

THE CAMPAIGN OF THE UDF AGAINST THE BLACK LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Black local authorities were one of the main issues with which the UDF concerned itself at its launch on 20 August 1983. In the declaration its opposition thereto was set out as a matter of principle. Exh A.1.

Before the UDF's existence, however, the Soweto Civic Association, the DBAC (Disorderly Bills Action Committee) and Mohlakeng Civic Association had taken up the issue of Black local authorities according to accused No 19.

At the first meeting of the NEC of the UDF in September 1983 the Black local authorities were chosen as a target in order to heighten the political consciousness of the masses. The NEC resolved to encourage the UDF's affiliates to this end. Exh D.1 para 10.

The UDF (Transvaal) provided information, co-ordinated, assisted in planning and produced publications in the campaigns against the Black local authorities. The campaigns were generally conducted in the names of the affiliates. Exh T.17.

Accused No 21 testified that the UDF's campaign against the Black local authorities ended at the election in November 1983 and that they did not have a further programme, but did not like them. This is incorrect.

The secretarial report to the NEC of January 1984 (exh T.2) claimed that the campaign to boycott the Black local authority elections had been a resounding success and stated that the next phase was to challenge the support and therefore the legitimacy of each councillor in each ward. The affiliates would then call for the resignation of the councillors. "The challenge to the UDF and its affiliates is to provide an alternative to these structures".

The NEC adopted this report and noted that consultation amongst organisations which campaigned against administration boards, Black local authorities and/or community councils was necessary to ensure ongoing work on this front. Exh F.

The NEC on 21 January 1984 decided to convene a national conference of civic organisations. In a circular of April 1984 Trevor Manuel regional secretary of the Western Cape region of the UDF, to whom this seems to have been entrusted, wrote that the major thrust of the conference should be the discussion of a campaign around the new housing deal, forced removals and local government. It was to discuss and develop approaches to changed local government. Dates were suggested in June and July 1984 and the campaign was to climax at the time of the elections for the Tri-cameral parliament.

In a memorandum "content or programme of conference on housing" which refers to this proposed conference, mention is made of the successful boycott of the Black local authority elections and it

is stated with reference to this conference "we would also need to discuss the type of problems we must take up after our successful boycott of community councils and the Black Local Authority Act". Exh T.27(2), exh C.60.

The circular was written after consultation with accused No 19.

A circular letter by accused No 19 dated 21 January 1985, however, shows that the "housing conference" had not been held by that time. Exh T.25(1).

Whatever the position may have been with reference to a formal campaign against the Black local authorities, the UDF throughout its existence since the meeting of the NEC in September 1983 called for their destruction.

In fact accused No 19 admitted in his evidence that it was part of the policy of the UDF to make Black local authorities unworkable. He added that that was to be done by making the Black local authorities lose credibility with the inhabitants. This flowed from the UDF's attitude of non co-operation with government and government bodies unless there is representation in central parliament. Black local authorities are absolutely unacceptable to the UDF. It is part of the freedom struggle to get rid of them. He stated the Black local authorities existed to implement government policy and the

interests of the Whites. The UDF had no policy to set up alternative local government structures, according to accused No 19.

Prof I Mohamed called for the destruction of the Black local authorities in a speech at Regina Mundi Church at a meeting of the Soweto Civic Association on 27 November 1983. Exh C.23 p.5.

Accused No 21 testified that the Transvaal Education Committee of the UDF organised a workshop around Black local authorities at Kagiso (Krugersdorp) in November 1983 as a result of a call by KRO (Krugersdorp Residence Organisation).

The Transvaal Education Committee in response to a call by Vaal Civic Association and Soweto Civic Association organised a workshop at Daleside on 27 April 1984 to evaluate the anti-community council's campaign and to look at the road ahead for civic organisation in the continuing struggle against the local authorities. Exh U.4(e).

The report on the workshop to the REC is Exh U.4(b). Copies were sent to participants. The report intentionally did not commit to paper the answer to the question "now the BLA is enforced what do you plan to do?" There is only the general statement: "The next tasks are to destroy the Black local authorities and to strengthen our civics."

When the meaning of this sentence is debated the background which is set out in a paper read at the Daleside conference should be borne in mind. It is Exh U.4(d).

"Before the 1976 June revolts, the townships were controlled by the administration boards and their puppets, the 'Urban Bantu' councils.

After and during the 1976 revolts these Urban Bantu Councils came under heavy attack from the people. As a result administration offices were burnt down and the councillors on the councils were forced to resign."

The film shown at the conference "The Fifth Offensive" was about the struggle of the partisans in Yugoslavia against the Nazi's in the second world war. No doubt it was a violent struggle.

The workshops were the brain child of the NEC which at its meeting of 5 November 1983 had called on the regions to set up training committees. Exh E.1 para 6.1.6.3.

The UDF's prescription for the method of the attack on the Black local authorities was to link current issues and problems in the community to the Black local authorities. Exh AM.1.

We accept that the UDF's action was to discredit the Black local authorities politically - as accused No 21 says. We do not accept that that was the sole aim.

The hollowness of the attitude of the UDF against the Black local authorities is evident from the fact that they, according to accused No 21, campaigned against them for two years and never discussed an alternative thereto. This indicates that they were intent on destruction of the existing system per se and not in the improvement of the lot of Blacks at a local level.

Accused No 21 states that after the Black local authority elections on 30 November 1983 the affiliates of the UDF inter alia the Vaal Civic Association and the ~~the~~ Soweto Civic Association kept on reporting to the UDF about their activities against the Black local authorities. Written reports were required.

The attack of the UDF and its affiliates upon the Black local authorities was ad hominem. The councillors were vilified in extreme language, generalisations about dishonesty were made and they were called traitors and oppressors of the people. A climate of universal rejection of the councillors and of hatred against them was fostered.

Accused No 21 in a press statement of 9 November 1984 called them the cannon fodder of apartheid. Exh CA.17. This is an apt description. In the eyes of the UDF they were exactly that.

Examples of the language used will be given elsewhere in this judgment.

Even after widespread riots had erupted against the councillors and councils and a state of emergency had been declared as a result thereof, the UDF did not relent but sought to increase the pressure. In the Border secretarial report covering the period 18 November 1984 to 15 February 1985, (exh T.21.) we find that the national secretariat discussed Black local authorities in January 1985. It continues with reference to the national general council in April 1985:

"The Black authorities will be under focus and workshops have been arranged in the Transvaal to organise united strategies on resisting them."

(Accused No 21 says it is incorrect - but his evidence is improbable. Why would the Border secretary make a false report?)

Accused No 19 issued a press statement on 9 January 1985 reacting to a statement by UCASA (which consists of councillors).

"It is because of the backwardness and greed of these puppets of apartheid that they failed to heed the warnings sounded by UDF that the implementation of dummy councils would lead to an escalation of violent conflict in South Africa."

The UDF then calls on them to resign from the "hated councils".

Exh AM.66.

In a UDF press release of 11 January 1985 issued by accused No 19, Exh AM.67, two councillors who resigned from the Lekoa town council are called "sinners who have now repented".

In a press release on 23 January 1985 accused No 20 attacked the introduction of municipal police (brought into being to control the unrest situation) saying that they were tools of suppression in the hands of the unpopular town councils. Exh AM.68.

The UDF tendency to make the Black local authorities the whipping boy is evident from a press release on the petrol price dated 23 January 1985, (exh W.8), wherein the economic crisis is blamed inter alia on Black local authorities.

The secretarial report to the AGM of the UDF Western Cape in March 1985 stated that the government was in its weakest position since 1948. The Black local authorities have collapsed as a result of mass action.

"The anger that is exploding all around the country bears testimony to our peoples readiness for mass action and we must be committed to taking this forward."

"We have seen throughout the country the anger of our people against structures such as the Black local authorities and community councils, an anger that in many places made it impossible for these structures to continue their oppressive practices. We salute our people and we will continue to ensure that the influence of such structures over our peoples lives is challenged. Wherever possible we will mobilise mass action against these community councils, management committees and the Tri-cameral parliament itself."

Exh C.138.

This report was adopted, as it was made part of the published documents of the AGM.

The same attitude prevailed in the Transvaal UDF. In the secretarial report to the AGM of the Transvaal UDF of 9 March 1985 (exh T.25) we find:

"On returning from Cape Town the region plunged into the first major campaign of the UDF - the anti-Black local authorities campaign. The programme of action of this campaign included: The formation and strengthening of local organisations like the SCA, VCA, etc. It also included door-to-door work, workshops, propaganda and mass meetings. By December 1983 through our campaign we displayed that the new Black local authorities were as unpopular as the hated community councils. The campaign also laid a firm basis for the eventual dismantling of the Black local authorities in most townships."

"Despite the repression suffered by UDF, affiliates intensified the struggle against the racist regime. The Vaal Civic Association embarked upon a rents boycott which is historically unprecedented."

"By effectively mobilising against the Black local authorities and the Tri-cameral parliament, we have broken the back of the state's so-called reform strategy."

The secretarial report to the NGC of the UDF on 5 April 1985 stated that there had been a successful campaign against Black local authorities but that the affiliates failed to assert their legitimacy at local level. They did not mobilise the masses effectively. Disciplined mass action was difficult. In the townships the Black local authorities were inoperative and over 50 councillors had resigned country-wide. Exh T.25.

In its statement the NGC pledged to organise the masses to challenge the state and demanded inter alia the scrapping of all "puppet bodies" created under the Black Local Authorities Act. Exh C.102.

The minutes of the NGC reflect that "unrepresentative local structures must be destroyed and authorities must be forced to liaise with the democratic organisation<sup>s</sup>". This decision should be read in the light of the massive violence against the Black local authorities at the time and the opening address of Oscar Mpetha "that the Apartheid regime and their puppets had to take responsibility for the state of civil war in which our country is gripped" and that the people would not be deterred in their march to freedom. Exh AAA.10.

A report evaluating the UDF's campaign against the Black local authorities and dated February 1985 was found in the UDF offices Johannesburg. It is exh C.110. It states that the heightened resistance against Black local authorities in townships throughout

Transvaal in the last five months has forced over 47 councillors to resign and has left the Black local authorities without a shred of legitimacy in the communities they are supposed to govern. It states that the campaign is not over. The resignation of the councillors is an important victory for the Front and its affiliates in local areas. The campaign against Black local authorities has to be taken forward and generalised throughout South Africa.

Our conclusion is therefore:

We find that the UDF since its inception and throughout the period of the indictment campaigned against the Black local authorities. It did so through its office-bearers and publications and by advising, co-ordinating and assisting the affiliates in their execution thereof.

As will be seen, no holds were barred. The attacks were stinging, vituperative, malicious and defamatory. Often the criticism was true. Often it was a gross exaggeration. Often it was blatantly untrue. It did not matter. It was an effective means of mobilising the masses, of fanning the flames of their anger white hot. And when the eruption came, as it inevitably had to, the UDF rejoiced in its success and gloried in its victory.

## **DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985-1989**

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