

BROAD GUIDELINES ON ORGANS OF PEOPLE'S POWER  
(Draft document for discussion)

## INTRODUCTION

1. The struggle in our country has reached its decisive phase. The central issue in the mass actions of the people is how we can bring about a united non-racial and democratic South Africa. Through our heroic actions we want to achieve this as soon as possible. On the other hand, Botha and his assistants want to maintain the system of apartheid forever. They kill, detain and sentence people to long prison terms. They tell lies and try all they can to make apartheid pretty. Their aim is to stop us from struggling. But they have failed. As a result, they have become more frustrated and desperate.

2. We want to run our lives as we wish. Thus we have to remove from power the racists who serve the interests of a minority; and form a government representing all the people. To reach this final goal we have to battle with the stubborn bosses where we work. We have to challenge the racist educational system. We should resist forced removals, and struggle for lower transport fares and prices. In other words, we do not have to wait for the day of liberation before we achieve each and every demand in each and every inch of South Africa. The act of struggling means that we must continually wrest from the regime what belongs to us.

3. This applies also to the central demand: The people shall govern. But in this regard we are talking about a qualitatively different level of struggle. To implement this demand we have to do more than apply pressure and force a concession from the powers-that-be. We have to use all our power to weaken the control of the regime over us, destroy its organs of government and overthrow its administration in the localities. Briefly, this means that we have to bring about a revolutionary transfer of power in these areas. This is what the emergence of people's committees in the streets, areas, blocks, townships and villages amounts to. For this reason, it is one of our greatest achievements over the years.

b. To reach this level we had to use all forms of struggle. We engaged in action against high rents and fares. We used the weapon of the general strike. We used revolutionary violence against the regime's puppet administrators and spies. We swelled and acted in the underground structures including Umkhonto we Sizwe. We formed and defended people's organisations; we marched and waged street battles. In time we made it more and more difficult for the racist government to rule us. We rendered its local structures unworkable and used our accumulated strength to destroy them. Thus, our people's committees emerged in the process of struggle, in a united all-round offensive against the racist government.

5. This development could be novel. But it is not new. In our own history we had the Pondoland Revolt in 1960 when the people, in revolutionary action, destroyed

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Bantu Local Authorities and formed people's committees by the name of Intaba. But this event was isolated to one or a few areas. The practice of all-round revolutionary action was only beginning. The vanguard movement was much less experienced. The emergence of people's committees in our country could have its own specific forms. But it is not peculiar to our struggle. In other countries too, people's committees of various forms emerged at some high point of struggle: in Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Vietnam new revolutionary state forms took shape in the liberated and semi-liberated zones; in old Russia the revolutionary Soviets (Councils) first emerged in revolt more than a decade before the final revolution. But these forms suited the countries concerned and the nature of their struggles. What needs to be emphasised is that the content of what we are going through today is part of our tradition, and of the overall experience of struggling peoples in other countries. It represents the decisive and acute stage of confrontation.

## PEOPLE'S COMMITTEES AND OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1. Why do we refer to these committees as Organs of People's Power (OPP's)? Why do we say they are rudimentary or embryonic? How do they fit into the strategy of people's war and corresponding concepts such as mass revolutionary bases and liberated zones? Is there any distinction between ungovernability and people's power? At first glance these questions might appear academic. But they do help us to understand people's committees much deeper: the better to carry out the day-to-day tasks that the committees and communities are faced with.

2. We all know that all revolutions are about state power. The strategic objective of our National Democratic Revolution is the overthrow of the racist regime and the seizure of power by the people - workers, the landless rural masses, intellectuals, students, small businessmen and others. For this power to serve the interests of the people, we have to destroy the racist state machinery, and the political, economic, social and cultural relations of the apartheid system. In their place, a new state machinery and relations of genuine equality will be set up. In the words of the Freedom Charter: The People shall Govern; All national groups shall have equal rights; The People shall share in the country's wealth; The land shall be shared among those who work it; All shall be equal before the law; All shall enjoy equal human rights; There shall be work and security; The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened to all; There shall be houses, security and comfort;

There shall be peace and frriendship.

3. As we stated earlier, people's committees emerge at a high point in struggle.

At this stage we are able to use the combined strength of all forms of struggle to crush the regime's institutions and set up our own. In broad terms, the following characteristics should obtain:

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i The people should reject the government of the day and all it stands for, and clamour for a government of their own. They should not want to be ruled in the old way.

' The existing government should be unable to rule in the old way: thrown into crisis by the active revolt of the people and differences among sections of those who wield political and economic power. t

'l The system in its totality should have become unbearable for the masses: political, social and economic hardships should be at their worst.

i This presupposes also that the actions of the people against the system should be at their most intense.

A. These conditions are necessary for a revolution to take place. But for it to succeed, the people led by their vanguard organisation should have the capacity to overthrow the regime. Secondly, it should be noted that different areas of the country do not all move at the same pace - at some point some areas could be well ahead of others allowing for decisive action against the regime's institutions. Thirdly, in our country a situation has arisen where we have mustered enough strength to smash the organs of government in "black South Africa" but are not yet strong enough to destroy the organs of racist power in the Imite areas" where the seat of apartheid power is to be found.

5. When the movement made the Call for us to make the country ungovernable and apartheid unworkable, it was enjoining us to wage battles on all fronts, and reduce the capacity of the racists to rule us. The state of ungovernability was to be a stage towards a higher level of organisation, to a new quality of government. To achieve ungovernability requires action on all fronts and all-round organisation: mass democratic organisation, a relatively strong underground network and an active and developing military force of the people. But to move to the stage of a people's government requires even better organisation. In the latter instance we do not merely negate an existing evil; we create, defend and develop the positive. What does this mean in actual practice? ,

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In the past we said we do not want, and fought against, ghetto councils; the task became to destroy them and set up organs of our own. In the past we fought racist education and rendered it inoperative; the task became to introduce people's education and make it work. In the past we rejected high rents; now we do not pay them altogether. In the past we passed resolutions against the migratory labour system in the mines; now we are defying these regulations.

6. As stated earlier, the central demand is that the people must govern. Where organs of the regime have been destroyed we have to create new ones which represent the people and serve their interests. These organs have to involve all the people. Therefore they have to be elected; consult the people and report back to them. With the people they work out ways and means of self-defence and other actions. They also

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deal with some administrative and social tasks. It emerges therefore that we are talking of a government in the making with corresponding substructures: its parliament in the form of Street Committees for example; its army and police in the form of self-defence units and combat groups; its courts: the people's courts; its educational authority: the Parent-Teacher-Student Associations. In brief, they are organs of people's power: a new, democratic government.

7. In many areas, we have already gone a long way in effecting what has been outlined above. But much more needs to be done.

A power in the political sense refers to a centre which commands the strength to defend and perpetuate itself. This implies that such a power should have the capacity to use force where necessary: military and political action. In our case it means that various layers of the people's army and mass revolutionary violence should be well-developed. It means also that we must be in a position to engage in systematic mass actions both to defend and advance our cause. This presupposes a fairly developed level of revolt in the locality and other areas of the country.

A people's democratic power should, in its manner of operation, be one in deed.

In our own recent and current experience there are many issues that we have to deal with to perfect our committees. To quote a few: The people's committees in many townships still have to achieve the active and conscious participation of the elderly in some areas parallel youth/parent structures exist. There are areas where the elected office-bearers do not call meetings.

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A& people's revolutionary power presupposes a relatively high level of political consciousness on the part of leaders, activists and the masses. The weaknesses cited above reflect in part the amount of work that needs to be done; In sane areas, besides discussions around the rent boycott, meetings are not called because 'there would be no agenda'. In most areas, the absence of activists has rendered the Committees non-functional .

8. There are other examples of this nature that we could cite. All of them demonstrate the fact that the people's committees need to be developed further into Organs of People's Power in fact. As they exist today, they are embryonic/rudimentary: great beginnings but beginnings all the same. Certainly we do not expect them to reach the ideal level now, not even in the early days of a free South Africa. But the factors mentioned above show that there are a number of basic issues we have to master before these organs can be qualified as mature.

This brings us to the issue of 'dual power'. The factors we have referred to in characterising the maturity of OPP's apply in this instance. Dual power implies a certain balance of strength between the contending forces in struggle. Here we are referring not only to the potential strength of the revolutionary forces but the strength in actual battle. The alignment of forces should be such that the revolutionary classes and strata have captured decisive positions. These forces will

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he so strohkh, and the reactionary regime so weakened that it is unable to act against ! them. But at the same time the masses would, for various reasons, not be in a positioni to seize power. Concretely, this phenomenon was identified by Lenin after the abdica- tion of the Czar(King) in "February" 1917. The Provisional Government of the capita- lists took over. The revolutionary masses who had precipitated this development . formed their OPP's (the Soviets) which encompassed workers, peasants and a decisive support base within the army. But owing to the weakness of the vanguard party (at that moment) and low\_political understanding among the masses, the people trusted that the Provisional Government would solve their problems. Thus while the Soviets had the necessary force to topple the capitalist government, they did not use it. On the other hand, the government did not have the force to srushathe\_Soviets. It banked on their 'uhreasoning trust' and bided its time in order to weaken or co-opt them. The situation was resolved - after many stormy events - in "October" when the Socialist Revolution took place. r

Dual power does nothave to arise in this form in all revolutions. In fact in host of them the moment of a precarious balance is , for practical purposes, insignificant. Therefore, revolutionaries do not plan for a situation of dual power. If and when it does arise. the point is toIimmediately transform it into people's power.

9. Our struggle has been characterised as a protracted people's war. What this means I in simple terms is that we have to wage a relatively long guerilla struggle, building our'military strength in battle; strive to, and actually involve the majority of the people in armed struggle; combine this with popular mass actions; and ultimately use our accumulated strength to overthrow the regime. We have to do this because we do not have the capacity - in particular the military capacity - to topple the i racist regime. We cannot rely solely on the possibility of widespread discontent within the regime's armed forces: the black contingent has only been recently esta- blished, and the core of these forces remains the whites who have a material stake in the system to defend. In ohr situation, actual armed confrontation forms the basic method for the mobilisation of the army. How then does the 'people's power movement' fit into the strategy of protracted war?

The system of national oppression necessarily leads to conflict. In various spheres of life, the day-to-day manifestations of oppression and exploitation have to result in mass protest action. In SA this is further sharpened by the level of economic I development which has thrown up a huge army of workers. The mass actions from time ! to time build up into revolts of varying scales. The crisis resulting from this i affects the ruling class directly because unlike other colonial powers it is not , in far-off Europe. A eombination of these factors could result in what we earlier termed "a high point of struggle", usually referred.to as a "revolutionary situa- tion".

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Such a situation does not necessarily mature at once, and in all areas at the same i a i

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time. In advanced areas has: uprisings will flare up, even resulting in ungovernability and the degiuction of the regime's organs of power. This forms pant of our people's war: Partial and local uprisings form part of the protracted struggle.

In order to render the system unworkable and move ahead to create OPP's we have to ' combine all forms of struggle including the armed struggle. At the same tide, where this has been achieved,,a new quality is injected into the armed struggle. Over the past 3 years the revolt has created better conditions for the survival and growth of MK and the general underground units, and for us to master even more developed methods of strnggle. The localities where the revolt has flared up have developed closer to what are called people's revolutionary bases, allowing for the rapid esca- lation of people's war.

In the 198T January 8th statement, President OR Tambo outlined features that chara- cterise such bases:

"One of these is that the masses of the people should not only have a high level of political consciousness but should also be active in the struggle to liberate themselves. Furthermore, the people should be organised into mass demogratc forma- tions which must ensure their mobilisation and activisation. \_,

" It is also vital that each mass revolutionary base must have its combat forces which will act both to defend the people and to mount armed attacks against the enemy beyond the given area ahd throughout the country. These forces, organised in and under Umkhonto we Sizwe, must necessarily be based among the people and drawn from the people themselves... ,

"Of central importance also, is that each mass revolutionary base has to have strong underground units of our movement, the ANC, to exercise its vanguard functions as we mount a new assault against the apartheid regime..."

Citing the destruction of organs of apartheid rule, emergence of OPP's and combat and self-defence units, the President went further to state: "In many parts of our country, we have already made important advances towards the creation of these mass revolutionary bases".

How then do we advance?

BROAD TASKS OF PEOPLE'S comm

1. The tasks of the people's committees should be looked at from the point of View of our strategic goal: the seizure of all power. For a start, the OPP's have to see to the running of people's lives in a new revolutionary way. We have to go as far as possible to implement the guidelines of the Freedom Charter. But like islands in a sea of apartheid, the people's committees will have to ensure that the waves of fascist terror founder on their shores. But the people's committees cannot survive through self-defence alone. In any case, the basic aim is not merely to survive, though it is an important starting point. The Embryos of people's power must: SFCV

into a people's government for the whole of SA. And to do 36 means to fight to get rid of the regime everywhere. In this context, people's committees are essentially organs of struggle. They have to lead in the all-round offensive against the regime, employing all forms of struggle.

2. Once a people's committee has been established - elected by the people in a Street or similar locality - it has to ensure from the very start that it is representative of, and responsible to, the people. Regular meetings should be called firstly to identify the people's needs and issues around which action can be undertaken. From this would emerge a Programme of Action for the locality. The majority of issues in such a programme will most certainly be of the sort affecting people in other streets, zones, areas, townships and villages. Thus a Street Committee cannot be indifferent to what happens in other localities. The major issues in our Programme of Action would include:

' The campaigns that we are currently involved in, eg:

- the rent boycott: how to strengthen it, forms of self-defence, how to spread it to other areas

- the education struggle: what is the state of affairs where students in our street are schooling; how can the community assist; how to establish democratic structures and introduce people's education in the schools

- workers' struggles: the situation in the factories where "our" workers are to be found: assistance to all workers on strike; participation in the Living Wage and other Campaigns

- struggle against high transport fares and other issues affecting our standard of living.

'Ensuring that each and every member in the Street belongs to a relevant democratic organisation: trade union, youth and students' congresses, women's groups and so on.

t Pay particular attention to the organisation of the unemployed and migrant workers

x hand-in-hand with democratic organisations.

' Necessarily the people's committees in all localities should know the individuals in its area, their profile and activity and identify the enemy network of informers and deal with it effectively. \_

' Structures should be set up to form and supervise the work of Self-Defence Units and combat groups.

' A system of political education and propaganda should be effected.

i People's Courts should be set up to supervise popular legality and ensure healthy relations within the community.

' A number of administrative tasks might have to be carried out eg refuse collection, cleaning of streets and setting up people's clinics.

Let us examine some of these tasks in detail.

3. Political education and propaganda: All the people have to know and clearly appreciate... 'v, m

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appreciate what the Street Committees are all about. They should have a clear grasp of the objectives of the struggle. They should know the enemy and his allies; the active as well as potential participants; forms of struggle; our history; and our allies and opponents internationally. Campaigns we take part in should be understood in context, constantly reviewed and lessons drawn from them. He should also study and draw lessons from both the positive and negative experiences of other streets, areas, townships and villages. ,,W

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From time to time discussion on these issues should be held. Activists of democratic organisations have to play a leading role. And we should consciously tailor our discussions in such a way that they are understood by all, and that all participate. Where the level of organisation allows, we could even group participants according to their level of understanding.

In time, Street Committees should establish the necessary infrastructure for the production, reproduction and distribution of leaflets and newsletters: for the purpose of spreading information, education, organisation and mobilisation. Through such means we are able to reach all households and turn them into a hive of political activity. We are able to organise swiftly for action, and to spread popular experience of other areas.

Political education will help to develop all the people into conscious participants in this historic process. All members of the community will see it as their duty to be active, to protect and defend what is their own. They will take up the tasks of those who have been killed or detained. All will be democratic activists in the true sense of the word.

#1. Self-defence units and combat groups: As stated earlier these formations are a necessary ingredient of people's power. All revolutions would count for nothing if they do not have the force to sustain themselves against enemy attack. This



applies even more to ours which includes armed struggle as its decisive component. The forms of armed actions and self-defence activity vary: the mass revolutionary violence of the people; units to protect leaders of people's committees and democratic organisations; a system of patrolling the streets and warning signals; units to harass enemy patrols; attacks on enemy encampments; elimination of agents; expropriation of weapons and so on.

Similarly, the tightness of organisation and structuring will depend on the tasks of each contingent. But we should be careful all the time: The enemy is bent on depriving us of the capacity to defend ourselves and to advance. He is continually on the hunt for units and individuals involved in such actions. Though the Self-Defence Units and combat groups form very much part of the people's committees, they cannot be exposed to everybody. Each street should have a core of disciplined and trustworthy activists to supervise this work, to plan for action and to strategise. The core should have a tightly knit structure. The task of self-defence such as: patrolling street protection of leaders and mass defence against evictions and the like.

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out by most of the able-bodied residents of the street in turns. But even here we - have to select the individuals carefully.

When it comes to combat actions, smaller units should be set up. These are to comprise of the most disciplined, security-conscious and politically-advanced cadres. They should be neatly structured eg., commanders, reconnaissance, logistics (weaponry and other needs), combat squads, hiding places and communications. This layer of the people's army represents a higher level of military organs of people's power and should operate in a clandestine manner. It draws advanced activists from the Self-Defence Units and should link up with the 'professional' guerillas (MK) or established with their assistance. Overhives of the combat groups could thus be upgraded and the groups themselves mature into underground combat formations of MK. The Self-Defence Units and combat groups have to exercise initiative all the time: in all their actions including the procurement of weapons. Secondly, these units are, above everything else, political units, guided by the politics of the democratic movement and in particular the vanguard formation, the ANC. Thirdly, the work they do should be systematic: they should have a thorough knowledge of the area in which they operate; know the enemy's bases, plans and movements; undertake actions suitable for the political moment and their capacity. The guideline should be: Plan, and Act according to Plan!

5. People's Courts: Courts in general are not an end in themselves. They are machineries to uphold and defend the legality of a political power or movement. In our case too, the courts we set up are instruments of people's power. Their task is to ensure healthy, revolutionary and democratic interrelations within society: among social groups, family units and individuals. The reason for their existence is political, and all their actions should serve the people's interests, and thwart the enemy's plans and actions. To ensure this, they deal with cases such as anti-social behaviour, conflicts and political crimes against the people. All this is important: the primary cause of these problems is apartheid.

The structuring of People's Courts and their composition depends on concrete situations in the localities. But all of them should operate on the basis of some broad principles:

' They should be popular and community-based. All sectors of the community should be involved in drawing up procedures of their operation.

' Their approach should be political and educational. Their authority should derive from respect and popular support, not fear. Charges, no matter how trivial, should be viewed in the context of the socio-political system, not mere symptoms.

' Punishment should serve educational purposes, eg., useful work for the community. For serious crimes against the people, even more seriousness and dignity is required. And where the death sentence is decided upon, ways should be found not endangering the Court. To carry it out, appropriate structures should be used, and the forms should serve as a deterrent while not exceeding the limits of revolutionary decency.

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In this regard it is necessary that we conduct proper investigations and ensure that we are not merely skimming at the surface of the enemy's network-

9 Democratic professional legal functionaries should assist in improving the operation of the People's Courts. However, we should consciously avoid turning the whole popular experience into an elitist exercise negating the very concept of people's democracy.

6. The Education struggle: The broad guidelines on people's education are to be found in the Freedom Charter. Basing ourselves on these guidelines, we are combining mass popular participation in the form of the Education Charter Campaign and concrete experiences in various schools, and professional contribution by active democratic academics to work out details regarding people's education.

One of the main elements in the struggle for people's education is the campaign to create democratic structures in the schools themselves. Student Representative Councils are organs of the students for them to play an active and direct role in the running of the schools. Through the Councils, the students unite with teachers and parents to form Joint bodies which aim at running all aspects of education at local, regional and national levels. Alongside this campaign is the demand for the withdrawal of troops and other repressive machineries from the school grounds.

' Through such actions we are able to create enough space for the implementation of people's education.

The Parent-Teacher-Student Associations do not exist independently of the democratic movement and, in particular, of the OPP's. In fact they are a form of people's government in the sphere of education. They should account to the people and act

in accordance with the popular will. As stated earlier, the Street Committees should themselves address the issue of education, find out what is happening in the schools, role of teachers and the principals, etc, and act to advance the struggle for people's education. This applies even more to streets and areas where schools are located. Hand-in-hand with the students and progressive staff members, the OPP's should also create the necessary units for the defence of the students and staff against the SADF, SAP and vigilante cut-throats.

The struggle to democratise the universities and turn them into people's institutions should also be viewed in the context of movement towards people's power. The underlying principle is that the education struggle is a national struggle which should involve all the people - students, teachers, workers, youth, women, religious groups and other democratic forces.

7. People's Power and the "white areas": Victory in the National Democratic Revolution means seizure of power in the whole of SA, including in particular the "white areas". In other words, we have to destroy the colonial power itself. Therefore, in the course of struggle, ungovernability and people's power has to be taken to the areas where the centres of racist power are to be found: the townships,

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. factories and farms, suburbs, the headquarters and 'rea bases: of the repressive machineries. The regime is doing all in H's power to confine our actions to the ghettos: the better to suppress and contain the revolt. We have to bragk through this artificial ring.

The OPP's in the townships are daily faced with the question: how to bring about ungovernability and people's power in the adjoining cities, dorpiess and farmlands! There is no simple answer to this question. The fact is, we have to use all forms of struggle to render these areas uncontrollable for the regime.

Workers have an important role to play in this campaign. Their actions on the factory-floor contribute a great deal in this direction. Of particular significance in Recent\_ years are the 'sit-in/sleep-in' strikes which are beginnings of the people's power movement in the places of work. From this experience should grow a systematic campaign aimed at implementing the demands of the Freedom Charter: The people shall govern; .The people shall share in the country' s wealth; The land shall be shared among those who work it; etc. Mass actions are to be reinforced with combat actions by various layers of the people' s army: Self-Defence Units, Combat groups and MK officers. Already, the bosses have admitted that the number of sabotage actions by hquers on the factory-floor has increased dramatically. The experience of the victorious railway workers on the Reef is one striking example of the effectiveness of combining all forms of struggle.

The organisational forms of people's power in the workplaces - eg workers' committees, street committees of domestic workers - will emerge in the course of struggle. Their formation will reinforce the people's committees in the townships: workers should not withdraw from these committees.

Taking the war to the "white areas" also means mass and other actions by all sectors of the democratic movement. White democrats have an important role to play: participation n mass and underground formations including armed actions, mobilisation and organisation of the "white constituency" around various issues, and building broad alliances on the basis of action programmes agreed upon. The emphasis in these actions should be to render the state and administrative organs of the regime inoperative: the City Councils, RSC's, JMC's, Civil Defence schemes and so on. In time we should set up All-City People's Committees encompassing the townships and the "white areas".

8. To multiply and fill SA is one important task of the people's committees. The strength of one people's committee lies in the existence of similar committees in other areas of the country. The regime relies on isolating areas of revolt from the rest of the country. Therefore Street and Village Committees should assist to activate areas which are lagging behind. Activists should share experiences; propaganda should be disseminated beyond one township or village? advanced areas could even send some activists to other areas to assist; the democratic movement in its -Wavtre totality has to identify issues around which the people can be organised and activated.

This applies particularly also to the Coloured and Indian areas. In these areas, various actions have been undertaken in the past eg against the ghetto councils and parliaments. Organisations such as residents' associations, youth and student structures, and the provincial congresses have been formed or revived. The response of the people to the 1983/84 campaign: was phenomenal. But the revolt that ensued has not led to deepening ungovernability and people's power. The situation differs from area to area. But all democrats are seized with the question: how to bring about a situation of people's power in these areas! Do our organisations exist at grassroots level? Are we taking up the issues that will galvanise people into action! Where and when actions are undertaken do we give the people the perspective of people's power? What are the links with the African areas? Given that the Management and Local Affairs Committees, and the tri-cameral stooges are rejected by the people and have a weak presence in these areas, what strategies for action should be adopted to destroy them? What is the extent of involvement in combat actions and the underground in general?

All these and other questions we need to address frankly in order to move to a higher level of struggle.

9. There are some "administrative and social tasks" that the people's committees undertake from time to time. The areas we are forced to live in are deliberately left dirty and poorly attended to. Where Street Committees exist refuse is most often not collected. Our ultimate objective is to rid our country of these shettos and redistribute the wealth of the country to serve, primarily, the working people. But an organ of people's power cannot remain indifferent to the present state of

squalor that breeds disease. Thus we have to collect refuse and clean our streets, set up 'people's parks' and so on. In many areas, people's clinics and first-aid centres have been established with the co-operation of professional medical workers. This activity is necessary on its own. But it is not an end in itself. It has to be conducted in such a way that it serves a broader political purpose. Mobilisation of the youth and other sectors of the community to do this work helps to foster the spirit of collectivism and a sense of belonging. We also have to engage unemployed workers in such projects; mobilise the traders and other businesspeople to contribute trucks, funds etc; and involve the trade unions, especially municipal workers. Municipal workers have an important role to play in ensuring that the regime does not blackmail our communities by for eg., cutting off electricity and water supplies. We should explain to the people why such work is being done. We should at the same time not lose sight of the fact that it is the regime and the bosses who are pocketing the money that is supposed to be used for our social services; that they are channeling most of these funds - from our sweat and toil - to the city centres and white suburbs. The talk about upgrading selected townships is an attempt to

buy off these communities and derail them from the struggle; ylf such "upgrading" has to take place, it should be supervised by the people; the needs and plans should be worked out by people's organisations. Democratic professional bodies such as . . PlanAct can assist. But we cannot allow this to take the place of the general democratic struggle and demands for the redistribution of wealth, abolition of Group Areas . Act and influx control.

Many of the activities we undertake such as propaganda need funds. Where practicable we should take over establishments previously run by the ghetto councils and councillors, and establish new ones. The mass democratic movement should also assist. But we must rely primarily on our own resources. The act of fundraising from the community - even if it is small amounts - is a political act. The people thus contribute to what is theirs for the advancement of all forms of struggle. Proper 'nccounting not only helps to strengthen democracy, but also forms part of political education. For example, a street committee could contribute from its coffers to a fund for striking workers in any part of the country, to preparations for the launch of a democratic organisation, to buy food for detainees and assist those attending political trials.

The base line is to advance the popular cause. ' , .

#### OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF PEOPLE'S COMMITTEES

1. It is clear that people's committees have to lend themselves to certain basic principles of operation in order to carry out their tasks in a manner that would advance the struggle. What are these principles? How do the people's committees relate to the "legal" mass democratic movement? How should they structure themselves? Answers to these questions have been given by our practical experience on the ground. - What is clear from this experience is that there are no hard and fast rules beyond principles that are universal.

2. People's Committees differ from the regime's structures in that they are democratic. Our democracy is of a higher quality compared to that in "western" countries because it is not formal, not an act of electioneering. In the first place, the people's committees are elected by the communities they lead. They carry out tasks given by the community and have to account constantly to their constituency, as well as to the higher structures - the Area, Block and other Committees. In the street meetings the committee should clearly report on whether the previous assignments have been carried out. It should also demand this of its subcommittees. Both the successes and the failures should be looked into when future plans are drawn up. In many areas the committee is elected for a given period, for example, a year. But true democracy lies in the right of the "represented" to recall the leaders if they are not satisfied with their performance.

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Democracy is not meant to stifle initiative on the part of the leaders. They should, within the broad guidelines given, take decisions and guide the community. Similarly, the community should constantly raise its suggestions and criticisms with the leaders. ' e

The state of repression has forced us to operate under 'abnormal' conditions: where it is difficult to convene and secure meetings. When meetings are called, we have to be "brief and to the point". This does affect democratic norms, but we have to adapt to the situation without undermining democracy. In the final analysis, the best defence of our committees is their democratic character: mass participation rather than individual distinction. At the same time, we should build different layers/of, leadership and plan for the "best" and the "worst" of times. Those involved in sensitive tasks should not be exposed to everyone. We should be vigilant all the time. Where we continue to hold meetings and to consult at various levels we should not lower our guard: the enemy is permanently on the lookout.

3. Relationship with "legal" democratic organisations: Whatever the variants per locality, certain basic principles have emerged. In the first place, the people's committees are a product of multi-form struggle in which the "legal" democratic movement played a decisive role. Democratic activists helped to give direction. They have a great role to play in reviving and strengthening OPPLs, in political education and so on.

Secondly, leaders and other activists of these organisations are part of the community and should naturally take part in the Organs of People's Power at all levels. Thirdly, the street and other committees are in direct contact with the people. Therefore, they will make a decisive input on what campaigns should be undertaken by the democratic movement. On the other hand, they are the most effective primary organs for the implementation of democratic programmes and campaigns. Consultation in both directions is an absolute necessity: without one level dictating to the other. Fourthly, while the "legal" democratic organisations cannot throw overboard

what legal space is available, the people's committees operate at virtually all levels - as a direct negation of Pretoria's legality. Therefore, there are areas of activity that the "legal" movement cannot formally enter. Individual members can and should participate at all levels, but as individuals, not representatives of these organisations .

It is quite clear that permanent and viable mechanisms of liason should exist between the two levels. Concretely: in some areas they meet at township level; in others they form joint leadership structures at area level; other areas have cores of members of democratic organisations at street level; yet in others the mass organisations appoint leaders of Area Committees. These forms have been brought into being by concrete needs. But the link has to be there all the time. And it should be the sort of link that does not infringe on the democratic operation of either the democratic organisation or the people's committee.

4. A special position in this regard is occupied by the Civic Associations. How do they rein to the people's committees? In areas where the civics have been operating arm grassroots structures, they have naturally assumed the status of an all-township people's committee. The Area and Street Committees became sub-organs of the executive of the civic. In places such as Mamelodi the civic was born out of the lower people's committees.

Other townships have had civics which did not have grassroots structures: they were not seen as being representative of all the people. Thus, from the Street, Block and Area committees emerged an all-township structure parallel to the existing civic. In some areas, the civic was virtually pushed to the sidelines.

There are areas where the civics are popular but are seen to have a role confined to "legal" whereas of work. Like the rest of the "legal" democratic movement, they link up with the people's committees at various levels eg Area Committees.

Whatever variety of forms, there is an urgent need to: . e.

- ' revive and strengthen the civics in all areas and link them up at appropriate level;
- 5 ensure that they are representative of all the people and operate on the basis
- ' of democratic . N

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- ' involve fully: intimately in the people's power movement with the aim of turning it
- r
- then: into all-township organs of people's power.

5. The underground movement, the ANC gives overall guidance and leadership. It learns from the people and harnesses their energies for the seizure of power. Therefore its members should operate where the people are. Operatives of the underground are to be found in the "legal" democratic movement. They have to operate at all levels of the people's committees too. They should win the confidence of the people by their selfless contribution to the common cause, and individual operatives should be given the task of playing an open leading role in the people's committees. The underground should identify activists and individuals with the necessary talent and inclination to strengthen and lead various structures of the OPP's - and lead by popular, democratic consent. Those who have been tempered in struggle are to be moved into the underground for various tasks.

Through the underground, we are able to carry out many functions that the "legal" structures cannot undertake. Unhindered by racist legality, we can openly and clearly put forward the revolutionary perspective by propaganda and other means. ; Through the underground we are able to give a professional shape to the Self-Defence Units and other groups and to bring them under the guidance of the vanguard movement. Inversely, the people's committees and their substructures create better conditions for the survival and development of the underground, including MK units. Once they have been set up, clandestine units provide reception facilities, information, places to hide military, propaganda and other material, etc.

The link with the underground at all levels is our guarantee for victory.

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6. The structure of people's committees differs from area to area. The "best" structure is one that allows the committees to carry out their tasks. Such a structure would ensure that: .

- i the leadership is able to guide all aspects of work: the combat units, courts, education and "administrative" tasks; .

- i the committee is not only representative of the people but also involves all of them in struggle;

- ' the best activists take their place in the leading organs, yet also see to the representation of all sectors, uplift those lagging behind, and ensure that the best cadres reproduce themselves;

- ' the committees link up with the democratic movement at all levels;

- ' representation in higher structures serves the intended purpose and operates on the basis of democratic principles outlined above.

THE ENEMY'S COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

1. Faced with the progressive collapse of its authority, the regime has become more ruthless. It is employing all the means in its arsenal to crush the popular revolt and re-establish its control. Open terror is the main lynchpin of the racism against the democratic movement. At the same time, Pretoria also tries to present an impression of concern for the problems we face in the ghettos, and to re-arrange its administrative structures under the guise of reform.

2. The States of Emergency are aimed at creating conditions for the racism to achieve these objectives. The Street, Village and other Committees are the main target of the regime's terror. Townships and villages have been occupied by the SADF, SAP and the vigilante cut-throats. These gangs have been on the rampage: killing, maiming and detaining particularly activists of the people's committees and democratic organisations. In an attempt to intimidate the people, and discredit the Organs of People's Power the regime stages show trials where the operatives



are sentenced to death and long terms of imprisonment. Various tactics have been employed to weaken and break the rent boycott. Activities of the mass democratic movement have been illegalised and news about the revolt is being clamped down.

3. In this way, the regime hopes to isolate one region from the "other, one area and street from the others: the better- to suppress them. At the same time, the regime is also trying everything in its power to re-establish its network of informers, which we had paralysed at the height of the revolt. It seeks to recruit activists who are in detention, to brainwash the youth and other sectors of the community. By means of its propaganda it creates the false impression that it is in control. This is aimed at generating a sense of fear, isolation and helplessness among the people.

4. The regime relies heavily on the informal sections of its state machinery. Vig-

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