

MK and the future

INTRODUCTION

Our manifesto states that..."Umkhonto we Sizwe will carry on the struggle for freedom and democracy by new methods, which are necessary to complement the actions of the established national liberation organisations...Umkhonto we Sizwe will be at the front line of the people's defence" [1]. Right from the birth of our army it was clear MK will have an important role to play as long as there is a need for us to forcefully push for the achievement of freedom and democracy and, when achieved to defend this from any aggression. History has taught us that there are always forces bent on depriving us of that freedom and democracy and thus, logically there will have to be a guarantor for it. A force to advance and/or defend the interests of the people whenever the need arises. If this is true, then the following questions need to be asked:

- What is the current perspective among the cadreship of the whole liberation alliance on the role of MK, now and in the future?
- Does/will MK have the capacity to, so to say, defend a new SA, given the present personnel, experience and related factors?
- What is the future of the SADF?
- If there will be some form of integration, how will MK relate to the SADF in terms of, inter alia, personnel distribution

In contemplating these issues, we should have in mind the experiences of other countries which were faced with a similar situation, e.g. Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam. There were similarities and differences in the approach of each of these countries. This paper aims to provide some background to these issues, with the aim of provoking a discussion, in the hope that cdes will arrive at a common perspective as to where our army is headed.

CURRENT PERSPECTIVE

Recent statements by some of our leaders have raised concern on how the role of our army is perceived, now, as well as in the future. Our army commander has recently emphasised the need to speedily build and convert MK into a regular army. This has implied the necessary steps in terms of military and academic preparation of Cdes who will be part of this regular army. We have also seen Cdes being sent for long term courses in the military academy. As the violence took its toll in the reef, our deputy president was reported in the "NEW NATION" as having said that MK cadres will lead in the formation of self defence units. It is not clear whether this refers to the Cdes who have come out of prisons or those still operating underground. What it means is that there is a role that MK has to play even in the continuing crisis. In a recent TV interview, the deputy head of our department of

international affairs said that when the ANC felt that the progress towards the elimination of apartheid had reached irreversibility the movement would consider disbanding MK. Does this mean the end of MK or is it in line with what the army commander said when he raised the possibility of both the SADF and MK being disbanded and a new defence force being established from the 'ashes' thereof? If the movement may consider disbanding the army, would this be unilateral action or would the regime be called upon to do the same? In our military code it is stated that "...When we have liberated our country, Umkhonto will constitute the basis of the defence forces of our country and the Revolution..." (2). We should be able to use this commitment which is binding to all of us as a checkpoint. How, then, do these statements relate to this. Of course all these statements and others may be interpreted differently. It is thus very important to establish a common approach to where we are going so as to be able to synthesize these views.

More light has been shed on the perspective of the role of our army by the section in the "PATH TO POWER" that deals with the army. The existing approach at formation of MK in 1961 is explained in the following lines: "It became vital to demonstrate an organised alternative to unplanned and suicidal outbursts which were beginning to take place. It was also necessary to make an open break with the politics of non-violent protest which had dominated the ideology of pacifism among many leaders of the liberation movement" (3). The emphasis then was on armed propaganda. The current approach on the role of MK, as influenced by the objective conditions, though ruling out the question of an immediate infliction of an all-round military defeat on the enemy, suggests the seizure of power and this brings MK to the centre. In this case, we will have to note the central role to be played by our trained cadres as military and political organisers of this army. It is necessary to study the options open to us even during this 'Pretoria Minute' era as the question of how we take over seriously determines the role that the army has to play now and later, as well as the difficulties involved in that. A successful insurrection brings to mind the scenario described in last week's "SANCTIONS" paper, with lots of jubilation, a victorious parade of our combatants on APCs and Katusha's, ready to take up the position of a new defence force. In such a case, it appears, it would be us who have almost exclusive power to decide on the future of the other forces' personnel (viz. SADF and Bantustan armies), including whether they qualify to be part of new army (I have in mind the lack of proper political education in their training!). Tables would be reversed. Presently it is not them, but us, who have to meet certain prerequisites as has been indicated earlier in this paper (on the conversion of MK into a regular army).

Various lively debates have taken place on our journals on the issue of the MK's role. We won't look at them here but it is

important to note that there is a general consensus on the fact that MK is an important part on the shaping of the country's

future. Another important point to note in this regard is that even our training prepares us not only for the pre-liberation phase, but also for the post phase. It is in the dynamic combination of efforts from our advanced detachments, the militant masses in action, as well as those won over from the enemy forces that we get the ingredients for a future defence of the country. All these forces will take part in various forms from the defence force to the popular people's militias. The second phase of armed struggle, is characterised by, inter alia, the setting up of autonomous administration in areas which are under our control or where the enemy, for one reason or another has forfeited control. This is part of our training. The point here is that nowhere and at no time have we been told that MK will cease to play a role in the future.

If we are to look around, there is no other foundation upon which a people's army can be laid without MK becoming a nucleus or, at least, part of it. While the SADF may have the technology and personnel, it has always been a tool of repression and thus lacks the important ingredient for a people's army. No other force in the country has shown such a close attachment to the aspirations of the people, through action as MK. The statements from the dock in many a trial, the bravery of our Vuyisile Minis, Solomon Mahlangu, Anton Franschs and many others, all these give testimony to a unique force in the country founded on traditions of popular resistance... born of the people into the frontline. On this note, comrades let us pay tribute to the three comrades who fell after the Secunda operation on November 28, five years ago. Comrades Barney, Vincent and Victor. Over the coming week we will be commemorating this day.

Unlike the SADF many of our combatants who swell the ranks of MK have been in battles against a heavily armed and strong enemy while they were either unarmed or poorly armed with stones, molotov cocktails and other improvised weapons including different forms of qwasbas (home-made guns). An example is that of some comrades from Kangwane. In a contribution to the 'Dawn', one of them writes of their different exploits including an ambush in which they trap a hippo. He describes "...the intention was to trap a hippo so as to capture weapons when it fell into the hole. The unit was deployed, armed with two R1's, a pistol, bows and arrows, and wooden AK's to give an impression that we were more heavily armed than we actually were..."⁽⁴⁾. At the end of the article he concludes: "...the time had come for us to leave and join Umkhonto we Sizwe. We needed to develop our skills further and acquire more and sophisticated weapons"⁽⁵⁾. Because of the confrontations at home many of our cadres get the battle experience even before they are formally trained outside the country. Its an army made of soldiers who's initiation into the war begins at a tender age, thanks to the brutalities of apartheid. In terms of necessity, then it is clear

3that if we are to get anywhere, we cannot leave our army as it was one of the key factors that got us here. The question then is: how capable are we?

OUR CAPABILITIES

At a meeting in Mulungushi hall during the visit by Cde Sisulu and the others, SG mentioned something to the effect that MK does not have the necessary capacity to face the enemy. While this came out of a speech that was not supposed to have been read for that particular forum, the fact that it came out reflects an existing perspective in our circles. In its programme, as has been mentioned earlier, the party rules out the question of an immediate military defeat over the regime. In the October 1988, article of Sechaba, the then Chief of MI gave an analysis of our chances of an insurrectionary takeover, by showing the balance of forces as influenced by the combination of objective and subjective factors. In a debate that ensued in subsequent Sechaba and other Journals the question of our capacity got addressed.

What seems to come out of this question is that we do not have the means by which to measure our capacity. We should remember that our capabilities are a combination of that part of our spear which has not as yet been given a chance to do the stabbing, as well as that which has. On one hand we can look at the Slurry, Koeberg, and other operations of a similar type and quality and proudly boast of a daring and able army. However, if we are to look at the scope of action as determined by the personnel and modern weaponry at our disposal, it is, to say the least, embarrassing. As an example, let us ask ourselves how many of the SAM-7 at our disposal have been used against the enemy. We need not mention that the enemy has been able to capture at least one, even before it was used. In effect a 'brand new' weapon has gone into enemy hands without having downed even a single of their lousy military aircraft. The weaponry that has been captured from our 'Vula' comrades, for instance, shows how much potential we have. The objective factors put us at a very strong military advantage. We have the numbers, we have a highly politicised community with a lot of creativity and initiative. The tradition of no surrender that has been inherited from the Wankie-Sipolilo campaigns and even from battles prior to that, make us a unique force. All this is because of the strong will with which the oppressed people of South Africa have decided to resist and subsequently crush the apartheid regime. MK left a mark in Angola.

However, it is the subjective conditions that have not been properly addressed resulting in the established impression that prevails amongst some of us. At this point we have to frankly address the damage we have suffered from the poor administration in our structures, as well as failures in the operational sphere. In the process of creating a revolutionary army we are faced with tasks both at the preparatory stage and at the open stage of our

armed struggle. Most of these tasks demand a lot of efficiency. These are some of the questions we have to answer, to ourselves and to the oppressed people of our country. How many of our cadres who have come out for training and have had to return within a specified period (lest their legends expire) have managed to do so, and why? Of those that have been sent home, why is it that some have not been getting what is needed for their work and survival on time, be it in the form of maintenance (in the case of those who are still setting themselves up), or in the form of proper arms as per requisition. Let us remember that at the Kabwe conference in 1985, it was suggested that the RC be replaced by the PMC whose structure and tasks were to be such that they would facilitate proper coordination between the different organs of our movement. We have not seen that proper coordination. For instance, our MI and NAT has a lot of information at their disposal, concerning targets and danger spots. However in our debriefings, some of us are not given some of the information on these. The political department had a lot of underground political structures inside the country which did not get transformed into politico-military units. We can see the damage done by lack of coordination in this sphere. There is a huge number of cadres who have been trained in this or that course but who have never been able to apply that training. Some of whom end up working either in our offices or not doing anything at all that is related to their training. Why do we seem to fail to deploy the forces at our disposal properly. We have the means of getting people around the region without the enemy knowing where they have been. Why has our use of these means been so minimal? Why is it that once deployed in a particular task it takes such a long time for us to be rotated so as to gain experience in other aspects of the military? It is only now that many of us are hearing about the necessity to convert our army, to be ready to take on a new South Africa. In all these decades of our existence what have we been doing to prepare for this? Had we started this conversion process in 1980 for example, would we not have been more capable?

Another area of our army that needs a bit of attention, and one would wish that we have a little discussion on this, is that of 'special ops'. Comrades, we all know that at some stage 'special ops' had served as a guarantee for what, according to the words of our Chief of Staff, are "sustained operations of a higher quality that have a strong political content" (6). We can compare the role of 'special ops' to that of the PKM. In a sustained attack which involves the use of coordinated fire, the PKM helps to pin down the enemy, it ensures that the volley from the combined fire is non-stop, closing the gap in-between the various shot bursts of our AKs, scorpions etc. What happened to this powerful arm of our spear? If we are to accurately assess our capabilities, we have to add the power we had from this outfit.

From the above questions and many more that ring incessantly in our minds, it comes out clearly that a lot that could have easily been done to improve our striking capacity has not been done. The

subjective factors have not been addressed to develop the capacity of our army. Again our problems are more administrative than operational. It is known that a soldier in any army should be constantly engaged in one of three things:

- constant upgrading in the military and academic fields (in our case the latter has been neglected)
- productive or administrative work in the army. This includes logistics, reports on various aspects etc.
- Combat activity in the case of an army at war.

One of the principles of armies is that a soldier is never kept idle. Why does it seem as if this principle is violated in our army? The principle of rotation also needs to be addressed. It is important that every member of an army gets involved in all the above aspects during their course of service. Again, with MK it seems that this has not been the case.

We have to boldly admit that had it not been for maladministration and improper coordination between our structures we would have been much further. If we address these questions in time then it is very clear that we have a very capable fighting force.

FUTURE OF THE SADF

It is well known that at the birth of apartheid it was an immediate necessity to create the means by which the regime would be able to crush resistance to it. Ever since its inception the SADF has been an army of repression. South Africa's history books are full of battles between the coloniser and the colonised. The colonisers have always been concerned with the vast numbers of the indigenous. The greatest threat to the rulers has always been from within the borders of the country. Most of the wars that have taken place have been waged from within these borders. Those that have taken place outside have been initiated by the racist aggressors themselves, as a response, in most cases, to the internal crisis. We have been told that more than three quarters of the SADF is made up of conscripts. That tells a lot about the nature of that army. Up until now, the SADF remains our enemy. Almost all the death squad and bandit activities in the region have been linked, in one way or another to this menace. Apart from revelations as those of the Inkatha training in the Caprivi strip to the evidence after the Gorongosa capture, it is known that even the so called 'independent' groupings have their membership mostly from the SADF. Not only had this army taken over the black schools, but it has also annexed white schools through the cadet system, the 'veld' camps etc. The scouts are trained in almost all military aspects and by the time they leave school to join the SADF, they know very well who the 'enemy' is and what to do, as well as how to go about it. 'White is right'; 'die swart gevaar'; 'red under the bed'; 'kill a kaffir a day' and so on. All these slogans help shape an army that has not only killed and raped the young and old alike, but that has also developed a system of automatic self-reproduction into many other extreme rightwing organs.

Given this background, it is clear that if we had a choice we would totally remove anything that was SADF from our history and build a totally different army. However, our bargaining power as influenced by our political and military strength as well as other factors locally and internationally tend to dictate otherwise. We seem to have tacitly accepted that the SADF will also be part of the new army. Our pronouncements on the future of the SADF have been more conciliatory than those of the enemy. Sometimes we seem to forget that in many cases that same SADF has been humiliated, and in most confrontations while our forces were outnumbered they managed to outmanoeuvre them. Thus while the SADF is a big and relatively well equipped force full of racists it has no tradition of dedication but cowardice. Fear is a characteristic feature of an army that uses conscripts. When we have a new government, why would Malan need to be so concerned about the quality of forces in that government? We need to understand that the question of the SADF is not being addressed in terms of the needs of a free and democratic South Africa. Among the reasons the enemy wants a place for the SADF is the fact that it can at least influence the rate at which the country is moving, as well as avoid humiliation as being part of a defeated system. In the final analysis the, SADF in its current form does not have a role to play. All its personnel needs re-education, others even rehabilitation before they can be considered as having a role to play in the defence of the future SA. The future of the SADF is thus a question to be determined by the bargaining power of the forces at play in the current process. If they are there, it will not be because we need them, but because of a compromise that has been reached.

It is with this in mind that we may best be able to address the remaining question in this discussion.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MK AND SADF

This question was at the centre stage of discussions that took place earlier this year between some retired generals of the SADF and cadres of our army. In a report that Cde Brett presented to this region, he indicated the sensitivity of the boers to the question of Nurembeg-type trials for SADF officers and others in the regime who had committed atrocities during the struggle. From the look of things after the Pretoria Minute, it seems unlikely that justice in this respect will be done. There is a lot of emphasis on reconciliation and it seems that our approach to the question should be from that angle if we are to be realistic. In any case we need to ask ourselves whether it would not create a greater danger for a future South Africa if we had a lot of unrehabilitated racist ex-servicemen roaming around idle and demoralized. We need to note, as I mentioned earlier that most joined as conscripts and are thus also victims of the system. They have suffered mental problems, many have committed suicide, and others suffer the Vietnam type of syndrome from their experiences in Namibia and Angola and who knows where. This is part of what we

will be inheriting from the apartheid machine and it is ours, they are our countrymen.

One of the reasons we are so remote from the SADF is due to one of our dismal neglects: - work within the enemy forces. The bantustan forces are a component of the SADF. Events in these bantustans over the past few years showed us the potential we had in this sphere. Work within the enemy forces is not only for the immediate aim of taking over. It is also important for laying a foundation for a future government. We can start preparing now. We have to remember that one of the main reasons for the Chilean failure in 1972 was the party's neglect of work in the army.

Malan has repeatedly said we don't qualify to be part of any defence force in South Africa. In his arguments he says that the SADF produces the technology while MK only uses that technology. He has proposed that there be a display of skills from both armies to compare our abilities. Many a time we have been called upon to disclose the size of MK. In one case our COS responded by saying it would be difficult to do this as MK has, and continues to multiply itself among the people, inside the country, thus MK is the people! As has been shown in this paper, politically, the SADF presently does not qualify to be part of a new people's army unless it is politically educated. It has to be taught to respect the birthright of all South Africans. All the concepts that have been pumped into the minds of its personnel, those of a superior race, have to be removed. Unless this is done, our country will be faced with the only threat to its peace that has plagued it for all these centuries : racism. MK may be lacking on one or two aspects of a regular army. This has to be corrected quickly. It has to be able to fill the spaces which are currently occupied by the SAAF and the South African Navy. On the question of integration, our army commander has stated that we are not proposing to join the SADF but that there will be a need to create brand new defence force. This seems like the most logical outcome of the current process of consultations with the enemy.

Question that which we need addressed in earnest include the following :

- What criteria will be used to determine who is in the new force?
- What is the future of the cadres in our army? One of our concerns on this is the question of demobilisation? Will it take place? If it does whom will it affect? What can be done about it? (Let us take note of the Zimbabwean experience)
- How do we see the role of the bantustan armies? (While they are all a creation of the apartheid regime, they have displayed different attitudes and they are different in various aspects). Do we treat them as one entity or as separate?
- The question of forces such as APLA is being shelved as these organisations have not made a move in relation to the current

process. Perhaps, we can still ask ourselves how we would relate to them if we knew their position

- What are the possible mechanics through which a new defence force will be formed.
- Do we see a possible role for brokers? If so, who would make up this structure?
- If the process collapses, how soon will we be ready to spring into action (let us remember that as long as apartheid is alive, our enemy remains the' enemy
- Above all, let us know what the prevailing mood is among our people on these issues? If we say that the masses are the key, then it is of great necessity that we move as one and any plans we make, should be guided by the will of the people.

CONCLUSION

Let us never lose track of the fact that MK has been one of the key factors that has brought us to where we are. Our efforts should be aimed at building the army in size and quality. Among the tasks that will be facing us will be the selection and training of thousands of our militants so as to be able to meet the demands placed by the vast territory in our land. A lot of political education needs to be done, both within our forces and the other forces to prepare them for the coming years. Most of all it is important to clean our house thoroughly so that we can truly take pride in our army. Let us minimize our failures in the administrative and operational spheres. We should ensure that through active involvement in the work of our army whenever we are called upon to do so, we give true meaning to the call- EVERY PATRIOT A COMBATANT, EVERY COMBATANT A PATRIOT!!

Above all let us remember the undertaking we made when we said that these freedoms, we shall fight for, side by side, until we have won our liberty. Therefore the war is not yet over comrades.

MAYIHLOME!!!
KE NAKO!!!

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