

MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

(Regional Commissar, Che O'Gara looks at the role of the political and revolutionary army in our struggle and in particular its role in an armed uprising.)

SOUTH AFRICA stands at a threshold of revolutionary transformation. In the words of Comrade Joe Slovo, the uninterrupted upsurge which can be dated back from August 1984 is not a passing phenomenon that the all-round economic and political crisis confronting the regime has become permanent and irreversible. Within a period of three years, our vanguard movement the ANC has made historic calls to our people to render South Africa ungovernable; and the apartheid system unworkable; and from ungovernability to people's power.

Events have confirmed the timeliness of these calls. The revolutionary upheavals in the course of this period throws light on the practical significance of these calls and make us determine more clearly and precisely the tasks of our struggle at the present stage. Among the fundamental pressing tasks facing our revolution today is the relationship between a political army and the revolutionary army.

The emergence of a political army is one of the strategic questions in the struggle for political power at one level, and the revolutionary army (an integral part of a political army) at another level — is a principal instrument of an armed uprising.

Opening the crisis

As the movement develops, as the class consciousness of the masses grows, as the economic and political crisis becomes acute, it continuously gives rise to new and varied methods of struggle; of defence and attack. We are beginning to see the emerg-

ence of factors which make possible a major historic breakthrough.

The ruling class is daily demonstrating its inability to continue to rule in the old way, while our people are no more prepared to be ruled in the same old way. With unprecedented historic actions, the masses have rendered ungovernable most of the urban level of administration, and replaced these with embryos of popular power. The past painstaking and goal conscious years of propaganda, agitation and armed struggle carried out by the liberation alliance is bearing fruit.

The regimes brutal military reprisals have educated the masses and prepared them for higher forms of revolutionary struggles: strikes, boycotts, partial uprisings and street fighting etc. which have become a permanent feature of our situation. In area after area, the people are creating a new order based on the Freedom Charter. They have set up street and area committees, people's courts, militia type combat groups and similar bodies. Thus ungovernability released people's energies, and also their creative activity.

The political and revolutionary Army

The significance of the current phase lies precisely in the fact that our struggle has thrown up a powerful political army, and, as it grows in strength, so are the conditions maturing for a revolutionary transformation. Experiences of the International revolutionary demonstrate that a revolution is successful only when the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production grows white hot, when there is a wide political army of the revolution capable of resolving the conflict and clearing the road for historical necessity.

We have already stated that the

political army is a vital condition for the success of any revolution, but victory cannot be secured by the political army alone without the revolutionary army which is its integral part. In the 1847 Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels declared that the aims of revolutionaries can only be attained by the forceable overthrow of all existing social conditions. And, this can be made possible by a great variety of forms of struggle, legal and illegal, armed and unarmed and in particular the combination of all these.

The political army

The political army unites all those that are discontent with the existing social order. It must have a clearly pronounced class character and its composition is determined by the character and motive force of the revolution. It should be noted that its composition changes at every phase of the revolution. Failure to observe this rule, might have disastrous consequences for the revolution.

The political army can be successfully built by a vanguard armed with a revolutionary theory, a political programme and scientifically substantiated strategy and tactics. It is formed over a long period of time, demanding painstaking commitment, loyalty and revolutionary work by a vanguard genuinely committed to the interest of the masses and capable of articulating their aspirations and waging a resolute and active struggle against the oppressors. The political army engages itself in strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, rallies etc. These actions will intensify with the ability of the vanguard to treat the revolution as an art and initiating the creativity of the masses.

The revolutionary army

The revolutionary army is an integral part of the political army of the revolution. It is formed and is successful only when a revolutionary crisis obtains only with the support of the entire political army of the revolution, that rises against the entire system of oppression and exploitation. Outside these conditions, without this of the entire political army, armed struggle does not have a perspective of success.

Like the political army – the revolutionary army has a pronounced class character and its composition is determined by the character and motive forces of the revolution. It is composed of the most conscious and militant from the political army who cross over to its side.

Composition

The revolutionary army consists of three main component parts:–

- The first component are the armed workers, peasants, youth ready to take arms against the enemy and fight for political power.
- The second component is the advanced armed representatives of these classes, i.e. the advanced and militant representatives of the working class, the peasants and the youth – who form the nucleus of this army.
- The third component of the revolutionary army is part of the enemy armed forces that cross over to the side of the revolution.

The role of the vanguard is absolutely crucial in the creation of the revolutionary army – that it must be a vanguard Party that is armed with the most advanced revolutionary theory to be able to show the role and place of military questions in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the reactionary regime.

One of the fundamental tasks of a vanguard is to be able to show under what conditions armed forms

of struggle could be used – to demonstrate the close dependency of these forms of struggle to the socio-political factors leading to the maturing of the struggle, – the general political tasks and of military strategy and tactics of the oppressed working masses. This vanguard must be capable of undertaking the complex and difficult tasks of building up its combat forces i.e. the study of military science, setting up of military organisation and combat units; their training and armament.

Lenin in his book 'What is to be done' emphasises the decisive role of military organisation, he says to deal with the question of an armed uprising, not only by political means – that is raising the political consciousness of the masses . . . but also by organisational and tactical means, demonstrating the need to create an organisation capable of leading the masses in decisive battles, but to decide when and how to take those arms and direct the entire movement.

Tasks of the revolutionary army

The tasks of the units as defined by Lenin, is to proclaim insurrection, to give military leadership as essential in a civil war as in any other war, to create strong points for open mass struggles, to spread the uprising to neighbouring districts, to establish complete political freedom, if only at first in small part of the country and to give full scope to the revolutionary creativity of the masses; who participate, but a little in these activities in times of peace, but who come to the fore-front in revolutionary epochs.

The revolutionary army employs all forms of weapons in this war both modern and primitive. Everyone can be a member of these combat units, men and women; old and young; the crippled etc. there can be no condition set not to join the peoples army. Every citizen in a peoples war has a role to play.

The Political and Revolutionary Army in South Africa

The present political upheavals have called into existence a powerful political army of the revolution, threatening the very foundation of the racist colonial system. It is a powerful army in the making, growing and maturing in the crucible fires of struggle. In the Green Book adopted by the extended meeting of the National Executive Committee and the Revolutionary Council in 1979 – the position of the movement with regard to armed struggle is emphasised as:

“The armed struggle must be based and grow out of the mass political support, and it must eventually involve all our people, all military activities must at every stage be guided and determined by the need to generate political mobilisation, organisation and resistance, with the aim of progressively weakening the enemy's grip on his reign of political, social and military power, by a combination of political and military actions.”

The Green Book further continues;

“It is therefore vital to have under continuous survey the changing tactical relationship between those two interdependent factors in our struggle and the place which political and military actions (in the narrow sense) occupy in each phase, both nationally and within each of our main regions.”

It is on the basis of this perspective that the political army of the revolution is developing and maturing. It is constituted in the mass democratic organisations throughout the length and breadth of our country; in the UDF, COSATU, civic and youth organisations in areas and street committees, in people's courts etc. Alongside MK the political army is organising itself in the form of Amabatho, and paramilitary type people's militias.

Preliminary forms of a Revolutionary Army

One of the fundamental advantages of MK in its formation was that it was rooted among the people with a small combat groups in the main centres and in the townships armed with rudimentary weapons. While MK enjoyed and relied on the political leadership of the revolutionary alliance of the SACP and the ANC for political guidance, at the same time the army leaned strongly to the people as its organised political base. MK has grown and developed rallying around itself all patriots and combatants who have come to grasp the urgency of the armed seizure of power. We are witnessing at this stage the emergence of preliminary forms of a revolutionary army.

As we observed that a revolutionary army emerges when a revolutionary situation obtains; it is a phenomenon whereby as MK deepens its roots amongst the masses in its actions; merging with those of the people; it at the same time transforms itself into a revolutionary army as an integral part of the political army and the principal element of an armed uprising.

The advanced vanguard of the Revolutionary Army

Umkhonto we Sizwe represent the nucleus of a revolutionary army, its most advanced vanguard. It is composed of highly trained and professional combat units; sabotage groups, and other specialised combat squads operating throughout the country: in urban areas and on the countryside, in factories and industries. The most revolutionary patriots, confronting the regime's forces with arms in hands, conscious of the armed destruction of that regime for the seizure of political power, acting under the political guidance of the political army and under the centralised military command of Umkhonto we Sizwe constitute the second component of our revolutionary army.

The third component is the unit of the enemy armed forces that cross over to the side of the people for the destruction of that regime. Depending on the conditions and peculiarities in each country, the third component might be extremely difficult to organise, yet it remains a vital ingredient. Although this is not the subject of our discussion, but in countries like Nicaragua where the third component was almost non-existent, the revolutionary forces relied on its armed blows and mass actions of the political army to seize political power.

Building the forces

The task of building these forces is complex and difficult, nevertheless, it stands as one of the overriding tasks facing the liberation alliance. In this regard it will be proper to highlight and emphasise the following tasks:

- The key to successfully building the political army is the ever escalating struggle inside the country and strengthening of the underground presence of the ANC to guide the conscious participation of the masses in the revolution.
- The creation of the political army demands centralised organisational leadership, from top to bottom: from national leadership regional district and area leadership etc. which concretely means politico-military committees at all levels.
- The strength of the political army lies at strengthening peoples formations at grassroot level which is the basis of the mass democratic organisations. In this respect, it means that our underground presence must be able to guide the mass democratic formations and the rudimentary organs of people's power.
- Organs of peoples power must be rooted within the masses, enjoying their support, being thoroughly democratic with the

perspective of the armed seizure of power as the fundamental question of our revolution.

Finally, we must speed up the linking of the actions of Umkhonto we Sizwe with those of the political army of the revolution to strengthen and expand the support and power base of our revolutionary army the principal element in any armed uprising.

"It is our task now to give utmost support to these efforts, to explain to the broadest masses of the proletariat and peasantry; the nationwide significance of a revolutionary army in the struggle for freedom, to assist various units of this army; to unfold the popular banner of freedom, the banner capable of attracting the masses and rallying the forces that will crush the Tsarist autocracy." V.I. Lenin.