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1. INTRODUCTION .

Today, almost a year after the germ of the United Democratic Front was conceived, and just a few days before the beginning of a new year, we are gathered here in all our hundreds as delegates from various centres of South Africa, to synthesize and decide on very crucial questions in our history. This now demands of us a very careful evaluation of our work, tactics and strategies. This conference promises therefore, to be a truly momentous event in the life of our Front. Decisions and resolutions adopted by this conference are going to be decisive in terms of the future direction of the UDF and, indeed, the way forward of the national democratic struggle in South Africa.

However, to be able to arrive at a correct political decision, we need to take a synoptic look at a number of factors influencing our tactics, strategies and programmes. This report will, therefore, attempt to cover the following :

- a) The State Crises and its strategy
- b) The Democratic movement.
- c) Our gains and problems
- d) Our future strategy

2. STATE CRISIS

South Africa is today in a state of crisis. This crisis has manifested itself on all fronts - in education, on the labour front, within political structures and within economic circles where inflation and recession have assumed alarming proportions. These are but a few of the areas of crisis. Also worth mentioning here, is the housing backlog, which is today a permanent contradiction and a political issue in our country.

The state crisis, we must point out, continues to deepen as the forces of resistance develop and become stronger. Our organizations have, over the last few years, organized high forms of resistance - around education, around housing, rentals, high transport fares, against puppet state bodies and for better pay and working conditions on factory floors. All forms of resistance in the different sites of struggle challenged and frustrated relations of domination and oppression.

2.1. State response to the crisis :

The government realised that it could no longer rule by the same methods. It had to adapt to new conditions and situations. It responded by starting on a process of restructuring its rule. A process essentially calculated to maintain the relations of domination, exploitation and oppression. As far as the government was concerned, the most effective and viable strategy was to weaken the forces of resistance by resorting to sophisticated methods of divide and rule. In short, what they hoped to do, was to co-opt a tiny middle-class sector and in this way to isolate the working class.

To realise its objective the government appointed a number of commissions on various aspects to determine the most effective methods of control, e.g. Wiehahn and Riekert on Labour relations, Rabie on security, de Lange on education. Similarly, the PC proposals and the new housing policy are some of the state's attempts to survive, and preserve Apartheid and the current economic relations.

apart from all these, we have seen in recent years, a close alliance developing between big business and the military. The State Security Council, a body making the most important and strategic decisions for the country, is today effectively controlled by the military and big business. We see here a systematic shift of power from the hands of parliament to those of unelected bureaucratic structures. Having succeeded in drawing big business into its ranks, the state has clearly broadened its base and increasingly its resilience. Over the past few years, as well, the state has increasingly attempted to crush democratic forces outside South Africa, through its policy of destabilization. More and more, it has hit out at those countries on its borders which have dared not only to sympathize with the struggle against Apartheid, but who also, within their own countries, have tried to build a new society..

We see, then, that although in a state of crisis, the government is certainly not in a state of collapse. To believe otherwise, would be an illusion..

However, as the state is restructuring itself, our organizations too have responded to the challenge and, are also restructuring. We think that the growth of our organizations and resistance to oppression is particularly important to us because if the state's restructuring is unopposed, it could weaken our struggle, and our organizations. It is, therefore, very important that we effectively defend our hard won unity, the unity that took years and great sacrifices to build.

THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

Our response to the state strategy has been to oppose the division of our people. We see the unity of our people as paramount: it had to be fought for, it has to be defended. Our response, therefore, was the formation of the United Democratic Front.

At the same time, though, the UDF was not simply a response to a call for unity. It was a culmination of building organizations which fought struggles affecting all our people in various parts of the country. Although these struggles were unco-ordinated, they all challenged the relations of domination. In this way, the UDF grew out of the development of organizations and the need to co-ordinate isolated struggles into broader forms of national campaigns and resistance.

3. WHAT WERE OUR OBJECTIVES WHEN WE FORMED THE UDF?

- (i) to take the ideological initiative out of the hands of the state
- (ii) to unite our people across class, colour, ethnic and organizational lines to oppose the Apartheid reform offensive of Botha.
- (iii) to co-ordinate the activities of all organizations opposed to Apartheid.

- (iv) to advance the mobilization and to deepen the organization of our people
- (v) to prevent the state from implementing its so-called reforms, or at least, to make it difficult for them to do so.
- (vi) to deepen the understanding of our people on issues affecting their lives, such as the P.C. Proposals and Koornhof Bills, the Community Councils and Black Local Authorities, the Coloured Management Committees and the new housing policy, etc.
- (vii) to establish a broad front to serve as the voice of our people.
- (viii) to link politics with the day to day experience of our people.
- (ix) to draw into the front groupings operating outside the government structures.

4. THE TRACE RECORD OF THE UDF.

Although we started the front with only 3 regions, namely, Natal, Transvaal and Western Cape, we have, during the last three months, extended to other regions. Two regions of the UDF have been formed in the Eastern Cape and the Border. An interim committee has been formed in the Northern Cape which is a largely rural area. Inroads have been made in the Orange Free State where Area Consultative Committees have been formed. We are confident that by the end of the first quarter of the new year we shall have extended to all regions of South Africa.

The last three months has also seen a mushrooming of new civic and youth organizations. These organizations were not only inspired by the UDF, but were initiated by the UDF itself.

We have also been able to increase our capacity to reach the people and to win some amount of legitimacy for the ideals of the Front as well as to provide an alternative for a democratic South Africa. We can see this from the thousands who have responded to our newsletters, mass meetings, etc. For example, 15 000 people attended the UDF National Launch, over 30 000 attended our Peoples' Weekend rallies, and more importantly, thousands are reached daily in our areas by our affiliates.

In addition, we have scored major successes in a number of campaigns over recent months :

- * Following a UDF call in the Western Cape, there were very low polls in the Coloured Management Committee Elections.
- * Similarly, people responded throughout the country to the UDF call to boycott Community Council and Black Local Authorities elections.
- * The UDF focus on the Ciskei evoked national and international attention.
- * Thousands of people attended the NIC meeting to challenge the Botha/Rajbansi meeting.

We have made these gains in a climate in which the state is engaged in a battle to win support for its initiatives. We can say without fear that we have, for the moment, gained the upper hand in this battle. And, at no stage can we afford to take a step back.

To ensure that this does not happen, we need to look not only at our gains, but also at our problems..

Before the launch of the UDF, organizations had been engaged in their day to day activities and struggles.. The emergence of the UDF presented new problems. The fast rate of growth created excitement and interest which drew more and more of the leadership of the affiliates into UDF campaigns. The result was that the activities of the affiliates were subsumed by the UDF activities and organizations were drained of their leadership. In essence, this meant that consolidation became very difficult for many first level organizations. This poses a threat to the long-term activities of these organizations and the entire democratic movement. The challenge facing this conference is to evolve a programme of action which will allow scope for growth and development of these organizations; a programme of action that will link our day to day work in our organizations with the work of the UDF in a way that will build both..

We have also not been able to facilitate affectively the process of consultation and democracy. We need to ensure that all decisions are taken or understood by the membership of organizations, taking into account the masses we still have to organize. This problem must be addressed in order to prevent mistaking the consciousness of the leadership for mass consciousness. This is important because we know that over the years, people have developed a scepticism and a fear of politics. We cannot pretend that the excitement the UDF has created has put an end to these feelings. We must take the prevailing consciousness as a baseline and take people through a process that will overcome their scepticism and fear. Again, this means that we must take the day to day concerns with which people are familiar, and link them to our political work..

These organizational problems must be addressed seriously. When we ask ourselves - "Where are all the people we have reached? Have they come into our organizations?" we find ourselves unable to answer precisely because we have not been able to channel effectively the people we have won over into our organizations.

The other difficulty which we face is that the different aspects of the 'New Deal' affect different sections of our society differently. In fact, the constitution and Koornhof Bills are designed to fulfil the specific function of sowing division. How do we approach these matters? Do we act as though we are affected similarly? Do we act as though divisions on the basis of race are non-existent? On the other hand, do we through our practice encourage and entrench these divisions?

What are the factors which guide us? Is there a difference between campaigns initiated by us and those which are responses to state initiatives? To illustrate, when we responded to the Black Local Authorities Elections, our campaigns were directed primarily, or even exclusively at affected communities. However, when we initiate the signature campaign, we cannot afford the risk of entrenching divisions. The underlying objective of such a campaign must be the building of unity. These questions will assume increasing importance in the future. In answering them, it is important that we understand the conditions at a given point and that we take decisions that will fulfil the aims and objectives of the UDF.

THE FUTURE:

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this conference is primarily to plot a course for the months ahead. We do this with an understanding of our successes and failures as detailed earlier. We should also take account of where the government is and what can be expected from those quarters.

We operate in a period in which PW Botha believes that he has a strong mandate from the white electorate following the 66% YES vote in the white referendum. PW Botha believes that this mandate allows him to proceed with his attempts at restructuring. This confidence results in a strategy which rules out naked repression as an immediate option. We see therefore that even though the UDF has made major gains, gains which threaten the implementation of the 'new deal', Botha has not yet resorted to mass detentions and individual bannings, or the banning of the UDF itself. Instead, we have seen a shift to harassment which involves threatening telephone calls to leadership and an increasing number of arrests involving little more than technical offences - eg motorcades, distributing leaflets, demonstrations etc. This is coupled with various attempts to isolate the UDF by attempting to project it as a front for the banned ANC. In relation to the previous years of harsh repression, these moves indicate a strategy of gentle persuasion, to create the conditions whereby the democratic movement can be isolated and cast out.

Yet, all is not rosy for the state. At an international level, P.W. Botha has been largely unsuccessful in attempts to win support of European governments, support so necessary for the state to regain entry into the international fold.

Also, the state has grossly over-estimated the strength of the junior partners. Neither Hendrickse nor Rajbansi have sufficient confidence to face a referendum. Together with Botha they are trying to manoeuvre their way out of this situation by using flimsy arguments about the cost of a referendum. They wish to hide behind 'scientific surveys' the results of which they hope will be less embarrassing than the results of a referendum.

The sum total of this is a realisation by the state that it is losing the battle for the hearts and minds of our community; a battle which will determine whether or not it can rule by consent, or whether the big stick must be hauled out and it must rule by coercion. It is for this reason that the state is now desperately trying to prop up its allies, Rajbansi and Hendrickse. It has set up, in the case of the Labour Party, a specialist unit for conducting the campaign within the so-called Coloured community. Already, Rlm has been collected. With such backing, the Labour Party hopes to lay the basis for an acceptance of the constitution by so-called Coloureds.

Within this framework, we need to understand the scope of our work in the year ahead. We need to identify certain characteristics of our campaigns in order to make our task more efficient and effective.

Our campaign against the Constitutional and Koornhof Bills must be intensified. We must direct our energies towards a fuller understanding at a mass level of the need for unity and an absolute rejection of the so-called new deal.

The base of the UDF is largely urban. Yet, repression is at its worst

in the rural areas. It is these people who are increasingly faced with barbaric forced removals to bantustans and an increased police and military presence.. To be effective and truly national, the UDF must try to incorporate these farflung communities and thereby extend our base. Already we have made some gains. The period ahead calls for an intensification of this.

Our future work is going to be crucially affected by the manner and extent to which we address the Koornhof strategy. The continued denial of Section 10 rights to Africans, the removals and relocations and the incorporation of areas into the bantustans are all part of a strategy designed to force Africans into bantustans. Our people in Magopa, Driefontein, Crossroads, KTC, Lamontville and Hambanathi are under the threat of either being removed or of having their areas incorporated into these backyards of Apartheid..In addition, those who cannot acquire Section 10 rights, are forced to the bantustans to starve there.

On the other side of the resettlement/relocation coin is Koornhof's attempt to co-opt a select few through the Black Local Authorities. Yet already we have made substantial gains here: we have successfully mobilized for a boycott; we have created informal organizational structures; we have created organizations opposed to those government created institutions, and we have discredited the Black Local Authorities.

But, we must recognize too, that the Black Local Authorities are a reality. They are being implemented and they will affect the daily lives of our people. What is the next phase of our campaign? Are we going to relax now that we have organized an effective boycott? Or are we going to find new ways to frustrate the Koornhof Bills, and in doing so, develop a coherent strategy against these bills.

Even though we understand the UDF to be a broad front, we must recognize that it is not nearly broad enough. There are many organizations which remain outside our front, organizations which have not been part of the mainstream of the democratic movement over the last few years. We cannot accept this situation as it is these organizations who will become the targets of co-optation. Our task is to bring them into our fold.

At the same time, this expansion must not happen at the expense of our organizations. The previously mentioned tasks relating to democracy and the building of organizations must be made concrete.

This is the scenario of the next few months. We see the UDF fulfilling these tasks by applying itself to the issues which will dominate discussion at this conference: namely, our response to the referendum/election, the signature campaign and our campaign against conscription. Unfortunately we will not have time to deal with the question of removals and resettlement, but they must be built into our campaign.

For these reasons, the decisions which we take will be crucial to the nature of our work. These decisions, must above all, build both the unity of our people, and of our front.

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