

FOR OUR COUNTRY AND PEOPLE

Report on recent ANC Youth Conference

-Lovejoy Karas

"I should like to issue this appeal to the Youth of South Africa. At this hour of destiny, your country and your people need you. The future of South Africa is yours and it will be what you make of it.

"Remember our heroes who are today sacrificing their lives for the freedom of persecuted, terrorised and tortured people. Our gallant and heroic fighters expect every young South African to join the struggle for the freedom of our fatherland and our people... It is only through a grim and bitter armed struggle that the system of apartheid can be overthrown by the oppressed people of South Africa. We must fight".

- Malome Moses Kotane

The ANC Youth Conference that convened upon Morogoro, at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, from the 17th to the 23rd August, 1982, was a political event of immense significance. Its mood, business-like atmosphere and pitch of deliberations were in many ways reminiscent of past ANC conferences that have rightfully passed down into the annals as great mileposts in the history of our struggle. In this connection, this historic Youth Conference was part of a long unbreakable trail of courage and determination that has today penetrated deeper into the wild fortresses of boer-fascism. Viewed at within the context of 1982, the conference was a giant step in the direction of bringing to fruition the objective of Unity in Action, our rallying theme of this year's campaign.

The convening of the Youth Conference was part of the unfolding deliberate plan of heightening mass political

involvement and the betterment of our striking ability. The idea of finding time and a suitable platform whence to formally, in the context of current developments inside the country, **relaunch the ANC Youth as an organised spearhead** of the entire militant Youth formation of our country builds up logically from the aims of the Year of the Youth, 1981, and corresponds most appropriately with the overall objectives of the Year of Unity in Action, 1982. Commenting on the background of the conference, Comrade Alfred Nzo, the Secretary General of the ANC, in his opening address to conference, pointed out, "The decision to hold this conference in this Year of Unity in Action, was taken at an NEC meeting in December of 1981 at the close of the Year of the Youth. This was due partly to the realisation that, the convening of this conference, which was one of our main objectives in declaring 1981 as the Year of the Youth, needed maximum preparations to involve all sectors of our Youth, both at home and abroad in order to achieve the goal of the strengthening of the revolutionary Youth section of our Movement. Much still needs to be done to this end. The holding of the conference and the decisions you will reach should therefore, be regarded as the necessary first step in response to the call of the NEC at the beginning of the year contained in the 70th Anniversary Statement .

Indeed the conference was a giant stride in the direction of implementing the directives of our leadership and realising the wishes of our embattled people as spelled out in the 70th Anniversary ANC Message to our people.

In terms of all the flanks of the broad movement for national liberation in South Africa, the attendance of conference, especially its main sessions, was highly representative: Present were Comrades Alfred Nzo, the Secretary General of the ANC, A. Masondo NEC member and National Commissar of the ANC, Joe Nhlanhla, ANC Administrative Secretary, Moses Mabhida, General Secretary of the SACP, E. Mtshali, SACTU Administrative Secretary, and **representatives of all the auxillary wings of our movement.** Special mention of the Masupatsela, the Organisation of ANC Young Pioneers, is quite imperative because their presence not only emphasised the broadness of conference's representativeness, but also brought to light the great

potential possessed by the little children and their amazing grasp of their situation and historic task.

OPENING SESSION

The opening session, which was attended also by representatives of fraternal organisations and members of the diplomatic corps representing friendly countries, did not fail to influence the mood of conference. Added to this was the many messages of solidarity and comradely greetings from Youth Organisations in different parts of the world. These helped reinforce the delegates' sense of internationalism and the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity with the peoples that hung thick in the air throughout the duration of the conference. Messages were received from amongst others; the UJC (Young Communist League of Cuba), Polisario Front Youth, Communist Youth of Denmark, AASU (All-Africa Student Union) Secretariat, Liberian Student Union, ISMUN (International Student Movement of the UN), Democratic Youth League of Japan, etc.

This session, as the initiation of the whole event was a grand manifestation of the strength and sincerity of the tremendous support rendered to us by the peace-loving and democratic forces of the world. Here they shared a platform with us and we exchanged views. They saw us gather to get down to serious work, plotting and elaborating our methods of struggle. They saw us sing and laugh during performances completely engrossed in the rich variety of our insuppressible people's culture. And they must have thought to themselves; "here is a people that deserve our support" as they settled down completely secure and at home amongst us. Comrade Moses Mabhida expressed the collective feeling of conference when, addressing himself to them, he said, "Dear friends, please go and tell your people that you saw our people meeting. They are singing, they are happy but not happy, in captivity - they are fighting back".

That the venue of conference was SOMAFCO was not only a fitting tribute to our National Youth Hero, Comrade Kalushi Mahlangu, whose name has come to symbolise the courage, daring and the spirit of no-surrender characteristic of today's young generation, but also an act of acknowledge-

ment by the Youth of the great historic significance of **this trailblazing school in whose life and milieu is** already manifest a striking outline of what education in a South Africa of the Freedom Charter will look like. Indeed with this project, the ANC and our people have emulated the youth through its naming after our hero, Comrade Solly and thus blazoning a tribute on a tablet that will stand the test of time. This must serve as a spur to a more ready discharge of energy in the name of our country and people, as the spirit of conference clearly emphasised.

Summing up the purpose of the conference Comrade Joe **Nhlanhla, chairing the Opening Session said: "The central task of the ANC Youth Conference is the strengthening of our Youth as an organised force under the leadership of the African National Congress... The African National Congress remains the vanguard of our struggle and our people. It should be stronger because our youth have become strong in terms of organisation, political maturity, militancy and readiness to dare. Our youth must deepen their political grasp of the situation in our country, the region and internationally. They must understand that they are a part of a huge and invincible army of the anti-imperialist world, dedicated to peace, freedom and social progress. ... Comrades this conference must consolidate the place of the African National Congress as an alternative power in our land. We must come out of this conference better placed to accomplish our historic role of liberating our country and people."**

MAIN DELIBERATIONS

The main task of conference was quite titanic and its details even more challenging to the participants. Since this conference was the first of its kind abroad, and the first after many years since the 1962 Lobatsi Conference which was perhaps the last ANC Conference where the Youth as an organised formation made an unmistakeable impact that was easily discernible (these were the years of ASA - the African Students Association) the conference had the extra responsibility of reviewing this history with objective caution in such a way as would benefit our movement's

current programme of action. This transpired most expressively during the main working sessions - plenaries and commissions during which the subject of conference as was reflected in the agenda was deliberated upon exhaustively.

These main deliberations were concerned primarily with the task of discussing and finally documenting the positions of conference on a number of topics of great import: **The Role of the Youth, their Rights and Obligations; Structure and Organisation of the ANC Youth Section; Education and Culture; Programme of Action; and Resolutions on the Internal Situation, the International Situation, Southern Africa, Namibia, Lebanon.**

The conference was able to accomplish all these excellently, thanks to the seriousness and devotion of all participants and the competency of its steering committee and other auxiliary sub-committees. Nothing short of **self-sacrifice itself could have better expressed the fruition** of the late Malome Moses Kotane's call to the Youth as cited above in the introduction to this report. Would he **was alive to see with his own eyes and hear with his very ears the thunder and lightning that is the Youth of South Africa of this height of our historic march to freedom.**

BASIC DOCUMENTS

Amongst the many papers and documents worked upon by participants, about four emerge as the basic documents **constituting the synthesis of conference's whole proceedings.** These documents pronounce and reflect in very unambiguous language the thinking of our Youth, their unfailing revolutionary devotion and lofty adherence to patriotic commitment. In their gist is captured actually, the spirit and psychology of the week-long deliberations.

Unable to publish them in full text for want of space, it is still possible to draw a comprehensive picture of their contents through succinct description of what they entail.

a) DOCUMENT ON STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

In the introduction to the document conference points out that one of the central aims of the structure is to

unambiguous distribution of tasks. This emphasises conference's full appreciation of the fact that the task of leading a fighting youth, the dynamic flank of the popular struggle, is as collective as it is arduous and lofty.

Herein is summed up, furthermore, the organs of the African National Congress Youth Section per order of seniority, their functions, personnel to man them and the interrelationship between the different levels of the structure. Indeed the structure succeeds in distributing tasks unambiguously in a centralised democratic fashion therefore guaranteeing proper lines of communication and accountability at different levels. Careful perusal of this organisational structure reveals it as ideal for above-board conditions and yet adaptable to clandestine circumstances.

In terms of leadership the highest executive organ of the Youth Section in between National Youth Conferences is the National Youth Committee, whilst the National Youth Secretariat is the executive body of the National Youth Committee (NYC) in between sessions of the NYC. The National Youth Secretariat is in turn composed of Assistant Secretaries in charge of several sub-committees responsible for specific tasks spelled out in the document.

DOCUMENTS ON RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

In this document a set of rights and obligations is put down to provide guidance to the youth in their effort to live up to their expected role of dynamo of the popular revolution in our country. This document, more than any other, lays bare the preparedness of the Youth to serve and to surrender themselves entirely to the demands of the struggle, the rigours involved notwithstanding. Therefore every young South African who accedes to the recommendations therein, will have, by so doing, volunteered to be in the front trenches of our fight, for our people and our country.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

In the light of the escalating popular offensive and the

emergence of new challenges whose attendance is ever more acutely decisive, conference, realising the imperative of **the Youth responding adequately adopted a Programme of Action. This programme seeks to respond to both the strategic and tactical demands of our unfolding war of liberation.** In this regard its highly political and well-considered approach has not failed to recognise the place of our struggle in its proper historical context and the nature of the factors influencing its development. Hence the programme is not confined solely to local demands but relates to and covers also the international sphere.

This document is therefore a guide to organised action of the Youth in keeping with the long-term and short-term action programmes of the ANC. It defines tasks for all categories of our Youth; the working youth and students and recognises the need for the Youth in the army to better their skill and capacity to destroy the enemy whilst at the same time reiterates the urgency of the **swelling of the ranks of Umkhonto WeSizwe by more and more youth.**

The document deals in part with a short special programme for the remaining months of the Year of Unity in **Action. Here the conference specifically directs the Youth** at immediate tasks that remain to be attended to within the framework of this year's campaign. Amongst others the 70th Anniversary of the ANC, the 20th Anniversary of the imprisonment of **Comrade Nelson Mandela, International mobilisation for the UN-declared Year of Sanctions against South Africa, Campaign to expose racist aggression against the Frontline states, etc.**

Herein the conference summed up the position of the ANC Youth Section on almost all the key points in international politics that are running central to world relations today. This included a reaffirmation of the growing strength of the world revolutionary process which is made irreversible by the growth of the socialist community headed by the **Soviet Union, and of the other peace and revolutionary contingents; a condemnation of the imperialist war-mongering policies as fanned up and directed by the US Admini-**

stration of Ronald Reagan: acknowledgement of the successes registered by the national liberation movement in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the imperialist satanic machinations to sabotage the OAU, etc.

Having pointed out that it was this international political climate that influenced the liberation at almost every level, the conference concluded the document by once again reiterating the readiness of our Youth to contribute towards the conquest of a better world to live in through the routing of the enemy and the winning of freedom for the people in our region.

SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

The urgency of some aspects of the international situation, according to conference's view, warranted special attention and that we declare our attitude specifically on the issues involved. As a result the conference found time to address itself in discussion to the Southern African situation, the crisis in Lebanon, and adopted relevant resolutions explicitly stating our positions and condemning the evil hand of imperialism that is responsible for:

Pretertia's brinkmanship and its destabilising role in the sub-continent, particularly the untold crimes of the boer-fascist regime committed against the governments and peoples of the frontline states, with the People's Republic of Angola bearing the main brunt of these bestial acts; the racist armed occupation of Namibia and manoeuvres to sabotage the implementation of UN Resolution 435 through treacherous ploys, conspiracy and deceit; the barbarous invasion and occupation of Lebanon by the Zionist Israeli cutthroats which constitute an arrogant and contemptuous violation of international law and reveals a beastly disregard for human life.



Guarding the status quo outside the Turnhalle

The resolutions were forwarded to their appropriate destinations which included the PLO office, the SWAPO office and also the press. In this way the positions of the Youth of our country and their unflagging solidarity with struggling peoples especially brother people of Namibia were conveyed.

FRESH BANNER

On finishing its work the conference was in actual fact unfurling a fresh banner of rededication and commitment, that the Youth of today have hearkened to the call of the late Malome Kotane and are hastening, blazing a new trail inspired by the examples of our forebears, the heroes and martyrs of the ANC Youth League.

No doubt this historic conference will go down in the annals as an important milestone in our struggle. The way forward has been cleared by the arduous work of the conference and the leaders have been appointed to their responsibilities to steer the youth to our objective without fail. What remains now is implementation of the ideas brought forth and written into documents and resolutions. We trust that the youth will not fail our people. We are confident that the Youth will make the words of Moses Kotane flower.

Let us all youth pledge as our new Head, Comrade Andrew Mkhize pledged to do our best in the pursuit of the tasks of the revolution. Above all let us vow to live by the motto of our Youth adopted by this conference as the **official motto of the ANC Youth Section: Fight, Produce and Learn!**

"Our aim is a war fought by the entire people, not only in strikes and demonstrations but precisely in the field of armed struggle. In other words, the role of the masses as the combat forces is growing, and their political education is a principal task which will facilitate unity in action involving the black masses and democratic forces of our country." (*Unity in Action - A History of the African National Congress 1912-1982, Page 71*)