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THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND THE ROLE OF THE ANC YOUTH
- A PAPER PREPARED FOR THE 2nd NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE MAZIMBU,
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INTRODUCTION

For over four decades, the international community has been seized with the question of apartheid. At the UN, apartheid has, particularly during the period following the Sharpeville Massacres in 1960, become almost ritualistically the annual subject of acrimonious debates and condemnatory resolutions.

Today, it can be stated that the struggle against apartheid has, internally developed beyond the confines of the UN.

Indeed, in the past year alone, it was regarded as priority item on the agenda of major international fora, including OAU Summit (Addis Ababa-July, 1986), the Non-Aligned Summit (Harare-September, 1986), EEC Summit (London-August, 1986), the Commonwealth Mini-Summit (London-August, 1986) and in numerous international non-governmental gatherings.

It is however, an examination of the manifold anti-apartheid activities of NGOs at the national level particularly in Western Europe and North America, that reveals the depth of revulsion that apartheid generates internationally. Indeed, it is precisely these activities that have forced apartheid onto the centre-stage of national politics in those countries, even to the point where in some of them, apartheid became a potent issue in national elections.

The reasons for this sharp international spot-light on South Africa are not far to find. Firstly, the determination and heroism of the people of South Africa, in the face of ruthless repression, to rid themselves and the world of the scourge of apartheid, have won the respect and admiration of the

international community. This massive political upsurge in South Africa, by the democratic movement at the head of which is the ANC, has given credibility to our struggle and has left no doubt that the battle for a non-racial democratic South Africa will, in the final analysis, be fought and won in South Africa itself.

Secondly, and no less important, is the relentless offensive that the ANC has launched internationally towards the isolation of the apartheid regime and wider mobilisation of solidarity with and support for our struggle.

With regard to our struggle today, two inescapable conclusions can be drawn from the perspective of the international community viz. that:

- * there is a broad consensus, even among the western allies of the apartheid regime, that apartheid is historically obsolete and must at any rate, in its present form, go;

- * the stature and image of the ANC has grown tremendously underlining the fact of our organisation as an important interlocutor in our struggle.

These considerations, whilst representing a step forward in our international mobilisation efforts, have nevertheless introduced new dimensions to our international thrust and brought about new challenges.

It is the task of this paper to examine these challenges. In so doing, the paper will seek to:

- * place our struggle in its international context;
- * examine the imperatives of our international campaigns;

*identify the role of our youth.

It may be added that the paper does not purport to provide answers and solutions to all problems, but rather to raise pertinent issues in the hope that they will enrich the deliberations and in the Second National Youth Conference.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF OUR STRUGGLE

The fluctuations in the character of international relations whilst not being the sole determinants in the outcome of any given struggle, have always tended to impact greatly on developments even in remote parts of the world. Thus today it is historically incontestable that the victory of the October Revolution gave a great impetus to the national liberation movement world-wide. It is equally incontestable that the victory over fascism led to the collapse of the colonial system in Africa. Similarly, the relaxation of international tension and the spirit of detente created favourable conditions for the victory of the Vietnamese people against American imperialism.

On the other hand, imperialism in its morbid desire for world domination, always thrives in an international atmosphere characterised by high tensions and strife.

In this connection, one can cite the international strife precipitated by the Reagan Administration with its massive nuclear arms build-up and its anti-Soviet rhetoric over the so-called "evil empire" a campaign which set the stage for the attack against Grenada, the aggression against Nicaragua the escalation of acts of destabilisation by the apartheid regime and increased Israeli attacks against Arab states in the Middle East.

It is against this background that we can argue that an appreciation of the dynamics of international relations will greatly contribute to the escalation of strategy and tactics of our struggle.

In characterising the contemporary international situation, one can identify three key areas of concern, and these include:

*the massive nuclear arms build-up and the grave threat of a nuclear catastrophe that is looming threateningly over the entire humanity. This threat has been magnified many times over by the insistence of the Reagan Administration to forge ahead with the Star Wars project. This very real threat has as a consequence, called forth a massive world-wide peace movement - a movement which, understandably, cuts across ideological barriers and is never growing. This peace movement has become a potent force which could and should be mobilised in the interests of our struggle.

*the inequitable distribution of wealth internationally and the need to work towards a more just redistribution of the world's resources has been the primary concern of two thirds of the world's population. It is this concern that has mobilised over hundred of the world's nations into the Non-Aligned Movement, and has served as a basis for calls for the New International Economic Order; the New World Information Order, and the south-South Co-operation. Indeed, so great is the concern that at the OAU Summit felt constrained to address the issue to the point where it succeeded in getting the UN General Assembly to convene a special session to address precisely this question - the first time in the history of the General Assembly.

The preservation of this unjust order continues to pose a threat to world peace precisely because it is inconceivable that peace can prevail in an atmosphere where justice does not exist.

*the continued existence of hot-beds of tension world-wide is another area of great concern. This is not only because their existence results in the devastation of life and property, but also precisely because they do not exist in an international vacuum and therefore may trigger off a major international conflict. Such a danger becomes even more menacing particularly in view of the fact that imperialist circles, particularly the Reagan Administration chooses to perceive these conflicts, which invariably have their origins in a quest for self-determination, through the prism of East-West confrontation. For imperialism, the struggles in Southern Africa, in Central America, in the Middle East and elsewhere are but manifestations of the encroachment of communism. This constitutes the basis of imperialist propaganda thrust against the National Liberation Movement.

THE PLACE OF OUR STRUGGLE IN THE WIDER INTERNATIONAL MILLIEU

In many ways the struggle waged in South Africa is a microcosm of the struggles waged on the global scale. Its significance, lies not only in the fact that it bears the features of the key areas of international concern and that its outcome will, as all other struggles, be highly influenced by the character of international relations, but also because its resolution will inevitably influence the socio-economic and political situation in Africa and throughout the world.

With regard to our struggle the following points can be made:-

* the apartheid regime, firmly entrenched in the imperialist world, features very prominently in the imperialist strategy of neo-globalism. With respect to the nuclear arms build-up the regime contributes in a very direct fashion. Available evidence reveals that Pretoria either has already in its possession a nuclear weapon or is technically in a position to produce one at short notice. But also to the extent that South Africa is a pository of vital strategic minerals required for

the production of nuclear weapons and actually supplies them to imperialist war-mongers to that extent is its culpability in the nuclear danger.

Consequently, the collapse of the apartheid regime will constitute a major contribution to nuclear disarmament.

* in as much as colonial and neo-colonial relations in the sphere of distribution of the world's resources exist between the developed capitalist countries and two thirds of the world's population, such relations exist not only between white South Africa and the rest of the South African population, but also between the apartheid regime and the neighbouring sovereign states. Just as the developing countries are encouraging South-South co-operation among themselves, the countries in the region are engaged in a similar effort with respect to apartheid South Africa. The Southern African Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC) constitutes the embodiment of this effort.

Thus, the resolution of the South African conflict will undoubtedly help resolve, at least on a regional scale, the problem which the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement seek to address on a global level.

*The policies of apartheid regime in South Africa, have reduced the entire Southern African sub-continent into a virtual war-zone. The racist regime has through its actions against the democratic movement in South Africa, placed itself on the same rank as the world's most notorious fascist regimes, whilst in its relations with the sovereign countries in the region, it has embarked on a policy of state terrorism that has left death and destruction in its wake. Countries such as Angola have as a direct consequence never experienced peace since the proclamation of independence following centuries of colonial repression. All this has led to a situation where Southern Africa has today

become one of the most explosive regions in the world which seriously undermines world peace and security.

The above-mentioned factors serve to demonstrate the international dimensions of our struggle, pointing not only to the objective interest of peace-lovers the world over in striving for the elimination of apartheid but also to the serious obligations imposed on the South African revolutionaries to the international community. In other words, these factors provide the ANC with the pegs on which to hang its international mobilisation efforts.

THE ROLE OF THE ANC YOUTH

At the outset, it is important to underline that with respect to the realisation of the strategy and tactics of the ANC, the obligations of the Youth Section of the ANC should not be perceived as being different or apart from those of say, the Women's Section or any other contingent of our organisation. Thus, in the sphere of international mobilisation, the youth like other formations should be guided by the twin-objectives of our movement viz. to strengthen the campaigns for the total isolation of the apartheid regime, and the mobilisation of all-round support for our struggle for the seizure of power by the mass democratic movement headed by the ANC.

These objectives were given further elaboration during the Second Consultative Conference of our movement held in Zambia in 1985, as well as in the subsequent January 8th Presidential addresses.

The above-mentioned point notwithstanding, it also needs to be stressed that the youth because of their special circumstances have additional responsibilities. In the words of the 8th January 1987 Presidential injunction, they must, "..... act as the yeast to energise and dynamise the people as a whole and act together with and not separate from them." Although this

injunction was particularly in reference to the situation inside South Africa it has direct bearing on our international work.

Against this background, the following points could be considered by the Youth Conference as part of an effort to identify the role of the Youth in the international offensive launched by the ANC.

DIALECTICS BETWEEN THE STRUGGLES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

Moving from the premise that there exists a dialectical connection between the battles waged by the democratic youth inside South Africa and the struggles waged outside the country, the Youth Section must rid itself of tendencies such as those of 'exile mentality', by addressing the youth issues inside the country more vigorously. In other words, the Youth Section must not be content to mere keen on-lookers on the developments inside South Africa. In this regard, the following could be considered:

- * the Youth Section must set up effective mechanisms such as would ensure that the Youth Section is not just well-informed about the day-to-day developments in the sphere of youth and students in South Africa, but that it would in fact help to influence the turn of events.

- * the Youth Section should determine the means of taking up more forcefully the pertinent issues raised by the democratic youth in the country and projecting them internationally. An example of such issues is the education crisis. The education of the young is a concern that appeals to peoples all over the world irrespective of political or ideological persuasion. The nature of the current crisis should have an emotive appeal and should serve as a basis for wider mobilisation.

* to counter the offensive launched by a number of western allies of the regime, such as that of the US of deflecting the South African youth from course of struggle by flooding them with scholarships to study abroad. The Youth Section should provide an answer. This answer should address the question at two levels viz. helping to define together with the democratic youth movement, a political programme for the recipients of these scholarship grants and to seek to win them over to our way of thinking in their countries of study.

* as much as possible and to the extent that security considerations allow the youth section should ensure maximum participation of the democratic youth movement in international events. This will not only enable the youth inside to be exposed to internationalist ideas but will also actively demonstrate the unity of purpose and action of the South African youth.

2. THE INTENSIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL MOBILISATION IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLE

Whilst it should be acknowledged that the ANC has made giant strides in this direction, it should also be pointed out that there is a lot of ground that still has to be covered, especially with regard to the youth and student movements in the western countries. A number of these organisations are either indifferent to our struggle i.e. they have no anti-apartheid programmes, or they place the ANC, PAC and BCM on the same level or still experience problems with armed struggle. In tackling these organisations, it would be useful for us to recognise that a number of such organisations may not necessarily be overtly political and therefore we should seek to relate to them at the level of their special interest. These could be categorised broadly as follows:

a) THE PEACE MOVEMENT

A large number of youth groups are affiliated to or are

closely associated with the peace movement. Our success in relating to them will to a large extent depend on our ability to demonstrate that our struggle is an integral part of the struggle for peace and development. In this connection we need to show in a convincing manner that there is no contradiction between the struggle for national liberation utilising armed struggle and the struggle for world peace.

b) DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTATED YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Such organisations include those that are attached to the AUN system and other inter-governmental organisations. With regard to these it would be important to highlight and focus on the negative impact of apartheid on the overall development of the majority of South Africans and the region of Southern Africa, contrasting this with the ANC strategy for post-apartheid training and development. In this connection, we should effectively utilise our membership in such organisations as WFDY which enjoy consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We should also explore the possibilities our participation in institutions such as UNESCO and other related bodies.

c) RELIGIOUS GROUPS

As regards national and international religious organisations it should be possible to focus on the evils of apartheid and to utilise the resolutions and documents adopted at various religious fora such as those of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The Kairos Document and the position of the SACC all of which point to the apartheid policy as a heresy and repugnant to God's law, should be used more effectively. This means that the Youth Section should by all means avoid displaying attitudes towards religion which may wrongly serve the project the ANC as anti-religious. Furthermore, we should seek to establish links with influential religious youth organisations with a world-wide constituency such as the YMCA and YWCA, instead of dismissing them variously as irrelevant or reactionary.

-ng relations with the youth and students in this region particularly in view of : the racist regime's policy of destabilisation of the sovereign states in this region. Such a campaign would ensure that the regime does not only fail to undermine our support in the area but also that we carry the entire youth with us in our struggle.

4. PROPAGANDA

In the light of the regime's propaganda offensive against the ANC, our movement should step up its own propaganda offensive in order to counter Pretoria's diatribe against it and project our struggle. The Youth Section could consider:

- the possibility of producing a modest news bulletin reflecting the struggle of South African youth, with the aim of mobilising the youth internationally;
- ensuring that at all international gatherings or international travels the ANC youth delegation should carry ANC propaganda material. It is not acceptable to find solidarity groups all the time being the only ones handing out such material and ANC delegates going around empty-handed.
- planning a propaganda offensive especially in Franco-phone Africa.

5. RAISING THE CALIBRE OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Youth Section, if it has to be taken seriously both within the movement and internationally, has to pay special attention to the training of its members. This question is made particularly urgent today given the sharp focus and debates on a post-apartheid order. The imperatives of contemporary international situation dictate that the ANC youth be not only committed and disciplined but also greatly informed as well as possess the ability to articulate our positions on the current struggle.

The training of our cadres therefore, should not be left solely to the relevant departments of the ANC. In this regard the Youth Section should:

- not only follow closely debates on apartheid in international fora such as the OAU and the UN but in co-operation with the Department of International Affairs work out a mechanism for active participation in such gatherings;
- explore possibilities of and formulate a programme for training of youth in the field of diplomacy;
- involve more and more students in Youth delegations particularly those studying in the countries being visited;
- maintain dynamic contacts with progressive youth organisations so as to ensure regular exchange of experiences.

6. RELATIONS WITH SWAPO YOUTH LEAGUE

Whilst both ANC and SWAPO have their historic obligations to their respective revolutions, the necessities of our region dictate that the level of our co-operation be enhanced. Hence the Youth Section of the ANC has a duty to play its part to realise this objective by striving for the strengthening ties with SWAPO Youth League. In other words, contact between us should not be limited to upper echelons of our respective structures but should be reflected at all levels.

In conclusion, let us reiterate that the objective of this paper is not to give definitive answers to the problems presented but ~~that~~ such issues have been raised in the hope ~~that~~ they will generate a healthy debate which in turn would serve to strengthen our international work, thus, justifying the description of the Youth as a dynamising force in our struggle.