

After Fort Hare he went to join his father in Cape Town. Here he threw his energies into the working class struggles, got introduced to underground structures of such working class veterans as Ray Alexander, Oscar Mpetha, etc. I don't know at what stage he joined MK and what forced him to leave the country at long last. In Lusaka he was already a resourceful member of the ANC's Revolutionary Council structures who had excelled in the grim battles of the ANC/ZAPU Alliance units in Rhodesia (Wankie 1967). Impatient with exile politics, submission to problems and inactivity, he hacked his way through odds homeward and was a leading political cadre of an MK detachment, the Luthuli detachment.

Prospects of reaching home soon via Rhodesia were gloomy and Chris was sent by the leadership to Lesotho to start and establish a political and diplomatic presence of the ANC there. His performance there can only be described as marvellous. The enemy felt it. It made many assassination attempts on his life, leading to the Lesotho authorities advising the Movement that he be withdrawn.

#### PEOPLE'S INTELLECTUAL

He is impatient with lack of seriousness, indecision, dogmatism and theory that cannot be put into practice. He is a young articulate selfless people's intellectual who easily mixes with every class, group, member and friend of the struggle; a jovial, optimistic jokes-cracker even under tension, yet a lover.

He is an open-minded leader who is fearless of criticism of anybody, including self-criticism, but without vindictiveness, bitterness and grudges against those who differ with him, thus earning himself no enemies amongst genuine fighters for the people's cause. He cherishes the counselling of old age and experience but is strongly biased towards the youth whom he believes can move mountains.

Chris has earned himself great respect for this balance of the articulation and use of old experience and its creative application to new conditions of struggle in more active hands and limbs. Because of this ability and his daring readiness to throw off his overseeing leadership garb, physically sharing the hazards and risks of war in the same trenches with his men, he remains essentially a man of the people's army who is destined to play a more vital role in the tough battles ahead against the enemy. He is easily approachable by any cadre of any rank and is deeply involved in the solution of their problems.

Now in his mid-forties, Chris was born from a politically involved peasant-worker family in the Transkei. Because of political persecution by the racist authorities his father escaped into exile in Lesotho in the early sixties. Perhaps a week

or so once a year he still has the privilege to switch off the routine burdens of duty and be comforted by the presence of his loving family from Lesotho. He is a loving father and a dedicated family man of sober habits and rearing.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of MK, we salute our fighting masses and their glorious army and leading political commissar! **IHLOMILE COMRADE COMMISSAR!**

## CROSSING THE ZAMBEZI

COMRADE TT Nkobi, the Treasurer-General of the ANC, witnessed the crossing of the Zambezi river by the Luthuli Detachment that fought in Wankie, Rhodesia, in 1967.

The idea of going home via Rhodesia came from the soldiers themselves, the rank and file of Umkhonto we Sizwe. It was then thrown at the leadership to discuss how feasible it was to send our forces home through enemy territory. The leadership had no quarrels with the principle and the matter was referred back to the combatants. I was particularly interested because at the time I was the ANC Chief Representative to Zambia. Our Headquarters was still in Tanzania.

MK soldiers decided they were determined to go home through Zimbabwe. Preparations began and in July 1967 the reconnaissance team went down to the river Zambezi to locate crossing points. The main group followed in August. The President and myself were there to witness the crossing. On the eve of the crossing we slept at the base we had established. A beast was slaughtered that evening and we had a big feast.

The following day, very early in the morning, we left for the river, east of Livingstone. We marched the whole day and spent that night in the bush. The following morning we proceeded. When we reached the river and were shown the points that had been selected for crossing we could not believe our eyes. The commander explained that those were the best points because they were hazardous and difficult and therefore the last places the enemy could suspect.

Ropes had been tied to trees and to reach the river from the bank one had to get hold of the rope and cling to it. From the height we were you could not even see a person when reaching the river down below. Only the sound of something landing in water would indicate that somebody had reached the water. Proper defence had been organised. Positions were taken to cover the whole crossing operation in case the enemy made an appearance.

#### FIRST TO CROSS

The first person to go down was

Chris, the Army Commissar. It was really moving. I had never experienced something like that before. I asked two comrades, Nkwane and Nikita how they felt. These two used to ask me when we were going to go home and I used to tell them that one day we would. One of them admitted that his heart was threatening to jump out through the mouth, he was a bit afraid. I told him that we all have fear but the important thing is to be able to suppress it. Pointing to Chris who had already crossed and was busy doing some exercises, I said: 'You see that man across there also has fear but he can suppress his and conquer it. That's what he is doing as you see him jumping.'

On landing the men had to be rowed across. Two comrades, Boston Gagarin and Guluva, were of great importance in this history-making event. They were experts in rowing. They rowed to and fro, taking one across at a time. It was a long and tiresome operation since about 80 men had to cross. The process began in the morning and lasted till late afternoon. The Zambezi current was very strong at the time but we did not suffer a single casualty. The whole operation was meticulously planned. The President, while looking at Boston at his job, remarked: 'Here is a great guy.' Both comrades are late now. Guluva died in a car accident a few years ago and Boston of natural causes this year (1986).

The crossing of the Zambezi was terrific and really moving. It is a great pity we had no camera to capture the moment because those men were making history when going down and crossing the river. This history ought to have been preserved in photographs for future generations. As it is now we are forgetting some of the heroes who crossed the Zambezi river and fought the Smith's forces. Some fell in battle, others were arrested and sentenced to many years imprisonment in Rhodesia. Many changed course and went to Botswana after running out of supplies.