

## PLANNING FOR PEOPLES WAR DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

1. The Summarised Theses on our Strategic Line contained in the Green Book and adopted by the N.E.C. in August 1979 constitutes a starting point for the determination of our perspectives in the coming period. Those theses continue to guide us in the definition of the main content of the present phase of our revolution, the principal enemy and its allies, the principal social force of our revolution and its allies, the key elements of the enemy's political strategy and our principal immediate policies line of struggle. The theses also correctly defined the character and shape of our broad front of struggle and laid down its strategy for the emergence of a structured organisational front such as has now emerged in its U.D.F.
2. On the specific question of the relationship between the political and military struggle taking into consideration the then existing conditions, came to the following conclusion which we summarize:

The armed struggle is secondary and our priority task is to build up political revolutionary bases out of which its armed struggle (in the case of people's war) can be developed. In the meantime the purpose of armed activity is to keep alive the perspective of people's revolutionary violence as the ultimate weapon for the seizure of power and to concentrate on armed Propaganda whose purpose is to stimulate political activity and organisation rather than to hit at the enemy.
3. This approach gave definition to our activities since 1979 and more particularly, our military planning concentrated virtually exclusively on armed propaganda. The main questions which now arise are: has the situation been so transformed and have we fulfilled enough of our objectives to move on to a new phase? In other words can we now move with greater purpose and begin to take concrete steps towards peoples war? By peoples war we mean war in which a liberation army becomes rooted among the people who progressively participate actively in the armed struggle both politically and militarily, including the possibility of engaging in partial or general insurrections.

4. What development have taken place since 1979 which justify the search of such a new approach in our military planning and actions? It is true that in the narrow sense the objective we set ourselves for the creation of political revolutionary bases has so far not made significant headway. The policy of creating APC's has been an almost complete failure.

But in the broad sense the political base in support of our revolutionary aims has widened immeasurably since 1979. The ANC and its allies stand virtually unchallenged (in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the oppressed) as the guide of our revolution. The mass receptivity to violence as the only real answer is becoming more and more evident. Indeed the mood in support of our liberation movement has created several moments in which the people behave as if the ANC is a legal organisation despite the threatening presence of armed police contingents. Every MK blow against the enemy, especially one involving enemy life, is greeted by massive joy and celebration amongst the oppressed.

Of equal importance is the dramatic advance which has been made in the past few years in growth of mass organisations both at the regional and national level. There are already 3/4 million black workers organised into trade unions and this figure is expected to rise to well over a million in the near future, outstripping for the first time in our history the level of white trade union membership. There is growing resistance among the urban community to community councils and to every measure taken by its authorities to place the burden of the economic crisis on their shoulders. Rent struggles and bus boycotts of a protracted nature occur with greater frequency. Above all, the movement's policy (as set out in the Green Book and followed by years of campaigning for unity in action at the broadening of the democratic front) has reached an important climax in the creation of the U.D.F. which also represents 1 to 1½ million organised people. And our liberation front is daily gaining more credibility both at home and abroad as the potential replacement for the racist outcry.

5. What does all this add up to in relation to our strategy in the coming period.

In the first place it is clear that the task which we set ourselves for the building of underground political revolutionary bases must be pursued with the greatest vigour learning from our failures to implement our APC policy. We must ensure that the growth of our internal underground leadership network keeps pace with the flowering of mass organisation and mass support for our policies which are in audience.

In the second place it would be wrong to abandon completely the phase of armed propaganda which has played, and will continue to play, such an important role in stimulating political activity and organisation. Indeed, both the sophistication and frequency of armed propaganda must be increased.

But at the same time we cannot continue to confine ourselves to armed propaganda. If we do, then the promise which armed propaganda held out that it is merely the first phase in the struggle for the violent overthrow of the regime will sound less and less convincing and the credibility of our strategy of armed struggle will begin to fade, leading to political demoralization both within our ranks and among the people. Above all we believe that the objective situation favours preparation for the raising of our military struggles to a new level. The political and military activities of the past few years have helped to prepare the ground for the peoples involvement in the armed struggle not merely as sympathetic spectators but also as participants.

6. It is therefore imperative that, while maintaining and even escalating armed propaganda actions, we must begin to create an armed presence within the country as a stage towards the building of a peoples army which will survive and grow internally and will increasingly engage in peoples war. What does this entail ?

(a) We must begin working immediately to prepare conditions for creation of guerilla zones. A zone earmarked for this purpose must have the potential to safely accommodate (either on the terrain or among the people) trained armed cadres which will constitute the nuclei for the internal recruiting, training, formation and survival of guerilla units.

- (b) Areas must be selected which have the potential over a period of time to be transformed into active guerilla zones. Initially this involves the injection of highly trained compact MK groups (defined as commando units) consisting of cadres each of which has the capacity to train and command local recruits. In other words, a group of, say, five MK cadres must aim to grow internally into five units of five.
- (c) The commando unit must, in the initial period, concentrate on establishing itself in its area, relying increasingly on the local inhabitants for its survival and growth and choosing a suitable early moment to begin mixing with the local population with arms in hand. During the early stages of this process it will avoid military action or engagement with the enemy except when it is forced to defend itself or when it is engaged in specific action designed to facilitate its growth and entrench itself among the people, and not merely to hit at the enemy.
- (d) The selection of areas and their preparation as future guerilla zones must be made in the closest possible collaboration between the political and military implementation machineries. Such consultations must lead to a determination of which areas are ripe for the early injection of a commando unit and the main emphasis of politico-military work in them, which areas need a prior period of sustained political work before we can be ready to inject armed cadres, and which areas should remain clear of overt military activity. The selective recruiting of cadres who come from areas earmarked for development into guerilla zones is obviously also a task requiring the closest possible collaboration between its political and military implementation machineries and this applies also to the main emphasis of political mobilisation and organisation of the areas in question.
- (e) In those areas selected for development as guerilla zones, immediate steps must be taken to build up the necessary arms and explosives caches which will meet the needs for the expansion of the commando units from among the local populace. Special procedures are required to ensure that until the contents of a cache are needed, its location should be known only to an external apparatus responsible for the creation of the caches.

- (f) The regions selected for development as future guerillas zones will in general be situated in rural areas. By and large (and subject to what we say below on insurrections) the main task in the urban areas will be to back up mass political mobilisation and organisation with actions whose immediate purpose is to support such mobilization and organisation. But in the urban areas too, such supporting armed actions will only be sustained by a network of locally based cadres. The task of creating such a network is a priority and must be pursued even if it implies a scaling down of actual armed blows for a short period.
- (g) The selection and preparation of personnel for commando units requires special attention. Those selected must undergo a period of intense specialised military and political preparation, and every effort must be made to ensure that there is no undue delay between the end of such preparation and actual implementation.
- (h) It, of course, remains an urgent objective that the local direction of military and political activity in a guerilla zone should be co-ordinated under an internally-based leadership and it is our task to work towards the creation of organs capable of carrying out such functions. But we must see this as a process which, in the initial phase, will unavoidably demand specialisation by separate political and military machineries guided by our external leading political organs.

7. As already indicated, the perspective for the creation of a peoples army with a capacity to engage our armed struggle increasingly involving the people must be accompanied by a stepping-up of armed propaganda which must concentrate more than in the past in the taking of enemy life. But those two streams of our activity call for specialisation. We must avoid the previous weaknesses in the military implementation machineries which attempted to engage in longer-term planning for the creation of internally-based combat units, only to be frustrated by continuous pressures to meet deadlines for armed propaganda blows. To avoid these weaknesses the MHQ has directed the regional commands to create a special apparatus under the Chief of Operation responsible for concentrating on acts of armed propaganda. The command as a whole could then concentrate

on the long-term tasks. This approach should be continuously monitored and, if it does not succeed in its purpose, other steps may have to be given to the strengthening and proliferation of separate Special Ops Units whose only task is to engage in armed activity in accordance with centrally-controlled plan.

### Some Additional Specific Factors

#### A. Rear bases

The actual correlation of forces in Southern Africa creates special problems in relation to our external rear bases. Compared to the facilities which were available to movements such as FRELIMO, MPLA, ZANU, ZAPU, FLN (Algeria), PAIGC, etc. we are at a disadvantage when it comes to a more sustained external support base in terms of logistics and army reserves. Enemy pressure has already reduced our opportunities for using external bases even in relation to limited sabotage operations and perhaps there is worse still to come.

Successful guerilla struggles (e.g. Cuba, Nicaragua, etc.) have been fought without its classical type of contiguous external rear base. In any case the only alternative to abandoning the armed struggle altogether is to find answers which compensate for this disadvantage. The main foundation of such answers is that we must create, as quickly as possible, a widespread internal presence which is not continually dependent on external bases. there must be sufficient internal resources to sustain the early phase of armed struggle and survival and growth must depend on the peoples support rather than retreat or reinforce from camps in the surrounding friendly countries.

#### B. The Bantustans

The succesful spread of peoples war is inconceivable without the escalation of political and military struggles in the Bantustans, in which over half of the African population is already forced to live. Perhaps the most important challenge we face is to activate the masses in the bantustans who in the recent periods have shown few signs of mass resistance or organisation (the urban part of the Ciskei is an exception).

We have become perhaps victims of our own public propaganda that the bantustans are meaningless frauds and that very little has changed from the time when they were called "reserves". It is of course true that the bantustans are among the most vicious frauds ever imposed on the African people. But this does not mean that there are no new realities which have a relevance for our strategic perspectives; realities which we can ignore only at our peril. The Bantustans have transferred the old reserves into sub-centres of military and political power. Such power is underwritten and manipulated by the racist state but the local administration nevertheless wield a significant degree of legal sovereignty over legislation, the judiciary, the state bureaucracy and the armed police forces. This reality is not altered by the certainty that if a Bantustan should exercise its sovereignty against some fundamental interest of the racist state it will be dealt with in no uncertain manner.

What perspectives of struggles do we place before the masses in the Bantustans? We believe it is necessary to go beyond the exhortation that they must join their brothers in the whole of South Africa in the struggle for peoples power. We must also provide a specific perspective of struggle for the overthrow of the Bantustan administration as part of the wider struggle for the total liberation of every inch of our soil. This implies the mobilisation of the people in each Bantustan to resist the administrative terror which is perpetrated by the regime to govern their lives. It also implies the need for an all-round political power in each Bantustan itself. In other words, we must provide a perspective which aims at the destruction of the existing power centres and their replacement pursuing the main overall objective of peoples power in a peoples South Africa. There can be no doubt that Pretoria never tolerate such an outcome as would undoubtedly attempt to oppose open direct role once again if any major transformation were threatened in any bantustan. Such an intervention would apart from anything else reduce its whole Bantustan policy to a shambles.

### C. The Role of Partial and General Uprisings

The Green Book states that peoples power will be won by revolutionary violence in a protracted armed struggles which must involve the whole people and in which partial and general mass uprising will play a vital role. This perspective remains valid.

In this respect our struggle bears some resemblance to the Vietnamese situation in which every Key phase of the armed struggle was accompanied by such uprisings. (Soweto 1976) was an example of a semi-spontaneous uprising which spread to parts of the country and continued over a relatively long period of time. The event which started as a youth protest movement was reinforced by a number of effective solidarity general strikes by hundreds of thousands of workers. But despite the important contribution by the ANC stalwarts, our movement was still too weak internally in 1976 to give effective direction to the uprising, to combine it with organised armed blows and to make available the means which would have enabled the thousands of militants to confront the enemy more effectively. Despite persistent killings by the enemy our youth showed a spontaneous readiness to sacrifice their lives (confronting guns with mere stones) over a period of many months. Imagine the potential if there had been an organised underground presence capable of giving direction and supplying a minimum of simple weaponry to quickly organised para-military unit!

There can be no doubt that the situation today is much more favourable than in 1976 for the more effective combination of organised armed activity with insurrections of various degrees of intensity. The strength of the workers movement, the proliferation of mass organisation and political resistance (one of which most important expression is the emergence of the UDF), the dramatic impact of MK actions and, above all, the growing support for the ANC-led liberation front as the unchallenged leader of our revolutionary process, promote a new dimension to a perspective of a combined political and military assault on the enemy. In this connection we should not underestimate the crucial role of the political general strike at the right moment. We stress the need for proper timing because we will help discredit the political general strike as a revolutionary weapon if we do not approach it in a discriminating fashion.

If we are correct in saying that partial or general uprisings may well play a vital part in the unfolding of our revolutionary process then it is necessary for certain steps to be taken now in order to be prepared for such an eventuality.

- (i) We must immediately begin to build up stores of simple basic equipment in the vicinity of all the major urban complexes which at the right moment could be used to equip contingents which can be quickly trained and organised during emerging insurrection conditions.
- (ii) A study must be undertaken of the main nerve-centres of enemy pawns in every urban complex. Such a study must provide us with the knowledge of which forces should be concentrated at which points during an urban insurrection and should enable us to select priority targets.
- (iii) There must be special concentration on the creation and strengthening of mass organisation in the rural areas (especially the bantustans) so that urban and rural action can be drawn together at the crucial moments.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that an insurrection cannot be mechanically planned on a drawing board to take place at some distant point in the future. It could occur as a result of a chain of events which trigger off widespread initiations from the peoples themselves (it was partly so in Soweto) or as a result of a call from the revolutionary movement at a special moment in the development of our revolutionary situation, or as a result of a combination of both. We must see to it that we are in every respect ready for any of these eventualities in the future.

#### D. Work in the enemy armed forces

A fundamental transformation is taking place in the composition of the enemy's armed forces; a transformation which demands that we devote much greater energy than in the past to work within its ranks. We refer to the fact that for the first time in our history blacks are becoming integrated as armed combatants in the racist army. The shortage of white manpower will hasten this process and the enemy consider that its supremacy cannot be defended without the growing participation of blacks in armed counter-insurgency activity.

If we add to this the establishment and growth of black police forces and armies in all the bantustans, it is clear that our peoples army will increasingly be faced with black contingents. This is also intended by the enemy to give the struggle the appearance of a civil war in which blacks face blacks.

There can be no doubt that in the long-run there is potential for either neutralising or winning over the majority of the black troops onto the side of our revolution. The vital significance of this possibility is so obvious that it need not be argued. It is our task to begin immediately to devote all resources possible to the different sides of work in and among these forces. In addition it is also necessary to engage in work among the white forces in order to diminish the morale and their will to risk their lives for white supremacy, and to increase the size of the minority which refuse completely to take up arms against us.

#### E. Arming the people

A considerable amount of discussion has been taking place recently in our ranks on the concept of an armed people as the vital element in the pursuit of peoples war. As a general proposition this concept is correct. But we have to be a little more clear about what exactly we mean in practice.

It is obvious that the policy of "arming the people" cannot mean that we begin now to distribute arms to whoever wishes to receive them among the oppressed. In the first place we have neither the capacity nor the means to do this on any meaningful scale. In the second place, it would be completely wrong to engage in a policy of merely distributing weaponry to people and trusting to luck that they will use them on the side of the revolution.

The policy of "arming the people" has completely different means in the different phase of a revolution. For example, once state power is achieved, the organised distribution of arms amongst the people (under the general supervision of the Party and mass organisations) may be an imperative in order to defend the revolution against internal or external counter-revolutionary threats. As the struggle develops in the guerilla zones, attention is always paid to creating armed para-military units and militia

from among the people as part of the organised support for the revolutionary forces. We have also already referred above to the preparations that should be made now to ensure that we have the capacity to train and arm contingents which should suddenly swell our ranks during moments of partial or general uprisings. In addition we look forward to the time when large numbers of black troops will come our side with arms in hand.

In other words, if the concept of "arming the people" is to become anything more than a nice-sounding cliché, it must become part of a policy to draw in more and more armed people as organised contingents in support of our struggle and acting under our leadership. Indeed the main burden of this whole discussion document has been to work precisely towards this aim.

#### Concluding Note

If there is a short way of defining what the main emphasis of our strategic line should be it is :

We must plan for a protracted armed struggle in which the foundation of peoples war must be urgently organised and we must be ready to accept all the sacrifices and the patient dedication which such a perspective entails. At the same time the situation has within it the seeds of sudden transformation opening up the possibility of a combined military and political assault on the enemy and leading to its overthrow by such combined insurrecting forces. We must prepare ourselves, and at all times be ready, for both these perspectives.

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