

The subject of the role of the ANC Youth is one that has been visited upon time and again. But as a dialectical matter it warrants continuous discussion and historical contextualisation at all times.

During the last Consultative Conference of June 1985, the ANC defined the tasks of the ANC Youth Section in the following terms:

- a) Shall organise the Youth and Students in S.A. into the ANC.
- b) Shall mobilise the masses of Youth and Students in S.A into the struggle.
- c) Shall organise ANC Youth and Students abroad into active units of the Youth Section.
- d) Shall mobilise the Youth internationally to support the ANC politically and materially.
- e) Shall issue propaganda material for both internal and external use.

A cursory examination of the years since the last Youth Conference in Morogoro will reveal disturbing failures - with the saving exception of ds and es in most of the areas stipulated above. The reasons for these failures are rather diverse and too various to be contemplated in a paper of this nature. But it is precisely because of such glaring drawbacks that we are obliged once more, to debate this important theme.

### ROLE

Since role is the interpretation of function in terms of defined tasks it may be sufficient to say that the tasks of the Youth Section passed by Conference summarises our role in a very simple and comprehensive manner. In other words the principal role the ANC Youth has to play has to be the realisation of the above-mentioned tasks and to see to their sustainment and development. But let us make bold to add that the role of the Youth in Umkhonto (a very crucial detachment of the Liberation Movement) has been unfortunately overlooked/underplayed.



It is important to stress here that the ANC Youth was not conceived only as an auxiliary wing, but also as an important pillar and reservoir of the movement's tempered cadreship without which the future is surely heading for rough seas.

Even before we as Youth can claim our rightful positions in the forward ranks of struggle we must first consider what it takes to make youth worthy of this role. The ANC youth must be a body of young men and women thrown up by the embattled masses of our people who are:

- i) politically conscious and progressively informed.
- ii) capable of monitoring enemy strategems and interpreting them correctly.
- iii) highly disciplined
- iv) morally improved.
- v) extremely loyal to the movement, its policies and leadership.
- vi) selfless and daring.

Such qualities are not in-born. They definitely entail continuous programmes of training and preparations. Therefore, it is paramount that the responsibility of education and political elevation should become one of the pre-occupations of the Youth Section.

The two fronts of youth:

The ANC youth is generally divided into two main categories:

- i) that of the Student Youth and
- ii) that of the full-time functionary.

The second category is further sub-divided into the Youth in Umkhonto We Sizwe and those deployed in the various departments, offices, and missions of the ANC.

a) The Student Youth:

The first category of youth (the Student) is on its own very important. Ofcourse we are aware of arguments to the contrary - these can only be misleading.



The ANC student youth has a definite duty to learn, learn and learn very hard in order to acquire knowledge. Such knowledge is essential to the acquisition of skills, both academic and technical fundamental to the building of a prosperous country founded on a sound socio-economic basis. The forces and means necessary for the establishment of such a social order can never be mustered without academic training. Since "revolution is an act of pulling down and building anew" it is unimaginable how any people can cope with the arduous task of reconstructing an economic system which however ravaged by the liberation war, shall have been highly advanced. We shall need our revolutionary intelligentsia; we shall need our skilled technicians from every field to rise up to reconstruct the economy, to restore order whilst ensuring the general upliftment of our lot. However, no room must be allowed to those who with the intention of dodging political obligations and/or obviating discipline take cover under the slogan "Our duty is reconstruction and nothing else".

The ANC youth through its leadership, general membership and appropriate structures set up for the purpose must see to the all-round development of the student youth. Through political lessons and discussion these must be educated to their role and obligations now and in the future. This is acutely important since many of our student colleagues find themselves in faraway centres of learning where they are relatively cut off from the excitement of struggle and the details of on-going political debates.

On the international plane the ANC student youth is, in most cases, better placed to campaign for the political and material support for our revolution. They must never lose sight of this important fighting factor.

The full-time functionary:

i) Other (refer to those in departments, missions etc)

This group is also bound by the same tasks and obligations.



Yet over and above the youth in this group must excel in discharging their energies, applying themselves unsparingly and be quick to respond to assignments with dedication. As we all know, a positive attitude towards work is a winner all the way.

ii) the military:

Our army, Umkhonto We Sizwe was founded by the ANC and its allies to provide a cutting edge to the popular political offensive. It is an army whose membership is drawn from all sections of the broad masses of the people. As a matter of fact its ranks are in the majority swelled by the youth element. It follows, therefore, that in order to make MK even more formidable particular attention must be paid to the youth in the Army.

The general role of youth in MK is known to all. They are professionals in the art of fighting the enemy with weapons of war. They are governed by the military code of Umkhonto which sets down rules and regulations which constitutes the basic guidelines and policy of military conduct as espoused by the ANC. For MK to finally emerge as a superior striking force the youth in its ranks must be like the rest - continuously armed with politics. For MK to show military competence, high combativeness must be developed through training; mental and physical fitness enhanced, military discipline drilled into everyone, and a spirit of non-surrender be engendered through encouragement, emphasis on the positive sides of the ranks and a willingness to convince through the force of example. Such lofty heights of achievement are possible only when the entire Youth Section of the ANC recognises and applauds the MK; gives it all-round support and sees it as a striking arm for the entire National Liberation Movement. There must also permeate within the Youth Section a spirit of readiness to swell the ranks of Umkhonto and also to reinforce it whenever need arises.



At an organisational level, the Army Commissariat provides the umbrella under which the MK Youth can be rallied and organised. This means that in every detachment of Umkhonto wherever and whenever youth structures are set up these must liase with the rest of the Youth Section through existing commissariat channels. Yet it is important that youth organisation in the ranks must be initiated and guided without let up. In this direction the example and experience of the Komsomol the FDJ, JMPLA and others, is most useful.

#### Internal Work:

The ultimate barometer of the Youth Section input should be our effectiveness on the ground. In other words, internal work must become our major pre-occupation such an achievement is only possible through hard work.

Appropriate structures must be erected on the ground to encompass the national, provisional, and regional levels at which it then becomes possible to effect a steady programme of youth mobilisation. Furthermore, ANC youth activists must interest themselves in and work towards the creation of youth units and cells for purposes of spreading this work. To lay down an effective foundation we need to formulate a programme of action that should enable us to engage Democratic Youth Organisations, in ANC activities and also to rope in support from hostile camps including those of whites. This programme of action is most urgent. Its drafting and careful implementation must be made a priority task in this, the Year of Advance to People's Power.

Again we have to throw in more effort towards ensuring greater youth involvement in our popular armed struggle. The youth inside the country have thrown us the lead by forming themselves into the 'Amabutho' and other forms of defence units and are presently creating new ones where these did not exist.



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We need to harness and guide these and develop them into proper underground combat forces.

The recent launch of the South African Youth Congress poses a great challenge to the ANC Youth Section. Guided by the Freedom Charter and the basic platform and policy of the ANC they seem to be inheriting the traditions of the ANC Youth Leagues. Where we have fumbled as the ANC Youth Section in the recent past, they appear up to now to be moving with remarkable clarity. They are successfully engaging the working youth, the unemployed youth, the student youth, religious youth etc in political work. We should lose no time in ensuring that SAYCO is strengthened; its programmes encouraged, developed and bettered.

How then do we proceed towards the realisation of these objectives? Our revolutionary perspectives teaches us that such work must be guided by a disciplined approach - personal and collective discipline reinforced by zeal and drive. Yet, let us be reminded at all times that a disciplined approach does not mean foot-dragging. We must be impatient with slowness and recklessness. We must also be impatient with mistakes. To guarantee uniform and soberly assessed guidelines regular consultation and discourses with the ANC leadership must be obligatory.

There is also need to continuously monitor the entire youth front at home with a view to influencing it. Where possible we must tirelessly but cautiously, work for the establishment of mutual contact between us and youth organisations on the ground.

#### INTERNATIONAL

Already reference has been made to international work as an important fighting factor. The role of the ANC Youth Section necessarily extends into this realm. In order for us to be more effective in this field we need to expand and ramify our work even beyond existing international youth and student fora such as are organised by WFDY, IUS, AASU and the likes.

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We have to explore possibilities of not only establishing links with Youth Organisations in individual countries but also to establish regular contacts and continuous exchange of views. Such an arrangement will enable us to facilitate success in the on-going campaign to effect the complete isolation of the apartheid regime by exposing it for what it is. No amount of energy must be spared in the effort to improve our contact with the youth in the Frontline States through such methods as proposed above. This is most crucial in that the Frontline States are forever victims of racists S.A's aggression. The ANC missions both abroad and in the sub-region must be approached to assist in this direction.

Remarks on some organisational matters;

On the surface it appears there is nothing wrong with the organisational structures of the Youth Section.- there is even nothing amiss with the ANC Youth policy in general. The point however is to make our structures function effectively. Our structures both here, in the front areas and at home must be seen to stand proudly and efficiently, capable of producing results at all times. At the moment, there is lots of loosen ends that need to be repaired/ remedied.

For us to be successful in this direction we need a strong and determined youth leadership capable of dedicating every minute to serious thought and work. A leadership that will pin its hopes on the powerful youth formations at its command. A leadership that will not buckle at the knees and give in which confronted with weighty matters; an honest and steadfast leadership will be worth anything if it cannot fight to plant the banner of the ANC on the ground. We equally need a strong and united Youth Section membership ever ready to respond to the call to duty; a membership that cannot be diverted by petty values. In 1987 the ANC Youth Section must demonstrate that we are the rightful heirs to the traditions of the ANC Youth League of the forties.

MAATLA!