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SA Jundarai News March 1985
'Mosi uoa 'ferro' Zeketa'

(Accused 20)

Mosiua "Terror" Lekota

Publicity Secretary, United Democratic Front

The United Democratic Front has two major objectives: to expose the serious shortcomings in the new constitutional dispensation, and to pressure the government into calling a national convention of all the people of South Africa that would lead to the adoption of a democratic constitution.

We in the UDF seek a negotiated settlement because we believe that the less bitter the methods adopted to resolve the present problem, the easier will be the process of reconciliation. The longer the government resists a programme of guided negotiation, the more it creates the chance for a deepening of the conflict and acrimonious circumstances. The process of reconciliation then becomes more difficult.

The reason for the existence of the UDF is to help the various sections of the public to learn to live together, to move towards a democratic society with all participating.

The UDF will not participate in the forum announced by President Botha because that forum is founded on apartheid and does nothing to eliminate the problem. Certainly while acknowledged leaders like Nelson Mandela remain in prison there cannot be a solution capable of bringing about lasting peace. Consultation up to now has failed to eliminate armed conflict for this reason: we need a process of well-founded negotiation.

In a country where people carry arms to further their political aims, the non-violent UDF cannot be considered radical. Some black groups would deny a place for whites in their new society, but we in the UDF still want to go for a negotiated settlement, with rights for black and white. We are, I believe, the most reconciliatory black organisation presently opera-

ting. To ignore the UDF now is to ignore the most meaningful black initiative.

We cannot accept the division of Africans into urban and rural, firstly because this implies the continued disenfranchisement of the African majority confined to these areas. The homeland structures were imposed by Pretoria and never enjoyed legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Secondly these areas remain utterly unviable economically and can never stand on their own. Since the homelands are accepted by the forum, we cannot participate in the forum.

Apartheid undermines the economic development of the country as a whole, thereby retarding the economic benefit to all. The president talks of freehold rights for urban blacks. But what is the meaning of freehold while the 1936 Land Act restricts African land ownership? The acts themselves must be scrapped so that Africans are free to own land anywhere and so that there will be no more forced removals.

Talk of removing the discriminatory aspects of influx control is empty rhetoric. Influx control is by its very nature discriminatory since it is directed at Africans. The only way to remove discriminatory aspects of the policy is to eliminate it entirely.

The crisis confronting the government is forcing it to make a number of statements that on the face of it appear to be steps in the right direction but that do not bear closer scrutiny. Consider the promise to equalise education among the races. Africans have to pay for schooling from the first year, but whites do not; the standard of black schools and the quality of teachers are low. Minister de Klerk's statement is laudable, but an equalisation simply cannot be effected in the

foreseeable future given the racial economic imbalance, the present state of the economy and resistance from the Afrikaner right wing.

The government clearly perceives the need for reform, but is concerned about the Conservative Party. The promises made in parliament cannot come to pass in the foreseeable future. The government has done nothing to justify optimism.

The lack of confidence in the government is not founded on rash youthful impatience. The history of interaction between the government and the disenfranchised has shown repeatedly that the government never really intends to meet our people half way. We gave them a chance after the so-called national convention of 1909, after 1936 with the Native Representative Councils, in the South African Indian Council and the Coloured Representative Council, and at every turn the hopes of our people were dashed.

For the past 75 years history is strewn with dashed hopes. Even the new dispensation, hailed in 1983, has already left the people in despair. The present collapse of the black town councils (witness the resignations of councillors, the attacks on them and their property, the low polls in elections) is the result of a long history of disappointed hopes, of trust confidently placed in the government that the government has violated.

The government should strive to create an atmosphere necessary for a national convention. Let the accepted leaders represent their constituencies, black and white, let there be representation on the basis of popular support, and let us create an open forum for all the peoples of South Africa without exception.

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