

1. The rapidly changing situation in Southern Africa since the defeat of Portuguese colonialism, and especially now with the racists' and imperialists' efforts to shackle the Angolan people and destroy MPLA have created a new situation in South Africa. Its main features are a more favourable balance of forces, new opportunities and a new level of participation of the people in the liberation struggle. As the momentum of the revolution grows, all aspects of the struggle grow sharper and the rate of change is accelerating.
2. These developments pose a big challenge to the ANC External Mission. It has to : (1) consolidate and extend the base of our struggle in independent Africa, winning new allies while seeking to prevent old ones from falling prey to Vorster's detente trickery. From this base (2) to organise, lead and equip the revolutionary struggle (both armed and unarmed) of the people inside South Africa; and (3) to intensify the international campaign to isolate the racist regime in all spheres and to win more moral and material support for the liberation struggle.

All this has to be done in an international situation which has never been more favourable. At the same time, precisely because the polarisation of revolutionary and reactionary forces in Southern Africa is becoming so wide and deep, a corresponding sharpening of the solidarity struggle abroad is going on which requires us to take a fresh look at our methods of work.

3. This sharpening of the struggle has forced out into the open, where they must now be routed decisively, the right-wing faction in the ANC which has congregated in London (hence the 'London problem' - though it is in reality a problem of the ANC everywhere, and only secondarily to do with some specific features of the London branch). Every new stage of a revolutionary struggle both attracts new forces and compels others who shrink from its implications to fall by the wayside.

By expelling the 8 main figures of the 'faction' the N.E.C. has shown itself determined not to let a disparate group of corrupt and cynically ambitious people hijack the ANC and throw overboard the principles which it has fought for over many years and which are the basis of the liberation struggle. But the expulsions do not by themselves solve the problem (though they are a step in the right direction), and we in London are required to make considerable efforts to rebuild the unity which has been partially undermined by the faction's activities, and to win back to the ANC the honest elements who have been bamboozled or misled by the manoeuvres and deceit of the faction.

4. In short, a challenging situation faces the ANC in London. Like any other section of the ANC it has a general responsibility for all the tasks of the movement and must contribute actively to their solution (ie. points 1, 2 & 3 above). But because of our location here, we can do little about point 1. We can and do tackle aspects of point 2 in London, but for security reasons this will not be further discussed here, except in the context of political education (below). However, we must constantly bear in mind that this is the central issue of the liberation struggle, and that if the ANC in London is not contributing to it, directly and indirectly, if in other words we accept for ourselves the role of a supporters' club cheering on the touch-lines, we are failing ~~in~~ in our responsibilities to the movement as a whole and to the people of South Africa. Point 3 is, for us here, our natural field of work, and we must do it, do more of it, and do it more effectively than we have been doing in recent years.

THE NEED TO DEEPEN THE UNITY IN OUR RANKS

1. The new phase of struggle we are now embarking upon will bring new stresses and strains; to meet them we must actively seek to deepen the unity in our ranks. This requires both a common overall approach to the strategy and tactics of our struggle, with corresponding style of work, and certain specific organisational measures which will be outlined later.
2. The retreat we made in the early and mid-sixties, the hammering we took inside South Africa in those dark days, and the long and difficult haul since then - these have left their mark in some comrades' minds. We need to overcome the exile mentality, to recognise that we are on our way home, that we are fighting our way home and must act accordingly. (We are not waiting for somebody else to free South Africa so that we can go home - it is our duty and privilege to participate in this struggle). Our presence here in the UK is a temporary thing, not a permanent handicap which we are forever saddled with. It has disadvantages, but also offers us unique opportunities (not available to people at home) to broaden our knowledge and experience of the international revolutionary movement and to harness its strength to our cause.
3. The exile mentality, the difficulties of our work in the African continent, and the deeply reactionary and racist environment in which we live, combined with the disruptive activities of the faction, have tended to push us on to the defensive at a time when history calls upon us to turn retreat into advance and to vigorously exploit the splendid new opportunities for prosecuting our struggle. This particularly relates to our conception of the ANC External Mission and the role of different national groups in it. Aware of the dangers of changing the character of the ANC and of the Congress Alliance in a situation where we were relatively divorced from the mass of the people at home, even where those changes were necessary and have been justified by events subsequently, we have tended since the Morogoro conference to emphasise that its decision about the participation of non-Africans in the External Mission of the ANC related to the External Mission only, not to the ANC proper.

This caution was justified, but is today in danger of being carried too far. The "ANC proper", i.e. as an Africans-only organisation such as it was at the time of its banning in 1960, no longer exists. The External Mission of the ANC is open to all races; so is Umkhonto we Sizwe (and has been from its inception); so is the underground apparatus of the ANC. However, the top levels of leadership of the ANC have not fully reflected this transformation in the organisational principles of the ANC, nor declared the principles applying to the 3 elements of the ANC mentioned to be universally applicable to the whole movement. But the trend is clear, and it accords with the growing unity of the oppressed people in South Africa and with the experience of other national liberation struggles.

So we must stop thinking about ourselves - as some comrades in London have evidently done for some time - as either being outside the ANC proper (which leaves the responsibility for solving the ANC's problems on other people's shoulders, viz. the leadership in Africa)

in London or - in the case of non-Africans - being second-class members of the organisation. These attitudes, often sub-conscious, harm the ANC; they have the effect of requiring the leadership in Africa to find solutions to problems in London which are additional to the many problems they face there and which they cannot know as intimately as we do who live here. The effect is also that second-class members

make a second-class contribution, withholding their fullest energies and efforts for fear of being accused of "hijacking" the ANC and robbing it of its African character. The clearest revelation of this situation occurred at the meeting where the NEC's letter was read out proposing the expulsion of the 8 : in the face of carefully prepared slanders and distortions, hardly any member of the ANC branch - African or non-African - got up to defend the NEC or its representative on that occasion.

WE ARE SOUTH AFRICANS, FULLY COMMITTED TO THE LIBERATION OF OUR PEOPLE, AND TO THE ANC AS THE INSTRUMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S WILL.

We are members of the ANC External Mission, and therefore part and parcel of the ANC. We must defend its principles, its policies and its leadership from hostile and unjustified criticism, and strengthen them by constructive criticism. In the new phase of the struggle nobody can afford to hang back or sit on the sidelines. All comrades must participate actively, regardless of race, to strengthen the unity which is essential for our victory.

SOME PROPOSALS FOR A BETTER BRANCH IN LONDON & THE U.K.

The London branch has had a troubled history since its formation in 1969. On the positive side, it has mobilised the members of the ANC here around the office, for occasional general members meetings, in support of some solidarity activities and in fund-raising efforts. On the negative side the branch has not provided the bulk of the membership here with adequate forms of participation in the ANC's work, such as to constantly raise their political consciousness and commitment in the course of a meaningful participation in struggle. Some of the reasons for this have been mentioned but they cannot be divorced from organisational structures which play their part in helping or hindering the participation of members.

An ideal ANC member in London will be fully committed, aware of current trends in South Africa and Southern Africa as a whole, engaged in work internal to the ANC or preparation for it (point 2 on page 1) and in solidarity work (point 3). Such a member faces the problem of finding out what's happening at home, what's going on in other parts of the ANC, preparing him/herself, and doing consistent solidarity work as part of a plan - co-ordinated, not ad hoc.

At present the branch is too large and diffuse to achieve most of these objects. New structures are needed to make it possible for all individual members to function fully as members. Amongst other things, we need, it is suggested :

- a) small basic units, or cells, which can meet regularly (not less than once a month), and
 - i enable any member to raise any political problem;
 - ii require every member to contribute to discussions, news briefings, and educational programmes;
 - iii collect dues regularly from all members, to strengthen the commitment of members and the finances of the London office.

To facilitate regular meetings such cells should be built on an area basis and meet in members' homes, with not more than 10-12 in any cell. Every cell should have a convener and treasurer who will be responsible for encouraging steady participation by members and for liaison with the Branch Committee.

- b) the Branch Committee should comprise 1/2 reps. from each cell, plus 1/2 reps. from each of the main divisions of the Branch (namely, Youth section, Women's section), plus a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, and possibly an organiser (at any rate in the initial stages until the cells get off the ground). Its main task would be the supervision and leadership of the cells. It would combine an appointed element (all office-holders) with an elected element (the reps. from each cell and section). Its additional function would be a general responsibility for events involving the Branch as a whole :

general
occasional/members meetings
the Bazaar
June 26
Heroes Day etc.

The Branch Committee would work under the general control and guidance of :

- c) the Office Committee, which would comprise the Chief rep, the chairman and secretary (and organiser, if any, of the branch committee, and representatives of :

Propaganda & Information dept.
SACTU
plus (possibly) a treasurer.

A small committee, comprising not more than 6/7 persons, it would meet frequently and regularly, regardless of whether individual members are in town or not. It would exercise an overall leadership and control of the whole London and UK branch, the activities of the members and their welfare. It would be appointed by the NEC in consultation with the existing Branch and Office structure and be answerable to the NEC in the first instance, and also to the rank and file membership in London with whom it will be closely linked through the cell network, the section committees, and the branch committee. Regular reports to and from the NEC will keep the rank-&-file in closer touch with the leadership in/

- d) In addition there would be a solidarity committee, appointed by the Office Committee and responsible to it, charged with the task of planning our solidarity work in Britain. This would need to comprise all the most experienced elements in this field, and must include persons active both within the ANC as such (Youth and Women's sections), in SACTU, and in other orgs. like AAM and D&A. It would co-ordinate and plan solidarity work, under the guidance of the office; the execution of the plan would be done through the office and branch committees.

Other committees could be considered, either standing ones (Finance) or ad hoc ones (the Bazaar, entertainments), but their role must be carefully considered in relation to the primary structures suggested above. The political tasks come first, and the structures must be geared to achieve them. It is an unhealthy situation when the social life of the movement is flourishing while its political activity is disorganised and at a low level. If the primary structures are set up carefully and made to function properly, there should be little need for additional committees, and they need only be ad hoc (i.e. set up for a specific event or need and disbanded afterwards).

Three problems need particular attention :

- 1) Youth. They need their own section, but must participate in

the life of the organisation as a whole. So every youth should be in a cell, but also take part in the general educational and specific solidarity activities of the Youth Section. This needs careful working out so as not to make unreal demands on individuals.

2) Women. An energetic Women's committee is needed, especially to initiate solidarity work in the women's movement in the UK. But if the cells are taken seriously and function effectively, there will be little need for a Women's section as such other than to elect the women's committee, and hold occasional events (notably Women's Day). Every woman will be a member of a cell, and that will be her primary place of participation in the London ANC, as for every man.

3) Solidarity work. This needs to be co-ordinated and planned on a regular basis. Because it entails many questions of our relations with outside organisations (other liberation movements, embassies, fraternal organisations etc.) it must be planned discreetly. The committee responsible (to the office committee) for it must be experienced, specialist, and carefully put together to embrace all sides of our solidarity work in the the UK. It cannot be elected, and must work ~~in an~~ essentially in an advisory capacity to the office committee. (the old Branch committee had none of these features and consequently contributed little to the conduct of solidarity work).

Finally it must be stressed that this document has not attempted a comprehensive review of all problems and aspects of the ANC's work in London. It has only raised some key issues. It makes proposals, which need to be widely discussed and thought about, and then transformed into plans - detailed and specific, which will give every one of our members a clear role and clear relationship to the ANC as a whole. Then, if some falter and others fail, it will be no fault of the movement as a whole. But there should be little need for that. Our experience is considerable. The challenge to us all is great. If we are united and properly organised, there is nothing we cannot achieve!

London
1st January 1976

Outline structure

