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Q: If the State of Emergency did not affect the work of the Party, can the same be said of the trade unions in which you were involved?

A: Trade unions were affected, there is no question about it because a lot of people got scared, I mean trade unions have been operating above board. So there has always been above board structures. For instance, I remember...of the RSC meetings we had immediately after the declaration of the State of Emergency. We had to reduce the members of delegates and say if affiliated to say one...we had about quite a lot of affiliates in the region. On RSCs used to be very big meetings during those days and each affiliate being represented by two to four delegates. After the declaration of that State of Emergency we had to tell people that they must send one person, we will meet in particular area and then move to...venue. We had to employ such tactics. After a few months of the State of Emergency we decided to go back to operate normally. Attendance of our meetings was affected however, especially in local and subcouncil meetings. Few could move at nights because we hole out meetings at nights or in the evenings after work, are, so people could not come to those meetings because these were in some cases curfews and that we could not travel at night. That was temporal however, because after we got used to it we just decided to surface and just operate as normal as before. We did mention that we need to succeed to revive those structures even though that had collapsed

until they ended on the State of Emergency, they started to add violence. That also affected our attendance, especially of the shop steward council which was supposed to be very big meetings of all shop stewards in a particular locality. Those meetings were...fairly affected from the RSCs which required specific member of delegates - we just functioned as normal. They would come sometimes - I remember at one of our regional congresses in Clairwood, the police came there in full force, workers just sang and toyi-toyed in front of them and they (killed?) them, and they repeated, not carrying any weapons, just sheer power of numbers of workers who were there. They finally sat there and got bored and drove off. They were trying to intimidate people not to come to our meetings but they could not attack us directly as they would do with UDF structures for instance. They could not do it easily with us.

Which proportion of trade unionist and trade union members were detained during the State of Emergency?

They were targeting mainly organisers. But we did not suffer a lot detentions as COSATU. This region as I was saying that they were not using the kind of tactics they used in other areas of detaining, they were using force here, violence and so on through the IFP. But at one time in Northern Natal especially they detained all organisers, not even one was left. Northern Natal is a small region. I think they had about 25 organisers - they detained all of them. They were clearly trying to open a way - the way we

targeted that area was that they could not open a way for UWUSA. So they thought that during that detention which lasted about 3 months UWUSA would be able to make inroads and organise which they failed to do. They dismally failed to do that, even without organisers. They only left the ladies who work in the office as administrators, but all the organisers were taken at one time in Northern Natal...Southern Natal they were targeting key people - people like myself, our regional chairperson, key comrades in different locales who were either co-ordinates. I mean, comrades such as Sibakhulu - the late comrade in New Castle, comrades such as Mandla Cele who were known to be political figures in their locales. They detained such people in Southern Natal but they could not just ahead for...detention as they did in Northern Natal. Among shop stewards as well they did detain some of our key shop stewards especially in industries which one would regard as strategic industries. So that was the type of the thing they were going for - either key shop stewards, people who were known also to be political activists. Otherwise they were not worried so much. They would just use violence and attack you, kick you out of your house, use a gutter... Quite a number of these trade unionists who were detained were Party members, besides yourself?

Yes, in Northern Natal they were not Party members, they were only COSATU people. You could count one or two who were maybe ANC, but most of them were not even ANC people, they were just ordinary COSATU organisers...I would say

people who were sympathisers mainly. But they were all detained, that is why we interpreted that action as...they were trying to open space for UWUSA especially in Northern Natal, they were hoping that during that detention UWUSA would be able to organise, but they failed. There was that swell - They had key people who would come from COSATU, for instance. There is this guy whose nickname was Sixpence, is one of the key people and the founder member of UWUSA. He was based in Northern Natal in Empangeni. He has been a leading shop steward in our unions - the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union. So they were thinking that if they remove all the organisers, guys such as those who had a following - he had a lot of following among our workers, he was a very strong shop steward in COSATU, they were hopeful that they will be able to win over all the workers and lead them into UWUSA. But they failed.

Earlier on you referred to the Party being very democratic in underground operation. . .what was the nature of this democracy?

Well, around issues...Parties discussed thoroughly, very thoroughly throughout the units from the regional or districts, co-ordinating committees right down to the units, we discussed everything. We sent all the information, I mean, to take Party Manifesto as an example, the one that was adopted in the congress, the one before the last one that was held in Cuba, that Manifesto was discussed very thoroughly. We went more than even...to all over units so that they could all discuss and then we fax

that information back to...In fact, we even looked at the congress report - it says more than a thousand inputs were made by different units of the Party, both internally and externally during those days of underground. So we had that communication with the grassroots leadership and so on. So it was very democratic.

How many people of the region who attended this Party Congress in Cuba?

I was supposed to be the one of them, but I did not get the passport, so I could not go there. Finally I think we had about 2 comrades who finally attended. I was supposed to be one of those who attended as the chairperson of the Party, but was not given the passport. They had given me before and it expired, so they did not want to renew it...

How were you structured in the region?

We had units. Each unit had its unit leader who will then sit on the committee discussion. It was more than...the co-ordinating structure had...people in addition to senior comrades such as comrade Mac Maharaj. Comrade Siphwe Nyanda, whenever he was available he would attend those meetings. Such co-ordinator was responsible for one or two units, so that the five of us, each one having his or her own units, two or three units operating under him or her. So beyond that of course we had not gone that far, but we were in the process of establishing the third layer where each person in each layer would be responsible for a unit as well. We had not reached that stage. Our membership was not very big as such. It was not very big, it was very

small, but very hectic.

What were the challenges that you...as you were confronted with working in underground illegal structures on the one hand, and mass based legal structures on the other hand.

What were the challenges?

There were a lot of problems. There is that old problem of taking decisions in underground structure and one to impose them on the aboveground democratic structures. That was always the problem with us because we had to strike the balance between those. We would strategise very seriously. In fact, most of the decisions or some of the ones that should operate above board were decisions which you would find that they were actually popularised by the underground structures of the Party because we had enough time to strategise from the units back to regional structures, have thorough discussions and then say look, this is the way forward. Take peace campaign for instance, most of the decisions which COSATU/UDF arrived at during those times, not necessarily because we were creating or using those structures as conveyor belts for the decision of the...but most of the decisions we arrived at UDF/COSATU level, we had what we called the joint working committee - JWC - most of the decisions arrived at the JWC level would be decisions which would have been discussed by the Party structures. This whole idea of a mass campaign for peace emanated from the Party structure when we were looking at what can we do to absorb the problems of violence. He said look, fighting this thing alone as small sectors..Sectoral

organisations is not going to work, we need a...movement for peace. That is why we had to pull in the churches, we had to pull in the business sector, all these tactics were tactics which had been discussed by the Party, but you could not come there and say look, the Party had decided this, this is what must happen. You had to sell these ideas democratically through our structures until they became popular and were accepted by the majority of the people and therefore became the decisions of these above board structures, and not decisions of the Party. 80 that was for this problematic area. If you could not really work democratically we would find ourselves imposing those decisions on the democratic structure and therefore we would be resisted. Those were some of the challenges. More than that we never had any serious problems - I personally never had any serious problems. What would you say was the contribution that the Party made to the political struggles inside the country? I think it made a lot of contribution. In fact, the Party made more contribution than it is making now when it was still underground, precisely because it was working underground it had. key comrades, disciplined comrades, people who were prepared to sacrifice, people who were prepared to do work. It had quality people. So I think it was able therefore to make a lot of contribution to the democratic formations. I think now it has become very much loose and very much mass, of course we have said we want a mass party built...has lost the quality in the process and

of course a lot of comrades are now involved in other work. I myself although I am still a member of RSC I have not attended on RSC meeting for the past six months because of the involvement in COSATU, whereas during those days of underground we had to meet every two weeks. It was possible to do that. You would talk about few comrades who would then meet at 10 o'clock, after the meeting they had to go home. It was possible to do all that and therefore it was able to strategise and give political direction, basically to all the struggles that people were engaged in. That is lacking now because of the...They just...go and eat...comrades coming from the townships who are fearful of violence and who do not have transport and all those problems now have now cropped up because of the opening up of the party to be a mass party and not operating in small cells as it used to do before. So those are some of the problems, but I think it made a lot of contribution generally.

What would. you say' were the achievements of political struggle in the '80s?

I think the struggle...to heighten the political understanding. I think that is the major contribution that these struggles to heighten the political understanding and make people generally aware of where things are going to...especially in Natal, in fact, that I could boast '76 and say look nothing happened in Natal because of the (royalship?) because he is the person in Natal. Therefore, he was able to talk to his people and they listened to him



not to do what happened in Soweto for instance. He could boast and say that but the political struggles - the '80s kind of make people aware - even Gatsha himself - a lot of people have respect for him but they started realising that this man is not on our side because whenever students stood up to demand their rights, free books and so on. In fact, he ended up being worse than Pretoria. Pretoria would agree to giving people free books and KwaZulu would refuse. So all those things made people that this man does not really stand for our interest. Again it mobilised a lot of people who otherwise would remain politically inactive. They were mobilised in the process and, of course, certain things were won by the people. It was not just an empty struggle which never won anything. A lot of things were won even here in Natal despite the fact that the violence is still with us. But we were able to win and put pressure on the authorities, especially on the South African government. It had to give to a lot of demands that people were putting forward to it around areas of education, around areas of a number of other things. That is why I am saying that today KwaZulu government is even worse than Pretoria. Pretoria has agreed to give in to a lot of things, but KwaZulu is still intransigent. It may be by the people to recognise our organisations. Today there is no individual who can think of doing anything without involving COSATU. That is one achievement. It made us to be recognised as major players in the political field. You can not start any project without coming to COSATU and say

look, you want to hear COSATU's views on any particular issue. So it actually put our democratic organisation on the map basically that look, those are people to contend with - you are forced to reckon with. So there were a number of contributions of course, but I think those were the major achievements.

Q: I think there are certain achievements you...since the unbanning of the organisations?

A: I think with the unbanning of organisations there has been a lot of relaxation ggz;lour people. People just say look, the World Trade Centre or CODESA is going to solve our problems. Look at what happens now - you call a rally and if you get 10 000 people, you say that rally was successful whereas in the past the first rally and march we had in Durban we had more than 100 000 people. In fact, 100 000 was conservative. But that was the types of numbers that you could draw to our marches. That could only be rivalled by the one that took place after the death of comrade Chris Hani because people were angry of everything, so they were showing their anger there. If it was called under normal circumstances I do not think we could have been able to pull those crowds. Marches now are ranging between five thousand, if you get 10 000 you say it was a big success. So we lost on the way, there is a lot of complacency now, people are saying comrade Madiba sold things out, the World Trade Centre, CODESA is there. Look, we are being drawn into a lot of...It raises deepest expectations, there is the regional economic forum this side...okay, comrade Thami

will sort out things for ourselves there for us, we will get jobs, so people are no longer saying is what they have to achieve themselves. They are looking now at the leadership, the leadership is there, the leadership must negotiate and then we will get all the things we want. So, I think, in a way we have lost that mass involvement. So which means the masses must have become weary? I do not think people are weary of struggle as long as there are issues that people want, and they believe that the only way to achieve those things is through struggle they will engage. I think even ourselves as the leadership, there is a tendency of saying wait, we are talking, we will sort things out. Even at leadership level we are to blame for that as well. How many times, for instance, has comrade Madiba himself has said go back to work. Take the SADTU strike, the teachers' strike temporarily, the first one of its kind in the history of our country, the ANC had to say look, SADTU wait a minute, do not do that which was interpreted by the people as demobilising them - they were saying look, wait, things are being sorted out, we're negotiating, just stop this...But whenever we come across the wall we hit ourselves against the wall, and then we call them to come back, that is one of other things along which I think we have lost as the democratic forces. We want to switch on and off as if people are water taps. When we reach problems at CODESA we say, no, mass action, when people continue with mass action we say no, stop now, things are coming okay. That makes

people to be uncertain as to what the leadership wants basically. We are still struggling - we are talking and not fighting anymore.

What then do you think...of this complacent view?

I think the biggest thing is that we won't be able even, no matter how good we can talk at the...there won't be people behind us. I mean, you can't negotiate with an employer when people are not involved, whereas they are part of that process. People must always be there to put pressure on the negotiations themselves. And also on the other side so that this person is not...there must always be a force behind them so if people are just going to sit there...then you won't be able...even other parties would become intransigent because they know that you cannot do anything, you can't call a stay-away, you can't call mass action because people are not going to heed that call. That is one problem with those people becoming complacent and thinking that everything is going to be solved by the negotiation process. On the other hand again you will lose that mobilisation of the people. It becomes lost in the process because no one feels it is necessary anymore to be united to have strong mass based organisation because you are no longer struggling. No one takes meetings serious. Even today you call the meeting of the local...you get 80 people then you say the attendance is very good, whereas in the past if you called the meeting of the shop steward council - take the Durban shop steward council for instance, it used to have more than 250 shop stewards every

Tuesday - more than 250 people. Today they are less than 80 - they no longer think that it is important for them to attend these meetings because everything is going to be sorted out there, Mandela is there, he can speak very good English and be able to convince Roelf Meyer. There are other guys, there is Cyril there as one of our best negotiators. So there is that complacency now. So you end up now not having strong organisation or civic society especially on the ground, let alone political organisation, but even other organs of civic society such as trade unions, civics, they become weak. How then do we drive our programmes in a new democratic South Africa, because we still have for instance a reconstruction programme that we need to drive, it is not going to be easily accepted by the other parties, they will resist - these bully boys who have been enjoying all the privileges, If you talk about affirmative action you say no, we are removing you because you are inefficient, we've got the guy who was trained maybe in Moscow or Cuba to put him in that position, he is going to resist. If there is no strong organs of civic society in that case to push that guy to realise that we are not playing, we won't be able to achieve all the promises that we have made to our people if there are no strong organisations on the ground. So there are a lot of dangers really.

What is the danger of this complacency beyond the elections...?

Beyond the election phase, that is what I'm trying to say,

that look, we have all these programmes, we have made all these promises and people are not going to be there to drive those processes. They are not going to be there because organisations would. be weak. People won't be attending our meetings because it is no longer necessary...and then we won't be able to achieve housing for them if civics are not strong because there will be a lot of forces at play. Business will be wanting money to go to subsidising them so that they can make profits. We on the other hand will be wanting money to go to providing houses for the people, to providing education, health care, etc., etc. So if those organisations which are supposed to be pushing those programmes are not strong themselves...