

60 years of struggle



ON April 6, 1652, the first white Dutch settlers landed at the Cape to establish a half-way house to supply fresh provisions for their ships going to the East.

Not long after, however, they began to enslave the local African inhabitants, confiscate their cattle and drive them off their land. This led to many armed conflicts until the second half of the 18th century, when the white invaders were reduced to roving bands of brigands. Towards the end of the 1700s however, Britain, which was allied with Holland in the war against Republican France, sent in her military forces to aid the Dutch settlers.

This brought about a complete change in the resistance of our people. The British, armed with the most modern weapons of war and their long experience of intrigue, defeated our people who were poorly armed and fighting separately as tribal groups. Despite these weaknesses, it was only in 1906 that our people were finally crushed militarily by the overwhelming might of the most powerful country in the world at that time.

Within four years of the final battle, the British government, despite widespread opposition from our people, granted "independence" to the white minority and the Union of South Africa, which excluded Africans and other nonwhites, was established in place of the four existing provincial regimes.

1912

The African leaders of the day were shocked into action. Calling for the unity of all tribal groups, Dr. Pixley ka Izaka Seme, a prominent leader and lawyer, in an article published in 1911, declared: "The demon of racialism, the aberrations of Xhosa-

Fingo feuds, the animosity that exists between the Zulus and the Tongas, between the Basuto and every other native, must be buried and forgotten [...]. We are one people."

Other leaders like Dr. J. L. Dube, D. S. Setaka, S. M. Kakgatho, Sol. T. Plaatjie, Dr. W. D. Rubusana and T. M. Mapikela took up the call and on January 8, 1912, a remarkable and historic conference was held in Bloemfontein. Every tribal group was represented: intellectuals and chiefs, workers and peasants. Zulus, Xhosas, Tswanas, Sothos, Vendas, Shangaans, Tongas, and others who had hitherto looked on each other with suspicion were for the first time united on a common platform.

At the end of their deliberations emerged the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa. On that day the African nation was born.

1913

In the meantime, the white minority regime passed the Land Act of 1913. Under this law the whites took for themselves 87% of the land leaving the remaining 13% for the African people, who constituted more than four fifths of the total population.

A deputation was sent to London in 1913-14 to plead their cause with the British government, which retained powers to veto any discriminatory legislation passed by the white South African parliament. The British government, using the outbreak of World War I as an excuse, refused to help. At the end of the war, in 1919, another deputation met the British authorities and again the British government rejected its pleas and asked the delegation to negotiate with the South African government.

1920

In the twenties the struggle shifted mainly to the economic plane. With rapid industrialization taking place, African workers in the thousands were drawn into secondary industry.

Trade union activity was stepped up under the leadership of Clements Kadalie and his Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU). Scores of strikes by African workers were brutally suppressed by the army and the police. The ANC organized many campaigns against the brutality of the oppressors, vigorously denouncing the massacres of striking workers.

1930

During this period the ICU and ANC used a variety of methods of struggle. Civil disobedience was used to obtain the right of Africans to travel on passenger trains in all provinces and to walk on the pavements. Powerful demonstrations against the pass laws led to numerous clashes with armed police resulting in hundreds of Africans being killed.

1935

One of the biggest agitations in our history occurred in protest against the removal of African voters in the Cape Province from the common roll.

In 1936, the ANC convened a special convention of all African organizations, political, social, cultural and religious, to meet this crisis. However, the 'agitation' was not followed by mass action and failed to prevent the removal of the last group of Africans who had the vote.





1946

On June 13, 1946, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) started a civil disobedience campaign against various laws designed to ruin the Indian people economically as a prelude to their repatriation to India. During the same year the African Mine Workers Union (AMWU), led by J. B. Marks, who was president both of the AMWU and the Transvaal ANC, came out on strike. Over 100 000 African miners struck work and the army was called out by the racists and in an unprecedented wave of brutality the strike was crushed.

In the general elections of 1948, Dr. Malan and his pro-Nazi Nationalist Party came into power on a program of intensifying racial oppression by the enforcement of what they called apartheid.

In 1949, the ANC challenged this vicious undemocratic policy by adopting a Program of Action. Among other things the program laid down new methods of struggle, viz. civil disobedience, strikes, boycotts, noncooperation and open defiance of unjust laws, with the main object of building the national liberation movement into a powerful mass movement embracing all sections of the people.

1950

In the meantime the question of unity among all genuine democratic forces — the people of Indian origin, the Coloured peoples and whites rebels — which had received the serious attention of the ANC in the forties, began to take a more concrete shape in 1947



with the signing of a pact of cooperation between the Indian and African peoples. This unity was consolidated in joint action on May 1, 1950, when the ANC and SAIC in the Transvaal called a general strike in this province against the government's attack on the freedom of speech and the banning of some of the leaders of the Congresses. On June 26 of the same year, the ANC and the SAIC together called a day of mourning in the form of a nationwide general strike to mourn the victims of police shootings during the Transvaal May Day strike and as a protest against new repressive legislation.

1952

In December 1951, the ANC National Conference in Bloemfontein resolved to embark upon a massive campaign of defiance of apartheid laws. On June 26, 1952, together with the South African Indian Congress, the ANC launched the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign. The defiance campaign carried on through 1953 covered all major centers in South Africa. Over 8000 volunteers belonging to the ANC and its allies defied apartheid and were jailed. In 1954, the ANC launched a struggle against the imposition of the inferior Bantu Education System calculated to reduce African youth into "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the white man. Massive agitation took place among the parents and teachers and a boycott was organized against Bantu education schools. Meanwhile, the alliance between the SAIC and the ANC was extended further when it was joined by the African Peoples' Organization (representing the Coloured) and its successor the Coloured People's Congress. Later, during the defiance campaign of 1952 some progressive whites joined the struggle on the side of the oppressed people, and the Congress of Democrats was formed.



This alliance was further strengthened with the South African Congress of Trade Unions, the only nonracial trade union federation in South Africa, actively joining in.

Having succeeded substantially in mobilizing the various African tribal groupings into a single fighting nation, the African National Congress, in keeping with its overall strategy to lead a united front of all antiracist and democratic forces, hammered out a common program with the representatives of the various racial groups and the trade union movement. This program was further crystallized when on June 26, 1955, at the historic Congress of the People, the fighting demands of the people were enshrined in the Freedom Charter, after a year-long campaign. The success of this campaign and the widespread support the Charter received from the people did not go unnoticed by the racist regime in South Africa.

In 1956, the political police swooped down and arrested 156 leaders of the ANC and its allies and charged them with high treason using the Freedom Charter as the basis of its charge. It was alleged that the ANC planned a revolutionary overthrow of the regime. In 1957, the ANC together with local Residents Associations organized the Great Rand and Pretoria bus boycott. In April 1958, the ANC organized another one-day national strike.

1960

In 1959 at its national conference in Durban, the ANC resolved to conduct, during the following year, a massive nationwide struggle against the Pass Laws. This campaign was under way when the Pan-African Congress (PAC) sought to wreck it by launching its passive resistance campaign only ten days before the National Antipass Campaign was to begin on March 31st, 1960. When the police shot the people at Sharpeville and PAC was in disarray, the ANC called a national one-day strike on March 28, 1960, and ordered action by the masses of our people, declared the African National Congress illegal. The ANC refused to accept the order of the powers that be, and decided to continue the struggle as an underground and illegal organization.

Following the banning of the African National Congress, the movement decided to operate on two levels—internally in South Africa and externally in the international arena. The external mission of the African National Congress is headed by Oliver Tambo, who presently is the Acting President-General of the ANC. The mandate of the external mission of the ANC was to mobilize democratic and progressive opinion in Africa and the world to support our struggle. Our external mission forged strong links first of all with the All-African People's Conference and during the second Congress of this movement, which was held in Tunis in 1960, the African National Congress was



electec. to its Steering Committee. Our organization played an important role in the work of the Afro-Asian solidarity movement and is a member of the Permanent Secretariat of the movement whose headquarters are in Cairo.

In Europe and America, in the socialist countries, in Asia and Latin America, at the UN and on other international platforms, the African National Congress resolutely raised the voice and demands of our people. The African National Congress was one of the founders of the antiapartheid movement which was established in the early sixties in Great Britain, which has now spread to other parts of the world and has today become one of the major forces which mobilizes world opinion against the iniquities of racial oppression and apartheid.

However the ANC did not once suggest that we look for deliverance and salvation from outside the borders of our own country. We believe that the cornerstone of our struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa lies inside South Africa itself.

1961-71 ten years of armed struggle

Meanwhile inside South Africa the ANC underground began plans for the establishment of Umkhonto We Sizwe (The Spear of the Nation), military wing of the Congress under the leadership of Nelson Mandela.

By December 1961 MK, as Umkhonto We Sizwe later became popularly known, was ready to announce its existence. On the 16th of the same month MK announced to South Africa and the world that a new revolutionary stage in our struggle had been reached.

On that day, bombs shattered government installations. MK leaflets were distributed explaining the background of its formation. It proclaimed selected sabotage, pointing out that loss of life would be avoided and that targets would be government installations. The white ruling class was still given a chance to change its ways before the country could be plunged into a civil war.





The activities of MK increased in scope and quality and began to spread to all the major towns of South Africa. The enemy was caught flat-footed and was unable to dismantle the MK organization. Every week brought news of systematic sabotage and MK cadres were quickly improving their skill. Among the exploits of MK was the bombing of the office of the Minister of Agriculture in Pretoria, the demolition of pylons in Natal and on the Rand and the bombing of the offices of *Die Nataller*, official organ of the Nationalist Party in Natal.

A revolutionary situation was unfolding in the country; it was becoming clear that the blacks and other revolutionaries were no longer prepared to live in the old way and were determined to take risks to bring about a change. The ruling class realized that their old methods of rule were inadequate. Vorster, a known fascist who was then the Minister of Justice, sought draconian measures from the white parliament to crush Umkhonto We Sizwe. The notorious General Laws Amendment Act known as the Sabotage Act was passed and it empowered the South African courts to impose a death sentence in cases of sabotage. The Act was intended to deal with the increasing cases of sabotage which were becoming bolder and more resourceful.

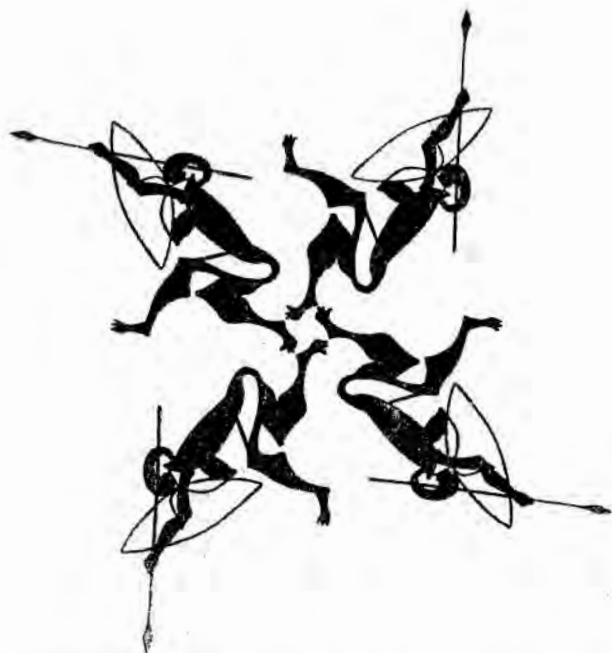
Torture

Umkhonto continued to operate despite the high rate of casualties. The enemy was getting desperate as the effectiveness of its security was beginning to be questioned and the image of a tough and efficient police force was getting dented. The only answer was to ask the white parliament to legalize torture and detention. The 90-Day Detention Law was passed. The ruling class was forced to take Umkhonto seriously and thus went into a wholesale onslaught. All the known leading members of the ANC were detained under the 90-Day Detention Law and were put into solitary confinement and tortured.

This new vicious law caught us unprepared. The movement had not drilled its cadres about behaving in situations of this kind. The police began to use electric torture and held all the suspects incommunicado.

Still suffering from the habit of semilegal days prior to the banning of the movement, we had not yet devised a tight conspiratorial method of work which made it extremely difficult for people to know more than they were entitled to. The looseness in the





machinery of the organization made betrayal by the weak and the provocateurs easy. Those who broke down were able to betray many units and individuals. The most serious blow was the discovery of the headquarters of the High Command of MK in Rivonia. The enemy was thus able to smash the very heart of the organization and this was a very serious setback. The regional commands had also been bled white and only tattered and badly mauled remnants remained.

Despite the sentences and executions, the fascists failed to break the back of the organization. Umkhonto continued to operate and Vorster, who after the Rivonia arrests had boasted that he had smashed the organization, was forced to swallow his words. The movement quickly regrouped and new leaders took the place of those arrested and fallen.

Guerrilla warfare

While Umkhonto was carrying on with audacious acts of sabotage, the High Command was preparing for the second phase of the struggle. The ANC had established an external mission to prepare training places for its cadres. These cadres were to be infiltrated into the country on completing their training.

While the cadres were undergoing training, the leaders and the organization were mobilizing the people and generating a climate for the armed struggle.

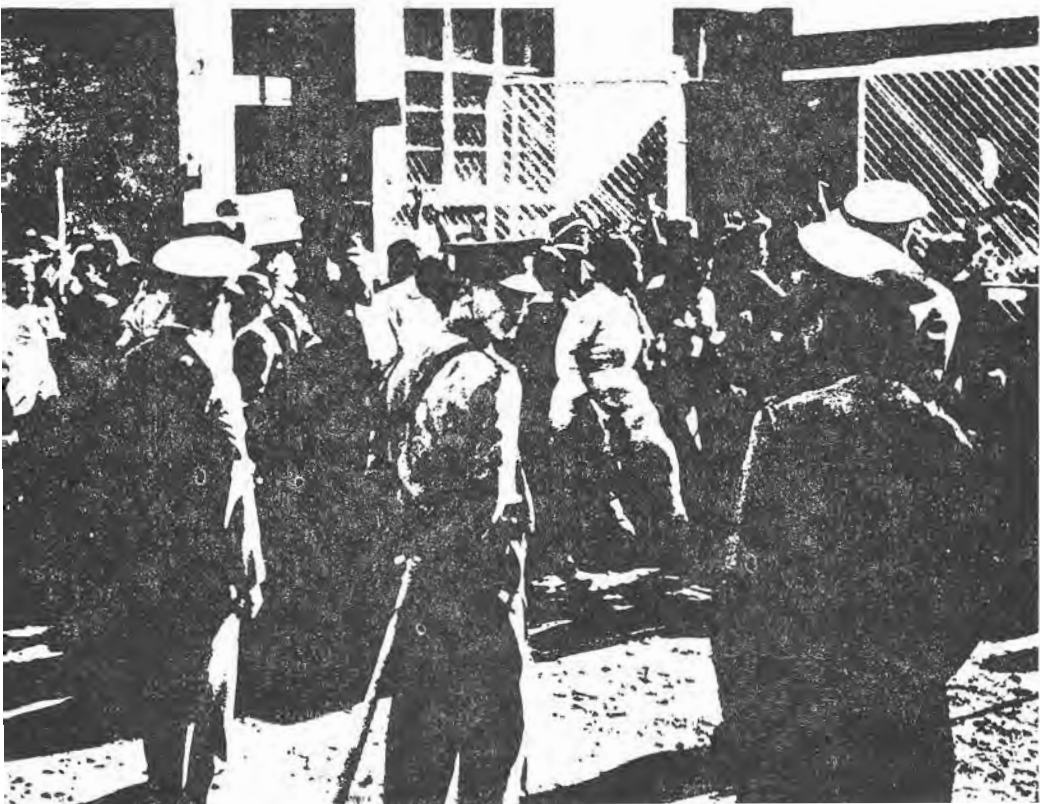
The arrest of the top echelon of the leadership of the movement affected the maturity and implementation of the plans which had already been drawn up. The communication lines between the internal and external machineries of the movement were seriously disrupted and thus coordination was hampered. Apart from the wounds inflicted by the enemy on the movement, there were also some objective factors militating against it.

These were the absence of friendly countries on the borders of South Africa and problems of logistic lines. As a result of these difficulties, mistakes were made and erroneous lines adopted.

Fascist South Africa began to support and stabilize tottering regimes in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The ANC and its military wing Umkhonto We Sizwe recognized the need to intensify cooperation and coordination with other fighting movements in southern Africa. It was against this background that the alliance with ZAPU was formed in 1967. The aim was never to commit men to fighting in Zimbabwe but with the help of our Zimbabwe comrades to procure and secure routes to South Africa. Zimbabwe was to be one of the many routes the movement had decided to use in its efforts to get cadres into the country.

Lutuli detachment

After undergoing intensive training, the Lutuli Detachment was the first to go into action in Rhodesia.



This was a revolutionary detachment, spurred on not by mercenary consideration but by absolute dedication to the struggle for the liberation of the black people of South Africa and for the realization of the ideals of the Freedom Charter. In its ranks were to be found men from all corners of South Africa. There are three memorable occasions on which the detachment engaged the Rhodesia armed forces, each time putting them to shameless flight. The equipment captured included machine guns, sub-machine guns, rifles by the dozen, ammunition, radios and much-needed food supplies. On the whole the detachment fought very well as a unit but certain names remain outstanding and when we write the history of our struggle, these brave sons of our country will take their places among those who shed blood to rid our country of tyranny and colonialism.

Eastern front

While the fight on the Wankie front was going on, the alliance was also probing possibilities on the eastern side of Zimbabwe. Here again members of Umkhonto We Sizwe played a distinguished role in what came to be known as the "eastern front" or Sipalilo operations. It was the activities of these militants which caused the South African ruling class to intervene openly on the side of the Rhodesian white settlers. Some of them lost their lives on Zimbabwean soil fighting South African imperialism, others were captured and arrested and are at present serving life imprisonment in Smith's prisons as well as in Vorster's prisons.

Zimbabwe was one of the routes the movement used to filter men into the country. MK men were filtered into the country with varying degrees of success through other routes.

Like all struggles, the Zimbabwe operations were a school of revolution to the MK cadres. They were not only baptized in battle but were also able to gauge the tactics of the enemy, his weak and strong points. They were also able to observe their own shortcomings and were able to analyze why they were not successful as they had hoped.

The years of struggle have steeled and hardened MK. Dealing with a brutal, sadistic and perfidious enemy which is well supported by imperialism, MK men have realized the need for organization and are fully conscious of their historic duty.

On the 10th anniversary of its formation, MK wants to remind its members, both inside and outside, of the immense responsibility history has imposed on them. The leaders of MK, men like Mandela, Mhlaba, Mkwana and Mtsheni have shown the road to sacrifice. No force on earth must stop us. James April, the most recent cadre to be arrested in South Africa, claimed in Court when charged, that the black man must get his freedom and that the ANC can never be destroyed. We guarantee this!

Amandla Nwa Wethu!
Maatla Ke Arona!
Power to the people!

(Copy from Sechaba)