

Notes for an Address at the 21st National Congress of the ANC Youth League Mangaung

5 April 2001

1: Greetings and best wishes from the ANC NEC and membership for a successful Congress.

2: Wish for:

- emerge with a stronger Youth League;
- emerge with a clear idea of the tasks of the Youth League during the second stage of the national democratic revolution;
- emerge with a clear idea about how to accomplish those tasks;
- emerge with a clear idea of the forces you need to carry out these tasks;
- emerge with a clear idea of what is to be done to ensure the ANCYL has the strength to carry these tasks through.

3: What is the ANCYL?

- a political school for the training and education of young revolutionary democrats whose task is to continue to process of the fundamental social transformation of South Africa in favour of the millions of ordinary people, both black and white;
- the home of the most developed and disciplined young revolutionary democrats of our country;
- the vanguard movement of the progressive youth of our country, both organised and unorganised;
- the leader of all the youth of our country who have an interest in the transformation of South Africa into a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous democracy;
- a front rank combatant in the progressive African youth movement that fight for the victory of the African Renaissance, during the African Century;
- a reliable ally with the progressive youth of the world as it engages the struggle for a process of globalisation that helps to end poverty and underdevelopment throughout the world and works to close the gap in living standards and the quality of life between the North and the South.

4: 21st Congress – year of the 25th Anniversary of the Soweto Uprising.

Why did our youth perform heroic feats of struggle in 1976 and later years – why does our country owe them a permanent debt?

- the country had no possibility to make progress in all social spheres – political, economic, social, cultural because white minority rule had become a heavy chain on all development;
- a victorious democratic revolution was a necessary precondition for everything that favoured and was in the interests both of the country and the overwhelming majority of our people;
- that democratic revolution could not succeed, and therefore further progress could not be achieved, unless the oppressed were prepared to sacrifice in an unprecedented manner, because the ruling group and the social forces it represented were firmly opposed to and feared change. The recognition of this reality had come earlier in our history with the decision to wage an armed struggle;
- this situation demanded that the oppressed people as a whole understood that they could not delegate the task of struggle to somebody else while they waited for victory day so that they could join the celebrations – hence the centrality of mass struggle in our strategy for the victory of the national democratic revolution: the youth added enormously to that mass struggle. (Workers struggles of the early 1970's.)

5: 1994 represented the victory of the **First Phase of the NDR**. It achieved what had to be achieved – the transfer of political power to the people - that would create the conditions for the national liberation movement to embark on the **Second Phase of the NDR**, the achievement of the progress in all social spheres – political, economic, social, cultural – that had been severely compromised by the counter-revolutionary hand of white minority rule.

6: Political power is now in the hands of the people, led by the ANC, the same force that led the struggle during Phase I of the NDR. Since the victory of 1994, the confidence of the people in their vanguard movement has been confirmed in two general elections and two local government elections.

7: The masses have both expressed confidence in the movement and mandated us to change our country, consistent with the objectives of democracy, non-racism, non-sexism, prosperity and human dignity for which the martyrs of 1976 laid down their lives.

8: The revolutionary youth of 1976 is in the ANC. It has handed to you, the delegates at the 21st Congress of the ANCYL, the successors to the youth who established and built up this League more than fifty years ago, to lead the youth of the African Century as we engage in struggle to meet the tasks of the Second Phase of the NDR – reconstruction and development.

9: Among us there is nobody who doubts the revolutionary capacity of the youth. Anybody with such doubts should not be here. The question the Congress must answer is what shall we do to ensure that the youth continues to act as a mass forces for revolutionary change, for the fundamental reconstruction and development of our country!

10: Five basis propositions:

- the struggle continues;
- it is not possible for the new tasks to be accomplished simply by the government acting on its own;
- the mass involvement of the people is a necessary condition for the success of Phase II of the NDR;
- as before, the NLM has a responsibility to ensure that these masses are involved in this Phase as an organised and conscious force;
- the ANCYL is central to the mobilisation of these masses, drawing on the resources of an organised and conscious youth.

11. Let us now go back to what I said at the beginning about what the ANCYL is. I have said that the League is:

- a political school for the training and education of young revolutionary democrats whose task is to continue to process of the fundamental social transformation of South Africa in favour of the millions of ordinary people, both black and white;
- the home of the most developed and disciplined young revolutionary democrats of our country; the vanguard movement of the progressive youth of our country, both organised and unorganised; the leader of all the youth of our country who have an interest in the transformation of South Africa into a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous democracy;
- a front rank combatant in the progressive African youth movement that fight for the victory of the African Renaissance, during the African Century;
- a reliable ally with the progressive youth of the world as it engages the struggle for a process of globalisation that helps to end poverty and underdevelopment throughout the world and works to close the gap in living standards and the quality of life between the North and the South.

12: The question we will have to ask ourselves at this historic first Congress of the ANCYL of the African Century, is whether we are, in practice, any and all these things! And we must answer that question frankly and honestly and agree among ourselves about what we must do to fashion ourselves into such a conscious instrument of revolutionary democratic change. Specifically:

- a political school for the training and education of young revolutionary democrats whose task is to continue to process of the fundamental social transformation of South Africa in favour of the millions of ordinary people, both black and white;

re we such a school? For us to be such a school, we must do a number of things with regard to every member of the Youth League:

- we must educate every member about the history of our movement and struggle and our objectives at every stage, including the current phase; (Is this done?)
- we must teach every member about how to build the YL, and expose them to the culture of our movement of commitment to principle, dedication to serve the people without expecting any reward, comradeship and working together as a collective, courage, truthfulness and a readiness to sacrifice, democracy and openness within the League accompanied by discipline and respect for the decisions of the organisation; recall the fact that historically the YL is – Uvuk'ayibambe! (Is this done?)
- we must teach every member of the League how to exercise the role of leadership within the progressive youth movement and among the youth in general, getting them to understand that the Youth Leaguer is never arrogant, does not dictate and wins the support of other organisations and the youth in general by being a true representative of their interests; (Is this done?) we must ensure that every member of the YL is not just a theoretician but an activist, who actively participates in the implementation of the programmes of action of the YL, especially as they relate to the mobilisation of both the youth and the people in general to participate in the process of the reconstruction and development of our country. (Is this done?)

The home of the most developed and disciplined young revolutionary democrats of our country;

- are we such a home?
- in addition to what we have said above, do we have a programme to train members who are not just members, but cadres of the YL?
- do we have a cadre development programme to identify the best among us and take steps to develop them further?
- do we have the capacity to implement such a programme, which must also ensure that maintain the proper composition, representative of the youth in our society, including the working, the student and the unemployed youth?

The vanguard movement of the progressive youth of our country, both organised and unorganised;

- are we such a movement – why do we think so;
- do we have a proper understanding of the response of the various race, class and gender sections of the youth to the new situation;
- do we understand the organisations into which they are organised;
- are we able to organise them into struggle?
- are we united?

The leader of all the youth of our country who have an interest in the transformation of South Africa into a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous democracy;

- are we such a leader;
- mass work for development.(community work)
- moral renewal : anti-crime, anti-corruption,
- encourage culture of learning, including IT(information technology)
- involvement in international work

13. As I said at the beginning, the ANC wishes this 21st Congress of the ANC Youth League success.