

# MMK



## Women's Forum

### The Challenge is facing us

-- MITCHELLE BROWN

*Our people cannot be free unless the women are free and Umkhonto we Sizwe cannot become a People's Army unless women are part of it.*

Ours is a People's Army. More than half of the people of South Africa are women. It is therefore only armchair revolutionaries who can still afford to debate about whether or not to mobilise women into armed struggle.

For us it is a question of how to go about this process of mobilisation and organisation. We have never regarded our struggle as women as separate from the struggle of all our people for national liberation and social emancipation. Indeed, we believe that it is precisely in the field of political and military struggle that we shall overcome centuries-old oppressive and negative ideas about the so-called inferiority of women.

This is why we say that the African National Congress and Umkhonto we Sizwe are schools of equality. It is in these schools that women must realise their full potential as individuals in their own right and become an organised force in the forefront of our revolution.

We say that black women in our country are triply oppressed - as blacks, as workers and as women. These three struggles are indivisible; just as freedom is indivisible. Therefore all three struggles have to be waged simultaneously. Just as erroneous and dishonest as it is to talk of waging class struggle after national liberation, in the same way it is just as dishonest to talk of women's liberation after national liberation. MK is the arena in which we must fight for all three freedoms. Freedom will not come walking to us. We learned this a long time ago. Therefore it is imperative that we fight for our freedom as women as well.

It is precisely because black women are the most oppressed people in our country that all women, black and white, have to take up the gun as combatants to help overthrow the racist regime. Women are waging battle against high rents, increasing food prices, bus fares and train fares. It



rising cost of living in our country is a direct result of the regime's desperate policy of militarisation. Botha's regime is spending more and more money on its army - with the result that life becomes more and more costly for the working people. We have to see the connection between Botha's plans to enlarge the size of his army, and the increasing cost of living. Our pockets are empty and our children are starving because it is costing Botha more and more to produce bullets to kill our children.

The story of Khosi Mbatha's testimony of torture is one which must reach all women in our country. She tells in simple, powerful language how her daily experiences as a black woman in racist South Africa and her detention and torture brought her to the realisation that it is finally only through armed struggle that we will defeat the boers in Pretoria. Our children are now called 'terrorists'. Khosi's child was taken from her by force to a so-called 'home for terrorist children'. Lilean Keagile's young son was called a 'terrorist' when he cried as his mother was viciously assaulted before his eyes. A four-year-old boy was shot dead during the Maseru Massacre because the fascist South African Death Force (SADF) saw him as a 'future terrorist'.

We women are now seen as 'breeders of future terrorists'. We have to become, not terrorists, but guerilla fighters to protect our children and win freedom for our children. An Indian woman from Guatamala in South America explains this when she says: "The fascist army is getting more and more sophisticated with its weapons, equipment, tactics and intelligence operations. We must do the same. We must know how to get out of our houses when the fascist soldiers block the door. We must know how to make and throw petrol bombs. Even a two-year-old must know this. If a child's parents are killed, the child has the right to defend itself. I myself have been doing this, learning and teaching these things."

There are many things we women must learn, and teach others. We must know how to shoot, how to throw hand grenades and how to manoeuvre under fire, how to retreat from a bad situation. We must know also how to conduct reconnaissance of targets like power stations, police stations, enemy military camps and government buildings. We have access to many of these and must know what to look for, and how to draw maps so that our combatants know where and when to hit! We must know also how to hide weapons for Umkhonto we Sizwe. Our houses have to become bases for MK combatants. In the bantustans women have a vital role to play in our armed struggle. For it is us women who are in the majority in these deserts of terror. It is we who are dumped here with our children in resettlement camps. Thus, it is even easier for us to move around in such areas, performing tasks for MK without being detected.



The precedent of women in armed struggle has recently been set right on our borders in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Today in the People's Republic of Angola women soldiers in FAPLA march as confidently as men, holding AK sub-machine guns. In Southern Angola, where FAPLA is fighting the boer aggressor troops, the Angolan Women's Organisation (OMA) is there also in the trenches, mobilising and organising women to battle.

Our first and main task now is to build women as a force within our People's Army. We can and must be able to meet the enemy on equal terms. It is precisely because women must be mobilised into struggle that we exist today as a women's section of the African National Congress. We have thus also to take up the task of mobilising women into the ranks of our People's Army. We have to assert ourselves as women, to assert our right to work closely with our army in building women cadres. But we can only do this when we are in Umkhonto we Sizwe ourselves. It is our duty to see to it that MK is a People's Army.

Our nation cannot be free unless the women are free. Umkhonto we Sizwe cannot be a people's army unless the women are part of it. This is the challenge facing us now.

# LEARN with DAWN

## *You too Countryman, can be a Freedom Fighter*

The murderers of Saul Mkhize, Hector Petersen and countless other victims of Soweto, Sharpeville, Langa, Bulhoek shot to kill. They were cold-blooded and inhuman. With the same callousness that drives the Pretoria cutthroats to lunatic plunder and carnage, they are destroying villages and homesteads in parts of Mozambique, taking potshots at innocent Basotho and breeding bandits for subversive ends from across the border. The Botha-Malan regime rules by the gun. We

have come to learn through bitter experience that the gun in the hands of the boer-fascist bullies is an instrument of human destruction and untold coercion, a tyranny enforcing device.

The time has long come for you countrymen to learn the manipulation of guns for the purpose of making your voice louder, making your political demands more boldly and effectively.

The gun in the hands of an oppressed people should be used as