



# **Spear of the Nation: Umkhonto weSizwe: South Africa's Liberation Army, 1960s-1990s (Ohio Short Histories of Africa)**

*Janet Cherry*

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Umkhonto we Sizwe, Spear of the Nation, was arguably the last of the great liberation armies of the twentieth century—but it never got to “march triumphant into Pretoria.” MK—as it was known—was the armed wing of the African National Congress, South Africa’s liberation movement, that challenged the South African apartheid government. A small group of revolutionaries committed to the seizure of power, MK discovered its principal members engaged in negotiated settlement with the enemy and was disbanded soon after.

The history of MK is one of paradox and contradiction, of successes and failures. In this short study, which draws widely on the personal experiences of—and commentary by—MK soldiers, Janet Cherry offers a new and nuanced account of the Spear of the Nation. She presents in broad outline the various stages of MK’s thirty-year history, considers the difficult strategic and moral problems the revolutionary army faced, and argues that its operations are likely to be remembered as a just war conducted with considerable restraint.

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