



Theory of Organisation

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As the ANC enters the Decade of the Cadre, it needs to locate the challenge of cadreship development within a coherent theory of revolutionary organisation.

The ANC 53rd National Conference resolved to make the next decade, a period of focus on cadre development.

The Conference further resolved that the *“ANC and the Alliance should, collectively and individually, pay urgent and systematic attention to the task of developing a contingent of cadres who have attributes that accord with the tasks of the national democratic revolution in the second phase”*.

The unfolding National Democratic Revolution has gone through many phases in its development. At one point it brings to the

The main content of the National Democratic Revolution is the liberation of Africans in particular and blacks in general from political and socio-economic bondage. It means uplifting the quality of life of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and female. At the same time it has the effect of liberating the white community from the false ideology of racial superiority and the insecurity attached to oppressing others.

It is about the resolution of the national question, which is at the inter section of economic exploitation and patriarchal power relations. The consequence of this was the transfer of political power into the hands of the democratic majority, as witnessed in the 1994 breakthrough.

The path hitherto traversed has been long and bitter, and yet we need to periodically pause to critically assess our strength and weaknesses. We shall do so within our mass formations, tapping on our organisational experiences especially during the struggle for liberation, in the current epoch, whilst at the helm of the democratic state. Even before we do so, let us once more equip ourselves with a scientific understanding of what organisation is, and all the elements that constitute it.

At the height of the struggle for liberation, this insight on organisation was passed by the African National Congress to the younger generation through the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). SAYCO's living organisational experience and the broader Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) at the time will assist in ensuring that this input is not just another academic offering. Our understanding will be tempered by our own experience from the university of mass struggle. This contribution is enriched by the perspective of the Vietnamese revolutionary Le Duan on Organisation and Cadreship.

ORGANISATION: AN INDISPENSABLE WEAPON FOR VICTORY

The history of society demonstrates quite clearly that humankind have always survived because they have always engaged in productive activity. From primitive societies to date, there has always been interaction between humans and nature. As society develops, human beings enter into definite relations with nature, which is defined primarily in productive activity meant to prolong life, to produce food, to build shelter, to make clothing for the human race and to address many other necessities.

Once a human engages in productive activity definite relations arise between them and the others who are also engaged in production. Productive activity itself becomes a mode or organisation of production. So, from the very earliest forms of society the human race has been part of an organisation in one form or another. Society itself presupposes forms of organisation in the existence of humans depending on the level of development of that particular society. Primitive communal society was mainly characterised by a mode of production wherein the means of production were owned communally.

Organisation is therefore at the heart of the very existence of humanity. The interaction between humans and nature is not always a harmonious relationship. At worst this interaction releases earthquakes, floods, diseases, dry seasons and so on. In the face of such problems, human beings cooperate with others to confront these problems and thus lay a basis for their survival. In confronting these problems, humankind does so not as part of an amorphous mass, but an organised

entity of people conscious to achieve a particular objective. Thus an organisation becomes central not only to their interaction with nature, but also in their relationship with their fellow humans.

The most important weapon available to human beings in charting an existence for themselves is organisation. A strong organisation releases a potential strength in each person and the strength of each person makes the strength of an organisation. This conclusion has not been arrived at by deduction of a sum total of simple experiences as mere events. It has been arrived at from concrete historical conditions attending to the existence of humans, their relationship with nature on the one hand, and their interaction and relationship with their fellow humans on the other. Without organisation, any group of people will be defenceless and are bound to fail in trying to address any social, political or economic problem. This is the lesson left to us by the march of history.

In their resolve to destroy the system of colonialism of special type, the people of our land resisted it by coming together to form an organisation. For any organisation to succeed in achieving its goals there has to be objective reason for its existence. The other important aspect of organisation is the issue or issues around which it organises those who are potential members. In the South African context it has always been unity of all the oppressed, one organisation uniting them, national consciousness, one national programme, that were the rallying points at the founding conference of the ANC in 1912. Indeed our forebears left us a tradition of an ever present need for the downtrodden majority to build organisation as an effective instrument of struggle. The ANC, for a century, has stubbornly stood at the forefront as the spearhead of the liberation movement and the struggle.

Thus by force of example the formation of the ANC in 1912 brings us back to history's injunction that the guarantor and the essential condition of humanity's victory over any challenge is organisation.

The ANC set about marshalling the collective energies of the people as a foundation stone upon which national unity was forged in the crucible of heroic campaigns over years. As the South African economy was going through phases of development so did the forms of organisation grow and develop.

More and more African people became proletarianised in the burgeoning gold and diamond urban centres. In the later years the super-exploited section of the working class began to form their own trade associations and trade unions to give expression to their determination to fight the owners of capital and the mines for better pay and working conditions. These were the origins of the trade union movement in South Africa. Socialist ideas were brought to this country by militant

white workers from Europe who had already acquired experience in trade union organisation and in struggle against capitalist exploitation. Thus another foundation of organisation emerged, characterised by the spread of socialist ideas, particularly among the black working class in the later years of the development of democratic organisation.

The Communist Party of South Africa was then formed as a vanguard political party of the working class.

WHAT OF CADRESHIP AND LEADERSHIP IN AN ORGANISATION?

Leadership is essential and key to the existence of any organisation. Leadership is constituted by a collective of cadres drawn from the most committed, disciplined and politically advanced sections of the people. A leader is a prototype cadre of any organisation, especially a revolutionary one. A leader is also a cadre of the people. They primarily serve the masses and are given a popular mandate by them. It is primarily important therefore to understand that intrinsic to the nature of leadership is that the masses must of necessity have confidence in their leadership. If the masses have no confidence in their leadership, the leadership cannot lead. True cadres never aspire or have an uncontrollable lust to lead. The main motivation for true leaders is to serve the movement and the masses at any level. To this extent the late Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh said *“be true to the Party and loyal to the people, fulfil any tasks, overcome any difficulty and defeat an enemy”*.

A leader must always demonstrate the readiness to be the last to retreat and the first to the offensive. Selflessness and service must inform the overall quality of leadership.

Leadership in the organisation develops and matures in the trials and tribulations of the struggle itself; it is never born nor does it emerge from nowhere. The very hard experiences of struggle produce cadreship and leadership which in turn develop qualities of creativity, imagination and the ability to seize the initiative. The leadership emerges from the people, it learns to articulate and champions the aspirations, demands, fears and hopes of the people. Leadership leads by force of example; it learns from the masses, and then teaches them.

Leadership and cadreship have a direct relationship with a cadre policy that expresses in concrete terms the general political line of any movement and cadre development, which includes political education and deployment of its cadres.

If a leader is a prototype cadre, it follows therefore that a cadre is a prototype member in a revolutionary organisation. There is a dialectical interrelation between

cadres and a revolutionary movement of the masses. A cadre's life is lived within the framework of multi-faceted relationships. It is these relations that make a cadre a cadre. In these relationships, a cadre is at the same time the cause and effect. A cadre cannot be conceived outside of an organisation, for a cadre is an element of an organisation.

A cadre lives in a definite organisation. They make an organisation a living organism. On the other hand, after an organisation has become a quantity existing in its own right and has struck deep roots in life, organisation in its turn has a decisive effect on people. It determines who will do what, what position and function they should hold in apparatus of activity. It defines beforehand the direction and objective of human beings' actions. It directs people and obliges them to act one way instead of another. Organisation in its activity, brings forth in people definite characteristics and qualities.

A cadre is somebody who is prepared to learn, learn more and learn forever. As the Chinese proverb goes *"live as if you are going to die tomorrow and learn as if you are going to live forever"*.

Cadres need to learn not only through books but also in practical life. In our work, in summing up the effectiveness of our work, we must engage in frequent self-criticism and criticism. Without learning from struggle and tapping on humanity's experience in life, book knowledge is worthless.

The essential duty of cadreship and leadership is to agitate for the political consciousness of the people, to mobilise, and continuously organise people as a conscious force to seize and maintain political power.

Key values of a revolutionary organisation

Collective leadership:

Individual leaders are elected into collectives which should work as a unit, fulfilling their mandate as dictated to by the constitution. No single person is a leader unto themselves, but a member of a collective that should give considered, canvassed guidance to the membership and society as a whole.

Consultations, accountability and mandates:

Regular meetings of branches, regions and provinces, and national conferences, provide the membership with the platform to assume collective ownership of the movement's fate. They set out the mandate that guides the leadership, and are important fora for report-backs and consultations across the movement.

Discipline:

A leader should seek to influence and to be influenced by others in the collective. They should have the conviction to state their views boldly and openly within constitutional structures of the movement; and – without being disrespectful – not to cover before those in more senior positions in pursuit of patronage, nor to rely on cliques to maintain one's position.

Democracy and democratic centralism:

Individual members and leaders will have differing opinions on how particular issues should be addressed. The strength of revolutionary organisation lies among others in the ability to synthesise these views and emerge with the wisest possible approach. Once a decision has been taken on the basis of the majority's views, it binds everyone, including those who held a contrary view.

Human solidarity:

The vision that the ANC pursues is informed by the morality of caring and human solidarity. The kind of democracy it pursues leans towards the poor; and it recognises the leading role of the working class in the project of social transformation.

Humility:

Criticism and self-criticism: It is to be expected that in leading social activity, leaders and members will from time to time make mistakes. The most important thing is that these individuals and collectives should have the capacity and humility to honestly review their work critically, and correct the weaknesses.

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