

**MK****SOLDIER**

# We must be seen to be a People's Army

— MICHELLE BROWN

**“Change? What change? They are still just racists!”** This is the usual response I get from many cadres in our People's Army when we begin to talk about “change” amongst the white group in our country. The view is that there is no change — that whites are still just fighting about the most effective way of oppressing blacks. This is what we said fourteen years ago in our Strategy and Tactics document, adopted in 1969, that *“for the moment, the reality is that apart from a small group of revolutionary whites, who have an honoured place as comrades in our struggle, we face what is by and large a united and confident enemy... All significant sections of the white political movement are in broad agreement on the question of defeating our liberation struggle”*.

This seems to still be the case if we take a quick look at the results of the racists' referendum on 2nd November in which whites were asked to vote for or against the constitutional amendments already approved of by the racist parliament. The results were that of a 76 percent poll, 65,96 percent voted for Botha's constitutional amendments.

These amendments are not there to change apartheid for the better. They are there to streamline it to face the fast-approaching onslaught of the progressive forces led by the African National Congress and Umkhonto we Sizwe. While Botha's propagandists make a lot of noise about the creation of an Indian and Coloured parliament, they are at pains to hide another aspect of the amendments, the creation of an executive president who will rule, not through parliament but through an elaborate set of committees — the most important being the National Security Council (NSC).

This type of government where the president will appoint the members of the NSC personally, will allow Botha to run his war machine efficiently. Not even the very limited form of parliamentary opposition that he has received from the PFP in the past, will be tolerated.

By voting for this type of government, by blindly giving up the little parliamentary democracy they have had so far, whites are blindly grabbing at straws, hoping that more oppression, repression and war will defeat the liberation movement.

What does this mean to us, the cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe? That whites have no role in our struggle? That we have achieved nothing so far in our mobilisation of whites? That whites will always be reactionary? That ours is a struggle of black versus white?

# S' VIEWPOINT

On the contrary no! On the role of whites, as cadres of our People's Army, if we have looked at the situation in our country carefully, and analysed the kind of enemy we are facing, it should be clear to us that we cannot hope to defeat the enemy without involving whites in our struggle. The simple fact that the fascist army is largely white, means that we need whites, not only in the ANC, but in MK. Guerrilla struggles in countries like Vietnam and in the Latin American countries, all point to the important point — that a major turning point in favour of the guerrilla forces only comes about when the soldiers of the fascist army turn against the fascist generals and join the guerrilla army.

So then, have we achieved anything in mobilising whites? By simply looking at the referendum results, many of us will be tempted to immediately answer no. But the referendum results cannot be looked at in a vacuum. They must be seen against other developments inside our country. The anti-war movement, which is one of the most strategically important sections of the democratic movement for our purposes, has never been stronger.

As *The Resister*, journal of war resisters from the SADF, states in its June/July 1983 issue, that for the first time since the 1974 Defence Act which made it a crime to advocate conscientious objection, there has been united opposition to conscription not only from the objectors themselves, but from church, student and civic organisations.

Organisations like the Black Sash, an anti-apartheid women's organisation, and other conscientious objector support groups, churches, student organisations and prominent individuals in the white community are calling for the total abolition of conscription! (Some misguided forces in the business world reacted with alarm too, they couldn't call for no conscription outright like that but timidly suggested that maybe a professional army, i.e. an army of paid mercenaries might be better than an army based on conscription, as the present one is).

## OBJECTORS

Young political objectors like Brett Myrdal are addressing mass meetings throughout the country, even though they will face a court martial soon and the threat now of a maximum eight year jail sentence. With the conscription of Indian and Coloured youths also on the way, the anti-war movement will receive and demand increasing attention from the broad democratic movement as a whole.

At another level of struggle young men and women like Carl Niehaus and Jansie Lourens are being convicted of high treason in racist courts. The former, who was sentenced to 15 years for various charges of sabotage, calmly told the racist court on

SADF  
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PROBLEM



SADF  
SUICIDE  
PROBLEM



the day of his sentence that armed struggle as waged by the ANC was not in contradiction with his Christian principles. He told the court that he knew when he joined the ANC, that if caught he could face charges of high treason which carry a possible death penalty if found 'guilty'.

The changing mood of young whites is not the result of a moral somersault of any kind. We are naive indeed if we believe we can mobilise whites on the basis that they must feel sorry for the oppressed people of our country. As we state in Strategy and Tactics, it is only the achievements of the liberation movement that will put an end to the process of white solidarity. To put it more concretely, it is only the increasing success of our armed actions, that will and are causing many young white soldiers, and future recruits, to rethink their position in the racist society and army. In the African Communist, the late Comrade Gene (Titus) Gugushe says that: *"We have to be pragmatic in extending the social base of our national democratic revolution in the white community. We have to raise concrete issues and not stop at general humanitarian feelings against apartheid"*.

## ISSUES

What are the concrete issues we need to mobilise white 'roofs' (trainees) and 'ou manne' (trained soldiers) in the fascist army and of course all the future recruits? The broad issue at stake here is that of a fascist army versus a People's Army. We must not just say that we are a people's army, we must be seen to be a people's army -- in action. Speaking at a recent SACTU conference at SOMAFSCO, Comrade Joe Slovo, said of the late Uncle J.B. Marks:

*"Another quality of his, which unfortunately is only too rare in leaders, is that he listened to and even believed he could learn from the rank and file. He never used that catch-phrase of bourgeois armies — 'You are a soldier. Yours is not to reason why, yours is just to do and die'. He understood perhaps better than most, that without people's politics, there can be no people's army, and without a people's army, there can be no people's war"*.

Yours is not to reason why, yours is just to do and die ... this underlines the basic principle of the training in a fascist army — break the man down, and then rebuild him into a cold, emotionless, unquestioning killing machine. The mental and physical battering and torture that SADF trainees go through is part of this process of building killing machines.

Some of the issues we will have to raise when presenting MK as the democratic alternative to Botha's South African Death Force are:

1. The political understanding of soldiers in our People's Army. We know why we are fighting. It is this political understanding, and not drugs, alcohol that gives the soldiers of MK courage in the battlefield.
2. Linked to the question of political understanding, is that of discipline in our People's Army. Unlike a fascist army which relies on brutal methods of physical and mental torture, a people's army relies on *conscious discipline* amongst its cadres. For, it is only when a soldier knows why he or she is fighting, that they will also understand that without discipline an army cannot fight and hope to win. A fascist army which relies on physical violence, assaults, beatings and constant degradation, humiliation and debasement can never be sure of its soldiers' loyalty or discipline in battle.
4. Along with the above, there is also obviously the right of every soldier to make political and tactical input into the army, through the creation of army commissars and by encouraging discussions in sections or units.



**Matola: Racist killing machine — do and die**      **People's soldier — conscious discipline.**

5. While the fascist army regards a trainee as some kind of machine who must simply "do and die", a people's army encourages the constant educational, political and upgrading of its soldiers.
6. Whereas in a fascist army, officers generally abuse their authority and treat rank and file like dogs, an officer in a people's army is there not to mistreat or enjoy certain privileges, but to ensure the constant political, educational, social and military upliftment of all the soldiers under his command. In fact in a people's army, every soldier is taught to be a commander, to take over and use his initiative if the situation demands. Command posts are not reserved for the sons and daughters of big businessmen, and influential cabinet ministers.
7. While soldiers in a fascist army are expected to carry out the most crucial and criminal tasks, all in the name of 'national security' (such as the deliberate killing of defenceless and unarmed women and children, and use of the most base forms of torture and interrogation of prisoners of war) a people's army does not believe that the end justifies the means. This is why the ANC signed the Geneva Protocol Convention. We are fighting a just war. Our enemy is clearly identified as those who carry arms for apartheid and this is seen through our actions which are directed at the SADF and its various wings.

Even then, for a long time, we desisted from hitting enemy personnel directly until the level of struggle required it, as it does now. And also in dealing with his enemy personnel, we do not believe we are justified in using forms of torture like using electrodes on prisoners' sexual parts, making prisoners addicted to drugs like morphine and then withholding the drug, or taking prisoners to view the decapitated heads of other prisoners who refused to talk. Our People's Army does not believe either in the use of internationally banned chemical warfare, which affects not only those it is afflicted on, but even the users. For example, the deadly chemical *Agent orange* used in the Vietnamese war, affected not only the Vietnam people, but also the pilots who flew the planes spraying the chemical.

These are some of the issues we will have to be able to deal with competently with all recruits for our People's Army. However, they are issues which are most important for our work within the fascist army because these soldiers with their direct and daily experience of a fascist military institution like the SADF, will want to see the sharp contrasts between the South African Death Force and our people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe.