

# WHAT COMES FIRST — ORGANISATION OR STRUGGLE?



The question in the headline is a wrong question. And if we ask a wrong question we will get a wrong answer.

The right question is: **what is the relationship between the two?**

The past four years carry many important lessons on the relationship between organisation and struggle. During that period we learnt how to build organisation under the State of Emergency, how to build under state repression, how to consolidate, defend and advance under enemy fire. The September **Spring Offensive** was indeed a great feat for the democratic movement, a basis for consolidating and strengthening the underground and the mass structures.

The year started with our strength, organisation and capability weakened under the State of Emergency. But it did not succeed in muzzling the outburst. The **Spring Offensive** closed much of the debate on how to advance further. Militants were asking:

- Can we dare challenge the state with our present state of organisation?
- Can we dare mount and coordinate a countrywide defiance campaign?
- Under the State of Emergency and with our relatively weak organisation would such an act not be suicidal?

**One of the big lessons of the State of Emergency is that the question of struggle must not be determined solely by organisation.** Struggle must be the basis for building and strengthening organisation. In turn

the organisational gains lay the basis for advancing the struggle further. **This was timeously emphasised in an UMSEBENZI editorial (4th quarter 1988) and the events proved its correctness.**

The second lesson from the State of Emergency is to evaluate the enemy's strength not just by looking at the number of tanks facing us in the townships at any given moment. We must look at the dynamics of internal and external pressure on the political cohesion of the enemy.

- In the face of our own weakness the people took advantage of the regime's weakness — its crisis of legitimacy.
- Use was made of the regime's search for a breathing space from internal and external pressure.

This shows us that even under extreme repression, given proper judgement and analysis of the situation, we can still make tactical advances at a great cost to the enemy. Titus Mofolo (UDF NEC), in a *New Era* interview, said that in the period between 1984 and 1986 we were making advances and we were on the offensive. Thereafter we continued to make advances even though we were on the defensive. We laid the basis for future organisation, expansion and consolidation. Thus experience once again revealed the interconnection between struggle and organisation.

The past few weeks have been marked by dramatic events. Some of our key leaders have been released from the prisons. Elections

have taken place in Namibia. These were moments of excitement and anxiety, joy and hope, notwithstanding our awareness that racism is still very much in power.

**What has been achieved in the recent period?**

- We have imposed the popular legality of the ANC and SACP even though the legal status of both as banned organisations remains unchanged.
- We have gained a significant breathing space for organisational advance, despite the continuation of the State of Emergency.

The present atmosphere carries great potential for further organisation and consolidation, political mobilisation etc.

But we must remember that organisation and struggle must never be approached away from its strategic political objectives. It must not distract us from the main issue — seizure of political power.

The 1984 uprising saw, for the first time in our history, the emergence of people's organs of power. Popular organs of power emerged and addressed in their own way the question of political power. Organs of people's power understood that real power meant the destruction of the enemy's administrative and political organs and the creation of our own offensive and defensive capability.

At the moment this task remains in place. **The correct approach to the problem we posed in the beginning is: organisation through struggle and struggle through organisation!**