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UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT BORDER : REPORT SUBMITTED TO UDF
SPECIAL CONFERENCE, FORT ELIZABETH, DECEMBER 17-18, 1983

A. PREAMBLE:

This report covers the period August 9 hitherto because we believe we owe UDF such detailed report. Having said so, we would like to apologise to honourable comrades that we did not prior to now have such a report.

We have had a number of problems in our development, which we hope this report will be able to reveal.

Our region came into existence at the height of problems in the East London region, which made operating freely quite a hassle.

A number of documents which relate to our activities, were confiscated by Ciskeian police when Sabelo Ndzuto, our secretary, was detained on November 7.

B. LAUNCH:

Despite the number of problems we had to contend with as presented by police harassment, our region was formally launched at Grahamstown, on October 15.

Prior to the launch, we had a meeting on August 9, at East London, where UDF was formally introduced. Present at the meeting were the following organisations:-

Cosas; Azaso; Saawu; Vecos (Victoria East Council of Sport); East London Youth Organisation; East London Descom; Mwasa; Naawu; AFCWU; GWU; DWU; NWA;

It was felt at the meeting that there should be another meeting, where UDF Border could probably be launched, because organisations which attended the meeting of the 9th had no mandate to discuss affiliation to UDF. The majority feeling at the meeting, however, was that there was a need for the existence of UDF Border.

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The next meeting was held on August 16, still at East London. The majority of the organisations which had attended the previous meeting, attended the second meeting as well, bar AFCWU; Naawu; GWU and Mwasa.

Before the meeting started on August 16, the organisers had a brief meeting with representatives of the East London Youth Organisation and the East London Youth Congress.

The meeting had been necessitated by the fact that both groups claimed to represent youth in the East London area, and it was the organisers' wish to get the question of representation in this regard cleared before the meeting.

The upshot of the meeting with the youth representatives was that the organisers advised them to go back and try to sort out their differences before they could eventually affiliate to UDF Border on the claim that they represented East London youth.

All the organisations which then attended the meeting of August 16, affirmed their commitment to UDF, and processes we set into motion to launch UDF Border.

The meeting, attended by accredited delegates, adopted a resolution that a contingent from the Border area should attend the national UDF launch at Cape Town. A delegation of 15 was elected to represent the area at the Cape Town launch.

The meeting adopted the following resolution:-
R1/83: That UDF shall not assume the role of accredited people's liberation movements.

3/... The delegates were ...

The delegates were, in terms of another resolution, given a mandate to participate fully at the launch, on behalf of the organisations, which were present at the August 16 meeting. The resolution went as follows:-

R2/83: That the organisations here present surrender their right to participate at the launch, to the 15 delegates, who shall report back on the proceedings at a meeting to be held on August 23, at East London.

At the meeting of August 23, a resolution (R3/83) was adopted to establish an interim committee, which would arrange for a formal launch of UDF Border. The interim committee was further mandated to approach those organisations which had up until then not affiliated to UDF.

Organisations present at the report back meeting on August 23 were all those which had attended the meeting of August 16.

Members of the interim committee were:-

Chairperson: Steve Tshwete; Secretary: Ntombazana Botha; Treasurer: Nkenke Stofile; Additional Members: Sabelo Ndzuta; Makhaya Ngalo; Mandisa Ntlabati; Phila Ngqumba; Mirriam Mgabela; Alfred Metele and Mzwandile Msoki.

The interim committee was given until September 3 to report back at a general meeting to be at East London.

The meeting of September 3 decided that the launch of UDF Border should take place on September 24, at East London.

The scheduled launch was banned when all meetings of UDF; Saawu and Cosas were prohibited in the East London area by the area's Chief Magistrate.

4/... Police harassment ...

Police harassment also made it impossible subsequently for general meetings to be held in East London, where the majority of UDF supporting organisations existed.

The police threatened the withdrawal of the Masazane Open School lease if the Institute of Race Relations, controllers of Masazane, kept on making the Masazane hall available to UDF and other progressive movements in the East London area.

A similar threat to the authorities at the Braelyn Heights Methodist Church, effectively stopped meetings there.

This affected our efforts, particularly because of the state of emergency declared by Sebe's government at Mdantsane, where most of our members resided. This meant that meetings outside the East London area could not be convened as an alternative as people, returning from those meetings, would have had to contend with Sebe's curfew regulations.

Most meetings, therefore, were interim committee meetings, some of which had to be held very secretly.

Consequently, the next suitable date for the launch was taken at interim committee level.

After a series of interim committee meetings and consultations with organisational representatives, the interim committee decided on September 29 that the launch would be on October 15, at King William's Town.

Because of special police attention and harassment, it was decided that the launch on October 15 would be a closed session for accredited delegates only, who would be only 3 from each participant organisation.

In view of the previous ban, it was suspected that the meeting of October 15 could also be prohibited and, therefore, arrangements were made for an alternative venue.

A venue at Grahamstown was secured but not published. The decision was that, should the King William's Town meeting be banned, organisers would go round informing all interested organisations about the switch to Grahamstown.

A ban, inevitably, was glapped on the meeting and was served on the priest-in-charge at the Catholic Church, where the meeting would be held.

As processes had already been put into motion, the meeting took place on October 15, as scheduled at Grahamsmtown.

Because organisations could not be informed of the alternative in good time and because the ban was brought to our attention in the afternoon of October 14, we could not contact all the organisations we had intended to and the Grahamstown meeting, consequently, was not as representative as it would have been under better conditions.

The effect of this was that, members of organisations which had already indicated their support of UDF, although present at Grahamstown, could not affiliate formally as the accredited delegates of the organisations could not be contacted to be informed of the switch.

The following organisations, therefore, assumed obser-
ver status, as the accredited delegates were not present:-

Domestic Workers Union (DWU); Ndantsane Burial Society; Mwasa; Lutheran Youth Organisation; Grahamstown Civic Association.

Those that affiliated formally were Saawu; Azaso; Cosas; Anglican Society; Catholic Students Association; East London Descom, and Black Students Movement (Rhodes).

The Black Students movement was at the time still in the process of deciding on matters of policy and were, therefore, regarded by the meeting as an unconstituted group and were then accorded one vote in terms of a resolution (R4/83) adopted by the meeting.

At the launch an explanation of UDF was given and a progress report was made. After the reading of the UDF Declaration, organisations endorsed it and an election of office bearers was conducted.

The following comrades were elected into office:-

Presidents: Steve Tshwete
Bangumzi Sifingo
Secretaries Charles Ngakula
Sabelo Ndzuto
Treasurers: Makhenkesi Stofile
Hintsisa Siwisa

Resolutions adopted were:-

- i. LABOUR: R5/83: That UDF Border condemns the ban on Saawu by the Ciskei Government and all harassment of the workers and pledge solidarity with the workers in their struggle.
- ii. HARASSMENT & DETENTIONS:
R6/83: That UDF Border condemns the violence at Mdantsane with the accompanying spate of harassment and detentions by both the governments of Ciskei and South Africa and pledges to fight side by side with the residents of Mdantsane for the restoration of justice and their dignity.
- iii. CHURCHES: R7/83: That whereas UDF Border regards the new Constitution Act and the Koornhof Bills as unholy pieces

of legislation designed to entrench apartheid and, therefore, all those involved in holy witness must take a stand against the stipulated laws.

iv. **STUDENTS: R8/83:** That, whereas Fort Hare has become an establishment seeking to justify the present political order as prescribed by the present South African oligarchy, therefore UDF Border calls for the immediate stop of the exercise and the immediate restoration of the dignity of the institution and academic freedom.

v. **REMOVALS: R9/83:** UDF Border deplures the continued uprooting of families which breaks up life at all levels and creates insecurity and uncertainty and therefore pledges solidarity with the threatened people of Mgwali, Mooiplaats, Newlands and Potsdam.

vi. **WORKING PRINCIPLES & PROGRAMME OF ACTION: R10/83:**

That UDF Border unanimously resolves that all member organisations shall submit names of their two representatives on the Regional General Council and that the RGC shall work out Working Principles and Programme of Action for the region.

8/... C. ACTIVITIES: ...

C. ACTIVITIES:

A number of activities were planned by the interim committee, prior to the launch, but most of these were affected by the state of affairs in the area.

On August 30, the interim committee decided on workshops, which would be educative in format, on the Koornhof Bills and P.C. Proposals.

The first workshop was conducted with Saawu as a base on September 4, where the pieces of legislation were looked at from a worker's perspective.

The next workshop, which was going to look at the matter from the point of view of women, was cancelled as it clashed with the Descom national conference.

Thereafter, most of the interim committee's time was taken up in arranging for the launch.

D. MOBILISATION:

The interim committee started on a programme of mobilisation and, in this regard, Mgwali was visited and contact was made with the Mgwali Residents Association, which is fighting the forced removal of people from that area. The MRA welcomed our representatives with open arms and indicated willingness to affiliate to UDF.

The interim committee also kept constant touch with the organisations which had since affiliated and those that had not yet made decisions on affiliation, but which had indicated friendship towards the Front.

A programme of decentralisation was then launched to make possible the existence of units at local level, for mass participation.

In terms of the new programme, representatives of the units were asked to go into the field to organise not only support but also the establishment of new organisations, which would subsequently affiliate to UDF.

D. PROBLEMS:

UDF Border has had to contend with some problems in its mobilisation.

i. Meeting with Fosatu:

The meeting was arranged with Fosatu executive for December 7 but Fosatu did not honour the appointment and the meeting was re-scheduled for December 8. The organising secretary of Naawu, C J Fazzie was met. He explained problems he was experiencing with his comrades. He then promised to try and talk to his comrades and that we should come back next year to Naawu.

ii. United Women's Organisation (EL):

Uwo was met on December 8, but we had a number of problems from the outset, when the deputation also included two men, who seemed to be more influential on the Uwo members present.

In fact, it was the two men who led the Uwo argument, which, to put mildly, bordered on the absurd at times.

Uwo's position was that UDF was usurping the position of exiled organisations, while UDF had no base. Uwo also insisted on a categorical answer to their hypothetical question on what UDF would do in the event of a schools boycott.

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