



Editorial Notes:

FREEDOM MARCHES SOUTH

The Fighting in Zimbabwe

... as comrades-in-arms, we are facing a common enemy, fighting a common purpose, facing a common fate. Hence, a combined force for a common onslaught against the enemy at every point of encounter as we march down for the liberation of our respective countries.

JOINT STATEMENT of the AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
and the ZIMBABWE AFRICAN PEOPLE'S UNION,

August 19th, 1967.

BEGINNING ON AUGUST 13TH, advance units of Umkhonto We Sizwe, combat force of South Africa's African National Congress, together with their comrades-in-arms of Z.A.P.U., opened a new chapter in the

struggle of the oppressed people of Southern Africa, in bloody clashes with the military forces of the oppressors.

Marching homewards across the Zambesi they were intercepted by forces of the 'Rhodesia Front' terrorist regime which has forcibly and illegally seized temporary control over Zimbabwe. Bitter and sustained fighting ensued. At Wankie and other areas fierce battles broke out, which are still continuing at the time of writing. Heavy casualties have been inflicted on the oppressors' forces, reinforced by South African troops and military equipment, including aircraft and armoured cars, rushed to Smith's aid by the government of the fascist Republic.

The brave African patriots of the resistance forces have undergone their baptism of fire in a manner which inspires the legitimate pride and confidence of all our people in them. They have fought with the utmost daring, skill and determination. Even the propaganda of the enemy, though laden with deliberate lies, pays involuntary tribute to their quality. The despatches of the Smith and Vorster regimes complain of 'cunning' ambushes laid by the guerillas, their 'fanticism', their 'stubborn' refusal to surrender.

The white supremacists' propaganda (spread throughout the world by Reuters and other imperialist press agencies) at first minimised the extent and seriousness of the battles that were and are taking place, and particularly the casualties suffered by their own forces. Every effort was made to present the opening phase as a purely localised operation on a small scale, which had already been successfully concluded, with perhaps some 'mopping up operations' to be completed.

As the fighting has continued over the weeks, as more and more news leaks out of the widespread areas of fighting and the extent of the casualties inflicted on the rebel forces and their South African allies, this optimistic propaganda is being replaced by a 'security blanket' of strict secrecy.

HELICOPTERS DOWNED

But truth will out. More and more the truth about the battles is emerging and reaching the outside world.

The first issue of *Flash*, Special News Bulletin published by the A.N.C. in Lusaka on September 2nd, tells of the brilliant successes achieved by the guerillas who wiped out and wounded substantial numbers of the white Rhodesian and South African 'security forces' in the Matabeleland bush. In one such action, in the Wankie area, the guerillas shot down three helicopters—two of them South African—which were bringing in reinforcements.

At the coal-mining town of Wankie, guerilla forces launched a surprise attack, inflicting heavy losses on the racist forces before seizing and driving off with a truckload of arms and ammunition.

In an attempt to conceal the extent of their losses, the Smith authorities told the nurses and hospital staff that a large number of recently-admitted wounded Africans were 'terrorists' (by which they meant guerilla forces). But soon the news leaked out. The wounded men were, in fact, all members of the 'Rhodesian African Rifles'—Smith's puppet force—who met their fate in battles against the liberation forces.

The wounded soldiers spoken to (by visitors) said they were lucky to be alive. During a march in search of the guerillas they fell into an ambush. As is the practice in Rhodesia, African puppet troops were made by their White Commanders to march in front. Our guerillas allowed the African unit to pass and when the White racist soldiers came through, our men let loose hell fire. The African puppet troops were caught in the crossfire as they fled. Our guerillas then went up to the wounded African soldiers and gave them help, explaining that the fire was not meant for them but for the White racialist oppressors.

(Flash, 2.9.67)

PROFOUND REPERCUSSIONS

The fighting that has now begun in Matabeleland has already made a dramatic impact in Southern Africa and far beyond, and it is bound to have even more profound repercussions as it broadens in scope and dimensions and spreads southwards. It is too early as yet to assess all the far-reaching implications of what has now been begun by the patriot warriors of Umkhonto We Sizwe and Z.A.P.U.'s combat groups. But already it is clear that the deeds of this new fighting alliance have wrought a qualitative change in the southern African—indeed, the African—situation.

Of course this is not the first armed clash between the unholy Vorster-Smith-Salazar alliance and its millions of African victims.

For a long time now, the African liberation forces of Mozambique, Angola and further north, in Guinea Bissau, have been pinning down many thousands of NATO-armed Portuguese, liberating and administering a constantly increasing area of African territory and enrolling and training a constantly growing army of devoted freedom fighters. In South-West Africa too, the Republic's illegally-seized colony, resistance fighters have challenged and fought the enemy.

Nor is the concept of an alliance of the liberation forces of unliberated Africa a new one. The oppressors are closely and obviously associated in an anti-African conspiracy, and it is plainly the duty of the people's leaders to co-operate, exchange information and experiences

and co-ordinate their efforts. Towards this end, steadily improving relations of friendship and mutual confidence have developed between the A.N.C., Z.A.P.U., F.R.E.L.I.M.O. of Mozambique, M.P.L.A. of Angola, and other organisations of genuine and militant patriots.

What now gives the A.N.C.-Z.A.P.U. alliance its special significance, one whose potentialities it would be hard to overestimate, is not only that it is sealed in a bond of brotherhood on the battlefield, but above all that it is boldly directed against the main bastion of white supremacy and colonialism in Africa.

That is exactly why these first clashes have caused a state bordering on panic in Salisbury and Pretoria, and trepidation among their imperialist backers abroad.

Smith and Lardner-Burke rush through new Vorster-style emergency 'legislation' providing for mandatory death sentences for revolt. Vorster, declaring the Republic cannot stand by while its 'neighbour's house is on fire', defies international law and sends units of his mechanised army, equipped with helicopters, jet-bombers and Saracen armoured cars, up north.

ACT OF AGGRESSION

Legally, this is an act of invasion and aggression, in the face of which the British government has thus far remained unaccountably quiet and complaisant. Politically, it is a desperate act. It is true that the Republic has been encouraged to feel it can get away with anything, since it has all along been defying the sanctions against the Smith regime and setting their avowed purpose at nought—and with impunity so far as retaliation by Britain, the Commonwealth and the United Nations are concerned. But this is brigandage of a different order. Unless Britain acts now against the Republic it is hard to see how British claims to any say or interest in Rhodesia can survive.

The opening phase of the guerilla war has also cast a glaring light on the shabby and underhand 'talks' which have sporadically continued between Whitehall and the Smith rebels. It was always outrageous and unthinkable that Smith and Wilson should presume to settle, between themselves, a constitution for the future of four million Africans whom neither has the shadow of a claim to represent. Z.A.P.U. has served notice in the most emphatic way that the future constitution of Zimbabwe will be written by the people themselves. Indeed, they are engaged in writing it, for constitutions, if they are to mean anything and endure, are always but a reflection of real relations hammered out in struggle between real social forces.

If the opening phase of the great patriotic war in the south has already caused panic and fear among the oppressors, it has also caused rejoicing and exaltation among the millions of the oppressed and their countless friends throughout the world. *Flash* reports that 'Bulawayo is seething—political feeling among the Africans is running high, reminiscent of the days of active mass struggles before Z.A.P.U. was banned'.

Further south, in the Republic, the people are learning but slowly of the truth of the fighting, because they are subjected to a barrage of lies from the misinformation services. Even so, the truth is penetrating. And our people already divine the true meaning of the fire in not-so-far-away Matabeleland. They know that our boys are returning; that it will not be long before the firing breaks out across the Limpopo and the battle is joined on the soil of the motherland.

THE WAR IS BEGINNING

The war of the people for the liberation of South Africa is beginning.

It is a good time to remember just why it is being fought and what sort of war this is.

This war was never sought by the oppressed non-white people of our country. For all the fifty years of its legal existence the African National Congress, like the other partners in our liberation movement, sought to win democratic changes and to change the rigid racial structure of the country by peaceful means, in the words of the late, great Lutuli 'knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door'. Instead of progress, Africans were faced with a succession of increasingly tyrannical governments, their rights even to legal protest whittled away to nothing, until as the Manifesto of Umkhonto We Sizwe (December 16th, 1961) pointed out there remained only two choices: 'submit or fight. . . . We shall not submit.'

It is the white fascist rulers of South Africa, swollen with greed and racial arrogance, who have deliberately chosen the path of violence, who have reacted with unbridled terrorism to the legitimate protests and demands of the people, in one massacre after another from the early aggressive wars of the Netherlands, Britain and the voortrekkers, to Bulhoek in the 'twenties, to the murder of Johannes Nkosi in the 'thirties, the killing of African miners in 1946, the May Day murders of 1950, the massacre at Sharpeville in 1960, and scores of similar incidents.

The full responsibility for the revolutionary war which now faces our country, with all its suffering, bloodshed and bitterness, rests on the shoulders of the white chauvinist rulers of South Africa, who have

turned our country into a battlefield. They have chosen the sword and they shall perish by the sword.

For the rulers of South Africa, whether outright fascists like Vorster, Hertzog and company, or those like de Villiers Graaff and the U.P., whose pretended opposition on minor questions does not conceal their unqualified support for white baasskap and apartheid, this is a wholly unjust war; a war for continued race oppression, land robbery and unbridled exploitation of the masses.

But for our freedom army, comprising as it must not only the heroic pioneer Congress fighters who have already entered armed combat, but all the millions of working people in town and country whose militant support and action will be called for and needed before victory can be won, this is a just, sacred and noble war. It is on a par with the fight of the resistance patriots in Hitler's Europe, of the heroic Vietnamese, Algerians and others who rose to repel the invaders, of all who have ever striven, struggled and died for human emancipation.

Our people are not fighting for a racialist cause but for a South Africa dedicated to the lofty principles of the Freedom Charter, a true motherland to all its peoples, offering freedom, security, human dignity and equality to all. It is because their cause is just, that it is supported by the overwhelming majority of our people, and of the whole of mankind, that the banner raised by the African National Congress must in the end triumph, no matter how long the war may last, or how costly it may be in lives, suffering and sacrifice.

On this score we should have no illusions. The duration of the struggle may be long indeed, and its cost heavy. We have no doubt of the courage and skill of our fighting men, of which they have already given so brilliant a foretaste to the enemy. But we must be ready, too, for reverses and bitter setbacks. The racialists are well armed and prepared to fight hard to keep their domination and their spoils.

The history of previous struggles of this kind in many parts of the world has shown that, often, there is a long, often slow and unspectacular, process of consolidation during which the guerillas establish themselves, acquire battle-experience, recruits and arms. Under conditions in which the enemy still dominates lines of communication and information services we cannot hope for regular front-line dispatches giving accurate accounts of the fighting. The enemy will seek to demoralise the friends of Southern African freedom by publicising highly exaggerated accounts of 'defeat' for our men and suppressing all news of their advances. For all these things we must be prepared, sustained by confidence in inexhaustible resources of our devoted patriots and the overwhelming justice of our cause.

The times call for endurance, self-sacrifice, the utmost contribution

that each of us can make, whether on or off the battlefield. This is the testing time for all who hate apartheid and strive for South African freedom, above all for the South Africans themselves, wherever they may be.

We know that the staunch friends and well-wishers of South African freedom are legion, in every country of the world. Outstanding spokesmen of our people have travelled far and wide, telling of the inhuman crimes of the racialists, the anguish and heroism of our people. We believe that, in the hard days ahead, the peoples and governments of Africa, Asia and the socialist countries, the mass movements against apartheid that have grown up in so many countries, will respond generously to the calls for such aid as the African National Congress will need and ask for. A particular duty rests, at this time, on the progressives in such countries as Britain, the United States, West Germany and France, whose governments and capitalists actively support the Vorster regime, and scab on the world boycott against it.

But inevitably the brunt of the struggle will fall on the South African people themselves, in whose hands now, as never before, rests the future and the freedom of our country. The decisive factor is the active support for our fighting men by the masses of workers and peasants of South Africa; the African people in town and country, the oppressed Coloured and Indian communities, the democratic core among the whites. With the rising tide of guerilla battle they are called on to sustain our guerillas in every possible way, to fight the oppressor with every weapon in the farms and reserves, in the towns and dorps.

We have confidence that our indomitable people, now as on so many occasions in the past, will respond to this challenge with all their might, that they will give everything they have for freedom, that they will never surrender.

To those who lack this confidence it may seem that the brave sons of Africa who gave up their lives at Wankie and other battles in Zimbabwe have perished in a noble but vain endeavour.

But we, who know our people and what they are capable of, think otherwise. Through all the tribulations ahead these heroes will inspire us all as we go on to new fights and new victories. We shall overcome. The banner they have unfurled, the black-green-gold of Congress and Freedom, shall be borne victorious from the Limpopo to Cape Town.

September 9th, 1967.