

1. INTRODUCTION

At this stage of our struggle, we need to reflect on the past year or so of activity and plan ahead. This is also an opportunity to clear up misunderstandings and build greater cohesiveness amongst all of us - not only within the Transvaal, but throughout the country.

This presents us with an immediate challenge of not only focussing our attention towards the building of organisations, but also to draw together, in a clear and united action, all those forces engaged in the struggle for democracy in South Africa.

In attempting to discuss the role and future of the UDF - it is important to recall some of the fundamentals that guide us in our work.

2.1 OUR OBJECTIVE: is to dismantle apartheid and replace it with a more just and democratic system (as in the Freedom Charter, for those of us who subscribe to it).

Often in the day to day heat of the struggle we forget that our enemy is the apartheid system not those whose views differ with ours.

The next question on which we require clarity is the question of how this change will come about.

3.1 Firstly is it through the actions and work of the few like ourselves or the many ; the masses?

OUR VIEW - the masses are the makers of history. It is they who must become the active participants in the struggle - without this there cannot be any successful victory.

It therefore becomes imperative to evaluate our organisational activities in such a way that we draw the maximum participation of the broad masses - through mobilisation, education, and by stating in clear terms, the need for unity, the need to reject attempts by the enemy to divide us on racial lines.

3.2 The second question is how do the masses become effective historical forces for change:

- by each ordinary man and woman acting on his or her own, without common goals or purpose? OR

- by becoming a highly cohesive/united body, with resilience, dedicated and experienced leadership etc - in other words, by becoming ORGANISED.

The crucial question to address ourselves to, is, how much of our time and energy do we spend on organisational work? How many among us are prepared to sacrifice, and seriously take as a priority the need to place in the background individual interests, in an effort to maximise greater mass participation in the day to day organisational decisions?

The way in which people become organised, the form that the organisation takes and its particular style of work is determined by the particular historical circumstances in which the organisation developed. So that during different stages in our struggle our peoples' organisations have taken different forms.

4.1 BEFORE 1912

- Armed resistance against dispossession
- Change to non-violent forms of struggle after the Bambata Rebellion (so-called).

4.2 1912-1949 - FORMATION OF THE ANC

- Petitions by the ANC leadership to the British Government
- Urbanisation, Industrialisation played an important role in bringing together various African tribes under the banner of the ANC

The role played by the I.C.U. with regard to organising the workers. ANC programmes such as the African Claims - and the Programme of Action. The Doctors' Pact (XUMA - NAICKER - DADOO).

4.3 1950's : Formation of the Congress Alliance ; Defiance Campaign - ANC becomes a mass organisation.

- Launching of campaigns - against Bantu Education, Passes, Bantu Authorities.
- Beer Halls destroyed, Potatoe/Bus boycotts.
- Destruction of Dipping Tanks (rural resistance against cattle culling) etc.
- Womens' organisations (Federation)
- Anti-Pass activities - (march to Union Buildings)
- Freedom Charter - (Treason Trial) etc
- State repression - Bans and banishments

4.4 1960's: Following the Sharpeville incident ;

- Organisations are smashed.
- The rise of the reactionaries.
- The PMB. 'All-in African Conference' preceeded by the coming together of African leaders in Orlando.
- The 3-day National stay-at-home protest against the formation of the Republic.
- The formation of M.K.
- House arrests, Detention without Trial (90 Days)
- Mass arrests - Imprisonment

4.5 1970's; Organisations of all types and at all levels begin to grow again - Students, Political organisations, Workers, Women, Community organisations etc.

4.6 1980's - We saw the growth in organisations: Political Organisations - NIC, TIC, RMC, the Anti Community Council Committees and eventually UDF.

Community Organisations: Soweto Civic Association and others - DHAC, PEBCO, CAHAC, etc.

Youth Organisations - youth clubs and Congresses -

Womens' Organisations throughout the country eg FED

Trade Unions?? (their lack of participation in UDF)

Students: COSAS - AZASO

These was also a growing need to

- build national unity and develop working relationships
- take up certain issues affecting our people at a national level - rents etc.
- Challenge the apartheid system through some national structure - rather than on a fragmented basis.
- begin the first stages of building a national, non-racial democratic political structure.
- challenge the new Constitutional proposals (in 1983)
- UCC

5.1 These then, were the conditions in which we as democrats began to look at how best to offer the most substantial political resistance (with the maximum participation of all our people) against the new Constitutional proposals.

To asses what type of political structure was necessary and possible, we had to understand and examine some of the characteristics of a unitary

These characteristics included ;

- 6.1 High level of ideological cohesiveness.
- 6.2 Presence of experienced activists and leadership in most parts of the country.
- 6.3 Capacity to build organisational structures throughout the country.
- 6.4 An appropriate mass political consciousness and readiness for active participation.

We also had to take into account ;

- 6.5 The level of repression and what space there was for legal mass organisation.
- 6.6 The level of disciplined political conduct among activists and leadership.

An awareness of the nature of repression and minimal scope to work within the legal organisational structures, forces us to be conscious, and to ensure that our conduct reflects the type of discipline required to maintain security at all levels and at all times.

- Accountability - leadership and activists to preserve the image of our organisations and the UDF.
- Highlight those positive aspects that unite us - as against points of difference which are negative and divisive.
- Differences to be discussed frankly in a comradely manner (which is constructive)
- Fight against gossip.
- To be patient, tolerant, and to respect one another's viewpoints.
- To ensure collective leadership and democratic decision making.
- To fight against individualistic tendencies which are not open to criticism.

If most of the above were highly developed (points 6.1 - 6.6) we could have conducted something other than a front.

However the following considerations actually determined the form that our organised resistance took in 1983.

- 7.1 The regional nature of the development of resistance ; with minimal, if

any, interprovincial links.

This gave us the regional structures in the UDF.

- 7.2 The low level of political organisation in the country - which gives us more non-political organisations in the UDF than political organisations
- 7.3 The large number of mass organisations which grew out of the mass action of the 80's on all sorts of issues - community - worker etc.

These then act as the major base of the UDF today.

- 7.4 Fragmented, unco-ordinated resistance - providing the urgent need to launch a national political structure which would lend cohesiveness to resistance; but at the same time help to organise the unorganised areas. This is why the UDF today plays both the role of a front -in certain parts of the country- and the role of an organisation in other parts.

7.5 Our Subjective Weaknesses :

Inexperience in handling front politics; no highly developed layer of activists throughout the country; inexperience in political mobilisation techniques, resulting in the need for the UDF to provide the resources and skills to train personnel; But also the recognition that organic leadership will grow from the campaigns of the UDF.

These are the conditions, among others, which led to the establishment of a certain type of political structure; a United Front. It is the actual conditions, as spelt out, that determine the precise form that the political structure takes.

Therefore a Front is (in South African Conditions)

1. The coming together of a number of existing organisations, each maintaining its autonomy. But also the creation of more organisations where they do not exist.
2. The adoption of a broad program and ideological position - compatible with attracting the largest number of persons/organisations.
3. Having a clear focus for campaigns - eg the new Constitution etc.

And a Political Organisation is an organisation that ;

- Has a unitary cohesive structure.
- Has a single, common ideological position.
- Has a wider ranging program.

We must remember that the question of organising our people is a historical process - it is a long and hard road.

Our glorious heroes of the past, have taken us some distance along this road. The UDF is merely another stage along this journey - it is not the end of the journey itself. We must still continue until we reach our goal of a highly organised people capable of swinging the overall balance of forces in our favour. So that when we finish our reflection, we must plan to move to the next stage on the road to becoming highly organised.

This will materialise only if the progressive forces in the Front realise, and are ready, to meet the challenges confronting them :-

- proper and constant communication.
- Co-ordinating and sharing of experiences.
- and preparedness to correct our short comings in the interests of the broader democratic struggle.

The next important consideration for us to understand, is that the change of an organisation from one form to another - eg front to unitary political organisation - is determined by whether all the development that is possible within that form (in our case the front) has been achieved ; before one can consider the transformation to another, more cohesive form (eg. National Political Organisation).

Key Factors To Be Assessed

1. Our actual organisational capabilities and weaknesses.
2. Our level of discipline and development of activists.
3. Our limited experience in handling national campaigns.
4. Our ability to challenge the state and the strength required to do so.
5. The readiness of our people to be organised and the urgent need to develop the resources to do so.
6. International support.
7. Level of cohesiveness achieved and still to be achieved.