
the tasks of the democratic movement in the state of emergency

Throughout the country, the people and their organisations are experiencing repression on a scale that is extraordinary, even by South African standards. Consequently, when we speak of the State of Emergency, we refer to a situation existing in the whole country, in some places formally declared, in others existing in fact, even if not officially.

Until now our reaction to the State of Emergency has tended to be on the state's terms. We constantly ask ourselves: What do they intend to do? - To ban us? Or to crush us, but allow us to exist formally?

Now more than before, it is important to realise that we are not passive onlookers. We have already shown, in these difficult conditions, that we can make interventions, as we have done in regard to Botha's "rubicon" speech, the so-called Convention Alliance, the distribution of our newsletters, Update and other literature.

At the same time, mass resistance to apartheid repression has spread and taken on ever more militant forms throughout the country.

It is important to see ourselves, as we are and were prior to the Emergency: as actors. When we ask: How long will the Emergency last? When will it end? - the state alone will not determine the answers to these questions. What we have done, what we do now and in the future, will have a great effect on the long term outcome of the Emergency. For this reason, this paper situates the Emergency within the framework of our goals, instead of situating ourselves within the state's goals. We try to understand the conditions under which we have to work. How we deal with these, the extent to which we master them, will determine how this phase of the South African struggle will end.

The question is who will be better equipped to continue the struggle from this period onwards? To what extent will the war against the people have weakened us? To what extent will the people's continuing resistance and the developing divisions within the enemy camp have weakened them?

before the state of emergency;

strength of the people

The rise of mass democratic struggle in the late 70's and early 80's brought back a form of struggle that had been eradicated for 20 years. What this meant was the re-opening of a front of struggle. While engaged in military struggle against SWAPO and the ANC, the state now also has a substantial internal mass struggle to contend with.

This mass struggle forms part of a democratic tradition. It is a movement of the majority of South Af-

ricans against white minority rule. It aims to ensure that "the People Shall Govern". It tries to draw in all oppressed and democratic South Africans, under the leadership of the African people and the working class. While neither of these leadership goals have always been adequately realised, the form of struggle represents an attempt to fuse two strands of the South African movement for liberation - the national (for the people to rule their own country) and the workers' struggle for socialism.

These national and democratic characteristics derive from the nature of the apartheid system and the strategy and tactics used to combat it. While the South African social order is based on a capitalist economic system, this coexists with the national oppression of all classes of blacks. This means that all black people have an interest in ending apartheid.

One of the significant features of the period immediately prior to the Emergency declaration was the extent to which the people's organisations were determining the course of political events. 18 months earlier the enemy had taken most of the initiatives. But in the period prior to the Emergency and during the Emergency, the government has found itself in a defensive position. It has been and continues to be primarily occupied in trying to contain the popular surge forward.

After the 1976 rising, the Nationalist Party had established elaborate schemes for the cooption of sections of the black population - in order to broaden the base of the state and to divide the oppressed. This went together with a wider reorganisation of the state.

In the early years of the Botha regime there was considerable momentum on the side of the government. There was also a developing alliance with the bosses.

Less than 18 months ago, the Botha regime presented a clear strategy, forcing the oppressed to struggle mainly on terrain of the state's choosing. The government's dynamic approach was partly a result of their closer link with big capital. This alliance to some extent made up for the Conservative Party break-away.

This was a period in which state initiatives flourished, there was an appearance of confidence as they produced Wiehahn, Riekert, de Lange reports, started to implement Black Local Authorities (BLAs) and other schemes.

Much of the early Botha initiatives were under the protective umbrella of "constructive engagement". While this provided much needed international support it also demanded a specific kind of conduct. The South African regime had to be closer to the model of a "normal" capitalist state - or at least appear to be so. This meant less open repression, the appearance (and to some extent, the reality) of open, democratic discussion, the attempt to depict South African society as involved in a process of ending apartheid.

Conceding space for a legal front of struggle can be explained by a combination of factors. The pressure of the democratic movement itself and the fact that such legal struggle might have been viewed by the state and capital, as a safety-valve, as an alternative to armed activity. At this time, the white ruling bloc was sufficiently strong and cohesive to feel able to contain democratic opposition.

The imperialists and big business were particularly keen to have evidence of democratic discussion and acceptability of the new constitution. They were aware that suppression of such discussion would make its already dubious legitimacy even more questionable.

The people's organisations used the space allowed for open democratic struggle to mobilise millions of people. Certain specific goals were achieved.

* The new South African constitution was born without any legitimacy and there was countrywide rejection of BLAs.

* Democratic symbols were popularised. Steps were taken towards creating a common understanding of the nature and goals of the national democratic struggle.

* There was extensive national mobilisation. The struggle was taken to many rural areas. It did not, however, reach the bantustans or farms in a systematic manner.

* Organisations were created where there had been none before and organisations with a national base were established.

* People were organised in a number of sectors around a wide range of issues such as women, workers, youth and students - around such issues as rent, GST, electricity, gutter education and retrenchments, etc.

Although we played the major role, not everything that contributed to the state's disarray over this period was initiated by the UDF and its affiliates. For example, FOSATU conducted its own campaigns against the constitution. At the same time, the continuation of the armed struggle by the ANC continued to extend the forces of the apartheid state.

The combined effect of struggle on all these fronts has smashed the enemy's plans. The NP has been paralysed since the rejection of the constitution. Bankrupt of alternatives they have increasingly resorted to pure repression. The initiative prior to the declaration of the Emergency passed to the people. The state was essentially engaged in holding action. It was on the defensive, trying to keep the lid on the people's resistance. The declaration of a State of Emergency was an admission of defeat.

what does the enemy aim to achieve through the state of emergency ?

The broad aim of the emergency was to reverse the gains made by the democratic movement over the last 18 months, to resuscitate discredited leaders and to re-create the space for puppet solutions and structures. The regime realises that only by crushing the uprising and the people's organisations can it hope to win a measure of consent and collaboration in the revival of apartheid structures.

SMASHING OUR ORGANISATIONS

Different sections of the ruling bloc and its allies have different intentions as regards the smashing of the people's organisations. In the case of the Nationalist Party and Inkatha the intention is to completely wipe out democratic organisations. With regard to COSAS, this has taken the form of outright banning. (In fact, COSAS along with AZASO, was already banned in 1983 in Kwazulu by Inkatha.) This strategy could still be applied to the UDF. In the case of other democratic organisations, the option may be to allow the organisations to continue in name, but to ban their activities in practice. This policy has different aspects: the mass detention of activists, the harassment and murder of UDF activists in Natal by impis. An analogy can be drawn with the way in which the South African regime has dealt with SWAPO in Namibia. While the organisation is not formally banned, it cannot operate freely and openly. The banning and disruption of meetings, confiscation of literature, all aim to prevent effective, open organisation.

In the case of the PFP and sections of the bosses,

the attempt appears not to smash organisation, but to render it ineffectual. This strategy is aimed at a long-term co-option of both the leaders of these organisations and their programmes. (See discussion of power sharing below.)

SMASHING THE UPRISING

The second aim of the ruling bloc is to smash the uprising in the townships. Under the guise of maintaining law and order and the protection of private property, all sections of the ruling bloc (including the bosses) supported this objective at the time of the Declaration of Emergency.

What this Emergency means in practice, is the occupation of the townships by the police and the SADF to wage a war of terror on the entire township population. The youth have born the brunt of this, although it affects all residents.

political options of forces of reaction

In considering the options at the disposal of the enemy forces, we will see that, while the various sections share certain aims, there remain distinctions between them. But even if all sections of the ruling bloc were to secure agreement as to their approach, their plans could not simply be implemented.

The ability of the ruling bloc to carry out its plans also depends on the people's resistance. As a result of popular resistance, there has been a great deal of vacillation on the part of the ruling bloc. The

people's resistance has created and exacerbated differences between them. As one initiative after another collapses, their aims have to be modified.

Whatever differences there are between the NP on the one hand, and sections of the bosses, the PFP and imperialism on the other, we must clearly understand what is fundamental and common to all these forces. This is their intention to seek a solution over the heads of the people, one that excludes the masses.

The fundamental ideological concepts used to mobilise people behind the type of solution favoured by the ruling bloc as a whole is "power sharing". Although the form in which it is applied will vary, it is a conception shared by the entire bloc. The concept of "power sharing" is counterposed, by its supporters, both to white minority rule and universal suffrage in a united South Africa.

"POWER SHARING"

"Power-sharing" is clearly intended as a form of evolutionary change. It suggests sharing what exists. The existing cake should be more equitably divided. Some who were not invited to taste the fruits of power should now be allowed at the table to eat, or at least to nibble. This is a revival of what SPRO-CAS called a "taste of power" more than a decade ago.

Central to the politics of negotiation outside the NP is the conception of the extension of civil rights. It is worth spelling out that a national liberation struggle does not seek to be "accomodated" within an existing order, nor merely to have rights gradually extended to the majority of the people. It is a call for the People to Govern - not to share power as if the minority were equals of the majority.

Power sharing is essentially political change from

the top, at the top, though the range of people involved in decision-making would be widened. This conception of politics operates through "leadership figures" negotiating deals. The extent to which individuals may be brought into this process would depend on the constituency they can command and control, or are thought to be able to do so.

For the system to operate effectively, every leader should be able to "deliver" a constituency. Thus Hendrickse was brought in to "deliver" the coloureds, Rajbansi the Indians, and so on.

The differences between the NP and some other sections of the ruling bloc is not about negotiation over the heads of the masses, but about who should be included in the negotiation process. While the NP is generally not keen to enlarge the range of negotiating parties, certainly within the central political system, other groupings argue that this system will only be viable if others are included. Its present instability, they would argue, is that it involves negotiation with too narrow a range of people.

Amongst some of the "reformist" school of thought there is a call for Mandela's release and his inclusion in negotiations. What one needs to understand, however, is that negotiations are intended to be with Nelson Mandela the man - not as representative of an organisation to which he is responsible. What these people have in mind, also, is negotiating on an "open agenda". One cannot come with "preconceptions" or non-negotiables such as universal suffrage in one South Africa. In supporting the Slabbert/Buthelezi call for a National Convention Alliance, one writer argued in the Star of 6.9.85: "The less non-negotiables brought to the conference table, the more successful negotiation is likely to be, for non-negotiables could scuttle the process before it is even begun..."

Because he has demonstrated the necessary "generosity" and "flexibility" someone like Buthelezi has considerable appeal in some circles, as a partner in such a process. The Sunday Times explains in an editorial of 11.8.85:

" In sharp contrast to the sloganeers of violence, the Kwazulu Chief Minister has never demanded more than should be given, but despite extreme pressure from the radicals, has skilfully practised the art of the possible, tailoring his demands to the realities of white fears."

In the same issue, Ken Owen acknowledges a "sense - no more than intuition - that Inkatha may be fraying at the edges". It is, he argued, therefore urgent to deal with Buthelezi before Inkatha has lost all support.

The question of "negotiation" has become a pressing one during the Emergency, precisely because of the patent incapacity of the existing negotiating partners to command/control more than a trifling portion of the population.

our tasks during the emergency

Before we can form an adequate response, we need to assess correctly what the State of Emergency means. Our view is that it is at once an admission of weakness on the part of the regime but also an alteration of the terms under which we conduct our struggle. The extreme repression that we are now experiencing is an attempt to "roll back" the forces of democracy to reverse the gains that we have made in recent months.

There may be some intellectuals who see value in repression because vicious acts "unmask" the enemy. (In fact the people have never had such illusions about the enemy's vicious character, since they experience it daily). There is another brand of left lunacy which thinks that the greater the repression the more symptomatic it is of "death agonies" and the closer we are to radical transformation.

Our view is that these new conditions create new problems and pose new challenges to us. We need the broadest possible space and opportunities to build ourselves.

But in a struggle like ours, we must constantly prepare ourselves for the possibility of altered conditions. We cannot allow ourselves to be paralysed by such changes. The difficult conditions under which we work now can, we will argue, in fact be turned to our advantage and be used to deepen organisation, to enhance our capacity to advance the struggle.

Our view is that we must not give up our space, we must continue to assert our right to exist as a legal democratic movement. At the same time, the manner in which we do this must be with sufficient responsibility to avoid needless arrests and weakening of our structures.

ISOLATE THE ENEMY

In the first place, as always, our job is to isolate the enemy. While this is a "traditional" task, we are now concerned with something more elaborate than undertaken in the anti-constitution campaigns. There we frustrated attempts to coopt significant sectors of the Indian and coloured communities, just as the rejection of BLA's ensured that only puppets would staff those structures.

Now we are speaking of something broader. We have noted the differences between sections of capital and the NP. We want to maintain that division. But that does not mean we draw big business into the camp of the people. That can never be. Our aim is, however, to neutralise sections of the enemy camp or its allies and thus to dislocate their attempts at unity.

But how do we intervene to achieve this? One of the ways we do this is to ensure that they have no illusions about puppet solutions. eg. every time we reject PW's offers - it actually energises business to come up with their own vision and that again exacerbates the split. The fact that business has met with the ANC is partly a result of popular rejection of government initiatives. In a sense, every time we successfully remove the legitimacy from a government initiative by getting the masses to support us, we further sharpen the division within the ruling bloc.

HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN OUR ORGANISATIONS ?

At the beginning of 1985, the UDF adopted as part of its theme "From Mobilisation to Organisation". This theme has become more important in the current emergency than ever before. Developing mass based democratic organisations is our surest weapon against the two pronged offensive of the ruling bloc. Such organisation is our best guarantee against the attempts of the state to crush us through repression, and the attempts to bypass us through 'power sharing' reforms.

To speak of developing organisation out of the mobilisation that we have achieved, does not mean that the task of mobilisation has ended. Mobilisation whatever and whenever possible, through mass campaigns (marches, rallies, pamphlets, boycotts) remains a major component of our struggle. However,

we must try also to organise the maximum number of people. Without strong, mass based democratic organisations we will not attain victory.

Let us remind ourselves why such organisation is important. It is only through such organisation that ordinary, working class people can participate, take control and assume collective responsibility for the running of their lives. It is through such organisation that the working masses can develop leadership skills. Without organisation, our struggle will risk becoming chaotic, we will not be able to learn from our victories and from our mistakes. Each day will be a new day.

But above all, we need to understand that mass-based democratic organisations are not a luxury, not something that we talk about because we think 'democracy' is a nice word. It is an absolute necessity for the survival of our struggle, that we develop well-knit, cohesive mass organisations. If our ranks are made up simply of a few thousand activists and some leading personalities on the one hand, and tens of thousands of sympathisers on the other - then we are playing into the hands of the apartheid government. We are making ourselves vulnerable to annihilation. Our greatest struggle, the guarantee of survival, lies in mass-based organisation, that will endure through the detention of leaders.

Such mass-based organisation is also the best guarantee against the attempts of the local capitalists and international imperialists to detach leaders from the ranks of the people.

LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

One thing that we must be careful about in this connection is that our organisations do not become

too closely associated with individuals, that we do not allow the development of personality cults. We need to understand why we regard people as leaders and to articulate these reasons. Where people do not measure up to these standards they must be brought to heel - no matter how "charismatic" they may be.

No person is a leader in a democratic struggle such as ours simply because he or she makes good speeches. Those speeches are good if they are able to reflect people's aspirations, and where they reflect prior consultation.

We are not interested in good ideas or interventions for their own sake. A suggestion that arises after democratic discussion is one that we may support. A decision made with people's consent is one we will recognise.

No individual may make proposals on the people's behalf - unless mandated by them. No person is a leader who acts without such a mandate, without a sense of responsibility and accountability to the people through their organisations.

We need to say these things because there are some people and interests who are trying to project individuals as substitutes for political movements. We need to be wary of this, especially now that we are facing the possibility of banning. If we were to consist of a few individuals what would exist after the banning?

When we say that someone is a leader we therefore mean someone who stands in a particular relationship to the people through their organisations. When we call someone a people's leader, we mean that such a person recognises that responsibility to the people.

Business, the state and the imperialists are engaged

in a concerted attempt to co-opt leaders as opposed to organisations and the people. No human being is infallible. The only guarantee against co-option is people's power and accountability.

conclusion

We have already won the first great battle for our existence, the battle against the new constitution and the Koornhof Bills. Let us now win our second battle, the battle for survival. Let us build people's power, street by street, house by house.

VIVA UDF! FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER!
