

TWILIGHT OF LEGALITY

I. State of Emergency

From the declaration of a national state of Emergency on June 12 1986 onwards, the UDF found itself in a period of twilight legality. This culminated with the restriction of the Front in February 1988, effectively banning all of its activities.

In November that year, Justice Van Dijkhorst found after 4 years and &&&&& pages of evidence, that the UDF was part of a treasonable conspiracy, and convicted national office bearers Lekota and Molefe, and Transvaal Secretary Moss Chikane.

The regime's priorities had changed. National political reform was on the backburner - the elimination of mass opposition had become the immediate task.

Once again the Front bore the brunt of the offensive, but the moves to finally eliminate the UDF - the February restrictions and the Delmas judgement - came too late. The UDF's legacy survives actively today, through the continuing dynamic of its affiliates and in the wider united action which they continue to initiate.

II. State strategy

With the reform initiative of the early 1980s mostly abandoned, the regime's priority became the elimination of mass organisation.

Contending factions within the state clashed over the question of negotiation with the ANC and local mass organisations. "Reformers" advocated a programme of repression combined with strategies to divide the ANC into "communist and nationalist" factions, eventually negotiating with a part of the ANC from a position of strength.

"Militarists" sought long-term stabilisation of the situation by eliminating, and even replacing people's organisations, and launching a series of "upgrading" schemes to "win the hearts and minds" of township residents, and depoliticise their grievances.

It was the militarists who came to dominate the chambers of state power, and their programme meant reversing some of the patterns which had emerged in the early 1980s.

Negotiations with even local-level "alternative" organisations like Civics, was ruled out. Indeed, the very legal space which had been created by the reforms was to be closed. Senior police commanders began by the end of 1987 to

speak of the mass organisations operating within the law as the major "revolutionary threat".

The National Security Management System, comprising Joint Management Centres at local and regional levels was established to coordinate a sophisticated strategy of the security forces involving intelligence-gathering, repression, and "upgrading" to win hearts and minds.

(elaborate)

Over 30 000 people were detained in the first 18 months of the Emergency, with UDF hardest hit. It was not only leading activists who were detained however - masses of rank and file street committee members were picked up in a bid to smash people's power structures.

Wave after wave of new regulations combined to limit the UDF's legal space, and deny it a presence on the national political stage. It was not only the UDF, but all the spheres of mass organisation which were affected. Detentions and harrassment became a key weapon, complementing new regulations virtually outlawing the promotion of any 'alternative structures', in the state's drive to smash street committees and people's education.

Some UDF leaders have been in detention for over 2 years, as the regime seeks the comprehensive crushing of organisation which the previous Emergency failed to yield.

The UDF summarised the aims of the Emergency as:

- * to eliminate the democratic movement
- * to close legal space for opposition
- * to smash the uprisings and people's power
- * to defeat the ANC militarily through attacking neighbouring states
- * to reunite the ruling group and restore business confidence

At the same time, the Front pointed out, "while widespread detentions have hit some areas hard, many activists foresaw the emergency and took the necessary precautions. They have been able to avoid detention and remain active, even if covertly".

For the democratic movement it opened a difficult period, in which it lost some of the initiative and struggled to adapt to the new conditions. While the period after June 12 represented something of a twilight phase for the UDF as a specific organisational form of the mass democratic movement, that movement is learning a range of new tactics and strategies to continue the Front's legacy.

The new situation has challenged the UDF to redefine its role. The Front's new direction was summarised in the slogan adopted at the National Working Committee: "Defend, Consolidate, Advance!"

III. Defend, Consolidate, Advance

"The state has embarked on an all out offensive to crush the democratic movement. If we advance without defending and consolidating we will be crushed by the state onslaught. If we only defend without consolidating and advancing, we will lose the strategic initiative to the state and progress will be disturbed." - Build the Front, Isizwe, September 1987.

The convening of a National Working Committee in May, attended by 200 delegates from 9 regions, was in itself a remarkable achievement under the State of Emergency. The conference clarified the direction that the UDF had taken in response to the Emergency under the three headings, Defend, Consolidate, Advance.

It stressed that these processes had to occur simultaneously, and that dynamic responses could quickly turn defence into advance.

Although UDF activists had at times been forced to defend themselves physically, the Front emphasised political defense. "Where the UDF has broadened into a true people's front and where the apartheid forces have been most isolated, the defence of the Front has been most effective. Organisations which is deeply rooted in the masses is difficult to crush".

Defending the gains of recent years therefore meant drawing the widest possible range of organisations and sectors into struggle, and defeating the regime's objective of isolating the people's organisations. "The political key to defence lies in broadening to the maximum the people's camp, while isolating to the maximum the apartheid regime".

Consolidation meant deepening the unity and organisation within the people's camp, while advancing depended on the political initiative being maintained in the hands of the people.

IV. Defending

The NWC saw three aspects to the Defence of the Front:

- * Building and extending the structures of affiliates, and of the UDF itself
- * Deepening the unity in action between the UDF and its natural allies

* Broadening the UDF's political and moral influence over the widest possible range of South Africans.

A. Building and extending the UDF

The first task involved the Front's attempts to maintain its organisational structures, and open up new fronts. The State of Emergency made this extremely difficult. While the Front's local affiliates managed to survive the onslaught over 2 years, the state's offensive put activists on the defensive. Survival became their immediate priority, and in many cases their active presence the masses waned.

As the process of recovery developed, the regime realised that the total elimination of Front structures was beyond its means. Its attack began to concentrate on structures of regional and national co-ordination.

Whereas the period June 1986 to June 1987 saw 26 000 detentions, June 1987 to June 1988 saw only 6000. The difference, however, was in the type of activist detained. The first Emergency swoops had taken all activists the state could capture, the second year focused on eliminating leadership.

All attempts to develop open structures of co-ordination, like the Committee for Defence of Democracy formed after the UDF's restrictions, and the Anti-Apartheid Conference, were quickly stopped. The Front's surviving affiliates managed to develop a measure of regional and national co-ordination through mastering "the art of secret and underground work".

Nonetheless, it must be stressed that adaptation to new methods of work has been difficult for a Front which was constituted in an era of open legal space. Front affiliates today are only beginning to come to terms with the requirements of mass work under a long-term State of Emergency.

Despite being placed on the defensive, the Front continued to open up new sectors. Its white affiliates became more closely co-ordinated. It formed the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa to consolidate its work of drawing traditional village structures in rural areas into the mainstream of national politics. Work in the spheres of culture and sport was expanded, with UDF activists taking a major role in the formation of bodies like the South African Musicians Alliance, the Congress of South African Writers, the Cultural Workers Congress and the National Sports Congress.

B. United action with natural allies

"The friendship and co-operation between Cosatu and the Front has grown into a true fighting alliance", the NWC noted. This alliance had developed through united action, both at a leadership level and on the ground in factories and localities.

The November 1984 Transvaal stayaway had highlighted the deepening cooperation between the Front and trade unions. During the People's Power era this relationship deepened, both at the rank and file level where UDF activists and COSATU shop stewards worked together in street committees, and at leadership level where the Executives of the two bodies began engaging in joint strategising.

The Easter 1986 NECC conference was the first formal occasion where the Front and COSATU sat down to formulate a joint programme of action. The highly successful May Day and June 16 stayaways which followed gave a major boost to the relationship.

The State of Emergency demanded a combined response, which came in the form of the National United Action Campaign.

1. National United Action

"Botha is attempting to reverse the tide of history, to prevent the old order from dying and a new South Africa from being born. As with the defeat of fascism in Europe, it is only the maximum fighting unity of all democratic forces which will prevent the forces of reaction from destroying everything in their desperate attempts to cling to power" - UDF 3 Years of United Action

In October 1986, the Front launched a National United Action Campaign jointly with COSATU, NECC and the South African Council of Churches, with the support of the Catholic Bishops.

The campaign called for the lifting of the Emergency and the release of detainees, an end to rent evictions, a living wage, the re-opening of the schools and the repeal of draconian controls imposed on students.

The Front hoped that the campaign would regroup the mass democratic movement, and deepen its unity. Although the level of repression made mass campaigning impossible, the National United Action campaign was an important milestone in the Front's deepening relations with COSATU.

The "Christmas Against the Emergency" called under the

National United Action banner at the end of 1986 won the broadest-ever support from Churches, traders and other groupings outside of the Front. Scope for mass action was limited, with even Carol services banned, but in a number of

townships residents doused lights for 2 hours each night for the duration of the campaign.

The May 1987 NWC called for the alliance with COSATU to be formalised at all levels. "The united front needs to be built at a local level. Zonal and area committee structures of the UDF must be transformed into united front structures in which all the sectors are represented... This will facilitate the development of working class leadership on the ground."

These structures could also serve as the platform from which the broadest possible range of forces in an area could be drawn together. "There is no reason why every sports club, every church, every trader's association, and every cultural movement in an area should'nt become actively involved in the activities of the democratic movement in that area", the NWC observed.

COSATU held its annual Congress in July 1987, in a period when the Front's structures were struggling in the face of repression, COSATU was fast becoming the most active sector of the mass democratic movement.

The Conference adopted the Freedom Charter and resolved "to develop permanent structures at local, regional and national levels with other sectors of the democratic movement which will strengthen our relationship and interaction with these forces and promote the leading role of the working class in a united front alliance."

Addressing the conference, acting UDF Publicity Secretary Murphy Morobe praised COSATU's achievements, and called on workers to take the lead in the struggle to shape a future South Africa.

"For us working class leadership of the democratic movement is not understood purely as trade union leadership", Morobe said. "We believe that leadership is essentially political leadership. It is working class leadership not only of itself, but also within and of the national liberation movement. For us today, at the mass democratic level we must mean working class leadership of the UDF itself".

While there had been significant progress on this front during the people's power period, "the floodgates to the widest worker participation in all our structures must be widely opened", Morobe told the Congress.

The unity in action between COSATU and the Front had to be extended at levels, particularly by transforming area committees of the UDF into united front structures representing the UDF-affiliates and COSATU locals, he urged.

COSATU-UDF unity became the major political centre guiding the mass democratic movement's response to the crisis in Pietermaritzburg, as well as in taking the initiative on issues like the welcoming of Mbeki and Mandela and the building of broader alliances.

C. Broader political and moral influence

"The regime can only survive for as long as significant sections of the people remain passive or actively support it. We are the people who run South Africa, who keep the cogs of industry turning. More and more people are prepared to use their power against apartheid. Yet the regime is still recruiting some of our people to defend apartheid. Others are in sympathy with the democratic movement, but are still not being actively engaged in the struggle.

"The UDF's task is to ensure that no section of our people remains outside the ranks of the democratic movement...The broad masses of our people are taking up the cudgels of freedom. They are looking to the Front for leadership. Our task is to act as a national political centre which can co-ordinate all the activities of our people whether in the schools, factories, bantustans, townships, churches, sportsfields or farms. Wherever the mass of our people are to be found, the UDF must be uniting our people, drawing them together in co-ordinated national, regional and local action" - UDF NEC Interview on the 4 the anniversary of the Front

The Front's priority, said the NWC, was to "work more consistently with groups that are not immediately drawn into our main-line sectors". This referred primarily to non-political groups in the townships, like taxi-owners, traders, sports bodies and religious groups.

Previously, such groups had at times been treated in an ad hoc and at times opportunistic way. The NWC rejected this approach, stressing that such groups should be won over politically. Failure to do this could result in some of these groups becoming "a recruiting base for the vigilante death squads, or for apartheid's local authority structures".

This new emphasis on the part of the Front was both an immediate response to the state's manouvreing to isolate the

MDM, as well as a recognition of the need to complete a process started with the very formation of the Front.

The UDF had been guided by the theory of national democratic struggle, which stresses inter alia that all principal classes in the black community have an objective interest in national liberation. By seeking to draw in non-active sectors, the Front was in beginning the completion of the

mass national liberation front which the formation of the UDF had begun.

1. The ruling bloc

While drawing in non-active sectors of the oppressed community was the priority in terms of broadening the political and moral influence of the front, the NWC also stressed the importance of this work in the white ruling bloc.

The struggles of the people's power period had produced massive fissures within the ruling bloc, which the state was trying to regroup under the state of Emergency. The Front faced the task of providing political leadership to those forces which had broken away from the regime.

While it was acknowledged that groups like big business, breakaway Nationalists and even liberals would be antagonistic to the democratic movement on a number of issues, it was nonetheless important to give leadership where possible:

"Many of the sectors to be addressed within the ruling bloc may well join us on one specific issue, and betray us on the next. Such 'allies' are much less trustworthy than... our natural allies or those who have still to be won over from the people's camp.

"But this does not mean that work on this, the broadest front, is pointless. Our duty is always to isolate to the maximum the main enemy. We must deprive the enemy of every support base, and of every potential ally. To the extent that we render some of the regime's natural allies wavering and untrustworthy for it, that in itself is a gain for our national liberation struggle."

Through interventions at the Five Freedoms Forum (FFF) and Broederstroom businessmen's conferences, the Front set about providing leadership to "the middle ground" elements, who distanced themselves from the regime, but were not prepared to endorse the programme of the democratic movement.

In the FFF case, the Front's white affiliates expanded their

shackle of apartheid rule created the possibility of building alternative centres of people's power".

summarise tasks:

- * regroup centre
- * reorganise structures
- * strengthen fraternal alliances
- * broaden front.

on need to win allies:

"The government is trying to win over uncommitted sections of our community to join the collaborators. It is attempting to build a block of "moderate" leadership. The state will only succeed in this initiative if we fail to spread our moral and political influence to all sections of our community".

Although organisations were weakened, Mafolo suggested, "the spirit of resistance amongst our people is still very high". Although the state was trying to revive its local authority structures hoping that repression and upgrading had created the space for this, they still lacked a political solution.

mention churches, Van Eck.

Given the restrictions on campaigning and the vicious repression in place at the time, the Municipal elections must be taken as something of a barometer of mass sentiment at the time. The fact that only 9% of potential voters turned out at the polls has serious implications for Pretoria.

State harassment made publicising the call difficult. Employer organisations made clear their intention to retaliate with mass dismissals. Mining bosses won a court interdict against the stayaway, and deployed hundreds of armed mine security men to force workers to work.

The stayaway went ahead, however. It had been widely discussed in street committee structures (where they remained), and taxi-owners, traders and churches had been drawn in. The Black-Consciousness orientated National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) supported the call, after discussions with COSATU.

Between 2.5 and 3 million workers stayed away nationally on each of the three days from the 6th to the 8th of June.

1. Anti Apartheid Conference

(need to write this up)

C. Municipal Elections

Before the elections, there was a bout of intense speculation as to whether the UDF would participate. Repression and restriction had made discussions over the elections difficult in the Front's ranks before the elections. Nonetheless, a statement from NEC member Titus Mafolo made clear that no affiliate of the Front had proposed participation.

He emphasised that the UDF's boycott position was not a question of principle. It was open to change, with changing

political conditions. At the same time, Mafolo emphasised, the boycott was not an ad hoc tactic. He explained it as an essential strategy in the process of building a political movement: "The boycott strategy evolved to fight against attempts to divide us on ethnic lines and preserve the unity of the oppressed".

"The boycott of institutions of minority rule is understood as a strategy in that it is a coherent and ongoing form of opposition designed to isolate these institutions and to render them as ineffective as possible. Ever since 1976, these institutions have been identified as the weak link in apartheid rule in that they rely for their effectivity on a degree of support from the oppressed community".

"The intensification of struggle, the advance in mass consciousness, mobilisation and organisation made increasingly possible to isolate these institutions totally from the masses, thus making it impossible for them to function. This cracking of the most immediate and weakest

VII. Restrictions

In December 1987, Vlok and General Hennie De Witt made speeches ominous for the mass movement. By declaring mass organisations to be the major "revolutionary threat", they ushered in a period in which the state tried to eliminate legal space entirely.

On February 24, 1988, all the activities of the UDF and 17 other organisations, mostly civic, youth and student affiliates of the Front, were entirely prohibited.

While most detained leadership figures were restricted on their release, the state also restricted 18 UDF leaders, including most remaining national office bearers, who had not been detained.

Sensitive to the international outcry which followed, the regime continued to restrict organisations in dribs and drabs, so that by the end of 1988 ** organisations had been restricted.

Cosatu was also restricted from any activity outside of its factory floor base.

The restrictions sought to pave the way for the regime to reinstall its local authority structures, and continue with its programme.

A. Weaknesses in state strategy

By 1988, a number of weaknesses became apparent in the states programme.

Elaborate: financial problems of JMCs, economy, Southern Africa setbacks - Angola/Namibia, white right wing, absence of a political solution - Mandela.

same time as subjective crisis for MDM.

B. Responding to the restrictions

On March 21, the UDF called for a stayaway to protest the restrictions. Although it was hastily organised, with minimal publicity, the call was observed by 1.5 million workers.

South Africa's largest ever stayaway was held over 3 days in June 1988, protesting against the regime's new Labour Bill, the restrictions on organisations, and the State of Emergency. It was called after mass rank and file pressure for action made itself felt at COSATU's special congress.

carriages.

School boycotts continued, and in a series of unprecedented clashes at UCT, white students armed with stones did battle with riot police.

UDF, Cosatu and their allies called a 2-day stayaway to protest against the white elections, and the repression in the country at the time. Again, the response to the call was bigger than any previous stayaway.

Thus, while the regime used the white election to consolidate the cohesion of the ruling bloc around its repressive program, voiting took place against a backdrop of mass initiatives which put great pressure on Botha.

The Front complemented its mass activity with appeals to whites through propagaanda and mass meetings. The Front urged them to abandon white minority rule, and struggle alongside the majority.

The Front's call addressed specific messages at particular sections of the white community:

* "To Nat Party supporters to realise that a break with outdated political loyalties must come. The future of you

and your children will not be secured by turning the clock of history back, but rather of facing the future with courage and vision.

* "To PFP supporters to abandon the myth of change through parliament. The future does not lie in a futile bid for a few extra seats in parliament. The future lies in joining the majority of this country in building an anti-Nationalist Front that will isolate the Nats.

* "To white UDF supporters, to go into the homes, offices and study places of concerned white South African and introduce the aspirations and demands of the people.

The Front's calls contributed towards bringing the white middle ground closer to the democratic movement.

E. National Stayaways

While the Emergency precluded mass rallies, demonstrations and some of the earlier forms of mobilisation, residents in many townships remained prepared to act.

National stayaways were called in South Africa for the first time since 1961, and were supported by millions of workers. The People's Power period had seen 12 stayaways in the space

of 20 months. All were regional in character, however, reflecting the dynamics of local struggle.

The NECC conference of April 1986 resolved to support a joint stayaway with UDF and COSATU to observe May Day. 1.5 million workers responded to the call, creating alarm for the regime which declared the first Monday in May (and later the first Friday) a public holiday to avoid a similar situation the following year.

A month later, the June 16 stayaway was observed by 1.7 million people, despite the Emergency. A stayaway called by COSATU to protest the detention of unionists failed in most parts of the country, except for the Eastern Cape. UDF activists were critical of COSATU's decision to call the stayaway without consulting its community allies, and focusing too narrowly on COSATU detentions.

A national COSATU-UDF call for a two day stayaway over the 1987 white election was supported again by 1.5 million workers. The fact that this support was sustained over two days reflected a growing mood of defiance in black communities. The June 16 stayaway of that year was observed by 1.3 million workers.

7 national stayaways, mostly in support of directly political demands, were held between May 1986 and July 1988.

F. Mbeki/Mandela

In a bid to "test the water" for the release of Mandela, the regime released his long-time Rivonia comrade Govan Mbeki in November. Mbeki immediately affirmed his continued membership of both the ANC and the South African Communist Party.

The regime hoped that 18 months of Emergency repression had created a climate politically "safe" for the release of the Rivonia prisoners. Mbeki's release energised activists however, and the state found itself banning "Welcome Home" rallies organised by UDF affiliates in Western Cape and Eastern Cape within weeks of his release. Within a month, Mbeki was grounded in Port Elizabeth with a restriction order.

Pressure for the release of Mandela has continued to mount, however, both domestically and internationally. The state's moves to relieve its fiscal crisis with foreign bank loans, floundered on the Mandela question. The regime today is still struggling to find a way of releasing Mandela while minimising the mass impact of such a move.

"It is time for the government to accept that our people have their own popular and democratic organs which they recognise and accept as their only mouthpieces", the UDF said in response to the massacre.

"There is no way in which the authorities can avoid these democratic organs of the people. Failure to do so can only lead to a repetition of the events in Soweto".

The strategy pursued by the National Security Management System precluded such recognition, however.

The rent boycott maintained some forward momentum, despite the setbacks of the Emergency.

B. Bantustans

In a period in which Pretoria was seeking to re-establish control over centres of resistance, it found its controls over the politically tranquil Bantustans suddenly under threat.

After a 9 month anti-independence struggle led by UDF affiliates, the KwaNdebele Legislative Assembly dropped plans to accept apartheid independence. It was a major victory, after a bitter struggle against the fearsome Mbokhoto vigilantes in which over 100 people were killed.

Gains of a different type developed in the Kangwane Bantustan, where the governing Inyandza movement of Enos Mabuza sought to define itself within the progressive camp, having met the ANC in 1985. Despite the quandry this caused for UDF activists, given the tradition of opposition to Bantustan structures, the repressive situation on the ground and the relative protection afforded by a relationship with Inyandza opened up new possibilities.

Bantustan struggles, which even reached the level of people's power in the form of village committees, polarised a wide range of elements towards the UDF, including sections of the traditional tribal leadership. This development crystallised in the Front's formation of a rural affiliate - the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (COTRALESA).

Ferment in the Bantustans continued into 1988, with a startling coup d'etat by the Bophutatswana Defence Force temporarily ousting Chief Lucas Mangope. The SADF intervened to reinstate Mangope, and coup leader Rocky Malebatse Metsing of the ?????? opposition party fled into exile.

C. Uban the ANC

Despite the curbs, the UDF used whatever limited means were available to it to continue its Unban the ANC campaign. On January 8 1987, the Front placed full page adverts in almost all South Africa's major newspapers to mark the 75th anniversary of the ANC, and call for its unbanning.

The adverts were signed by a wide range of groups, including (NSL etc.), indicating the growing consensus emerging over this demand.

"We know that the state considers us to be a front for the ANC", the UDF told the Press. "But that is the problem of the state and not ours. Our recognition of this Anniversary is nothing more than a recognition of a milestone in our people's long history of resistance".

The regime held a commission of inquiry into the ads, and promulgated new Emergency regulations which prohibited calling for the unbanning of the ANC. Although the UDF was reeling organisationally, by using remaining legal space to put its demands on the agenda highlighted the Nationalist Government's lack of a political solution.

D. Struggle against the white election

The build-up to the white general election on May 6 1987 saw an intense round of labour struggles, which spilled over into broader student and community resistance.

Mineworkers flexed their mighty collective muscles in the largest strike since 1946. Although the miners had to back down on their wage demand, the fact that ** 000 workers could take strike action for 18 days, and return to work as a disciplined unit, boded ill for the mine bosses.

A national strike by postal workers demonstrated the growing strength of black workers in the public sector. It was the railway strike, led by the UDF-affiliated South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union which really shook the country.

The strike on the railways was a disturbing demonstration of how collective action by black workers could paralyse important parts of the country's communication system. Important sectors of the economy in different parts of the country were affected by a strike of 22 000 workers in Johannesburg.

The security forces fired on workers in Germiston, killing two, and laid siege to COSATU house. Militant youths took up the cudgels on behalf of the workers, and began burning rail

recording of mandates from its affiliates. Without for a moment undermining the importance of internal democracy of its affiliates, it must be able to adopt a global (an overall) approach to the township, and to reach beyond the township".

A political centre, said the NWC, should not negate mass democracy. It "relates to, works with, respects and is finally responsible to the democratic processes of the UDF, its affiliates and to general organs of people's power. But at the same time, it thinks ahead, it suggests strategic tasks that are more significant or more likely to produce results than others. Active leadership adopts a global, overview approach. It might note, for instance, the under-representation or absence of a key sector (for example, organised workers) within the area committee. It will take responsibility for rectifying this. An active political

centre with a strong mass base will also think beyond its immediate area of operation.

"It takes responsibility, for example, for other weakly organised townships in the vicinity, or for exerting at least some moral and political influence over the local white community. It might concern itself not just with its township, but with the nearby industrial zone, or an outlying rural area. A strong political centre dispatches cadres to other areas, it assists with resources and with education and training. Needless to say, it relates to these other areas with the same respect for existing democratic structures and networks as it does to its own base".

The Front envisaged such political centres at local, regional and national levels to include COSATU leadership. They would serve as "the heart and engine" of a broader unity of organisations.

"The consolidation of political centres and the broadening of the front are two complementary processes", Murphy Morobe told the COSATU Congress. "Without the broad front the political centre will have no links with the masses, its leadership will just be up in the air. On the other hand, without consolidating strong political leadership centres at every level, the broad front will lose direction, weaken and eventually break up."

(this section needs examples - were the intentions outlined above implemented, and how)

VI. Advancing

Advancing had been defined by the Front as keeping the

political initiative in popular hands. The Emergency aimed to do the opposite. Nonetheless, the mass democratic movement managed to engage the state on a number of Fronts, combining high profile propaganda campaigns around calls like "Unban the ANC" and "Nelson Mandela: Freedom at 70", with exercises of mass power in the form, particularly, of stayaways.

While organisations found themselves in a subjective crisis, the mood of the masses remained combative. Indeed, the largest stayaway in South African history occurred 4 days after the Emergency was declared. Rent boycotts and militant strike actions maintained an ongoing crisis for the state.

A. Rent boycott

"The value of rent boycotts is that they strike at the material basis of Black Local Authorities, while simultaneously relieving some of the economic pressures on the masses" - Z. Sisulu.

The State of Emergency did not immediately end the people's power phase, and township residents continued to keep the regime off balance in some sectors, particularly in relation to local authorities. The most effective weapon here was the rent boycott. These boycotts, which began almost spontaneously during the revolt, took the struggle against Black Local Authorities from protest to challenge.

While the refusal by residents to pay increases imposed by unpopular councillors was a political action, the economic crisis had eaten so far into real wage packets (if not jobs themselves), that for many working people the rent boycott was an act of economic survival.

By September 1986, 42 townships housing 3 million people were engaged in rent boycotts.

People's power structures often made state harassment of the boycott ineffective. For example, when defaulters found their electricity disconnected, they would simply contact the street committee who would break open the electricity box and reconnect it.

The UDF warned that evictions would raise popular anger, and that the government should take responsibility for any violence that resulted.

An attempted mass eviction by municipal police in White City, Soweto, in August caused a battle in which up to 30 people were killed. In response, Soweto residents held their biggest stayaway since 1976.

explained. "The tactical use of these methods does not mean abandoning our legality, or our struggle to preserve it".

While the Emergency was calling forth new methods of organisation, the Front insisted that repression not be allowed to hinder the democratic practice such as elected leadership, mandates, reporting back and constant assessments. Developing the mass character of organisations was even more essential.

Consolidation also demanded greater ideological cohesion, and the eradication of any tendencies towards individualism, factionalism and regionalism. These processes had made important advances under the Front's banner. Delegates to

the 1987 NWC observed an absence of some of the regionalism which had characterised earlier gatherings.

A. The Freedom Charter

The most important step in the ideological consolidation of the Front was the adoption of the Freedom Charter in June 1987.

Although it had not adopted the Charter at its formation, the process of consolidating the political identity of the Front had seen the Charter assume greater prominence. UDF had mounted a national campaign to observe the Charter's 30th anniversary in 1985.

Since the defeat of the Tricameral elections, the Front had increasingly assumed the role of a cohesive national political organisation, and political centre within a broader anti-apartheid movement. This demanded that the Front adopt a clear ideological identity.

In the Charter, the Front found the vision embraced by the bulk of its affiliates, as well as its most important allies in COSATU and other spheres. Indeed, the Front believed that widespread and unchallenged support saw the Charter "fast becoming the programme for national unity of all those opposed to the Nationalists". While this statement might have been premature, the Charter was clearly the common vision among the main active detachments ranged against the regime.

B. National Affiliates

A second important consolidation dynamic was the gradual restructuring of the Front from a diversity of small organisations into giant national sectoral affiliates.

Despite the ears and eyes of the system being in every

township through the JMC system, 115 delegates from all over South Africa gathered in total secrecy to launch the South African Youth Congress (Sayco) at the end of March 1987. Its membership was estimated at 500 000, and it immediately affiliated to the Front.

Indeed, as early as 1983, the Front had initiated the process of unifying its hundreds of youth affiliates under a single national banner.

The formation of SAYCO was a milestone, for it created a tightly disciplined and nationally coordinated force out of the sector which made up the bulk of UDF's cadres. The national UDF campaigns, the consumer and rent boycotts, the stayaways and streets committees, all depended first and

foremost on the militant youth and their willingness to work and sacrifice.

Qualitatively deepening the organisation and coordination of the hundreds of youth congresses which had sprung up all over the country was an essential precondition for the advance of the democratic movement as a whole in the new circumstances.

A month after the SAYCO launch, the women's organisations affiliated to the Front formed a national structure - the UDF Women's Congress. Its task was to be "raising women's issues in all UDF forums and striving for the fullest participation of women at all levels of the UDF".

UDFWCO also played a major role in reviving the Federation of South African Women, a broad based body embracing all anti-apartheid women.

The cohesion of the Front was strengthened by the creation of strong sectoral affiliates, which in turn strengthened all organisations in their sector.

C. Political centres

The NWC encouraged the tendency towards leadership and co-ordinating structures playing the role of "political centres" - "organisational collectives that are capable of providing political leadership, that are able to strategise, to lead".

"The concept of 'political centre' means that all our co-ordinating structures - the zonal, area and township structures, our RECs and the NEC must be more than the simple sum of their parts. A township co-ordinating committee, for instance, must not simply be a bureaucratic

working relationships with the white parliamentary opposition. There was a recognition that for the Front to influence whites, it could not rely exclusively on its small extra-parliamentary affiliates in the white community. The bulk of whites still looked to parliament, and the Front needed to seek to reinforce its moral and political authority in that quarter.

By addressing parliamentary groups, and seeking joint struggles with them on specific issues, the Front has won

itself an important place in the thinking of white political opposition, and its opinions are sought by key actors in this sphere.

At Broederstroom, the Front and COSATU met with a delegation of senior businessmen. They made clear that despite major differences, there was grounds for cooperation on specific struggles against apartheid. The businessmen formed the Consultative Business Movement (CBM) to coordinate their political responses.

The impetus towards wider united action has taken shape in a number of limited campaigns, often local defensive actions over the schools crisis, Pietermaritzburg vigilanteism and detentions. (need examples!)

An attempt to widen the scope and nature of such cooperation came in the form of the Anti-Apartheid Conference scheduled for September 1988.

D. Vigilantes

The doctrine of "low intensity warfare" which guided the regime's response to the revolt, calls on its adherents to use "proxy forces" to attack an enemy, rather than their own armed forces. The presence, for example, of the SADF in townships only served to polarise residents against them.

For the US military, the same strategy has meant that rather than invading Nicaragua, they created a "proxy force" of Nicaraguans - the "Contras" - to carry out their designs.

It is not surprising then, that in the new more sophisticated State of Emergency, people's organisations increasingly came under fire from vigilante groups based inside the townships. The regime presented co-ordinated military campaigns by vigilantes, such as the burning of KTC, as "black on black violence".

"Social problems and unemployment, tribalism, gangsterism, and bantustan poverty have enabled the forces of apartheid to recruit people", the NWC conference warned. "The

overwhelming majority of death squad members are politically backward people".

In combatting death squads, "our response must be 90% political and 10% defence", the conference stressed. The best defence against vigilantes was drawing the widest sections of the community into struggle, denying vigilante forces a base.

Besides expanding the Front's moral and political influence in townships, the NWC stressed that organisations should look after the welfare of those detained and hiding, to

prevent the system finding weaknesses which could be exploited to generate informers.

NWC delegates stressed unity as a matter of survival in the new political conditions. The danger of violent organisational differences, such as the UDF-AZAPO conflict, had provided a smokescreen for the death squads. Uniting the community was essential.

Indeed, the UDF intervened to keep reconcile rival progressive factions whose quarrell briefly erupts in violence in Cape Town's KTC squatter area in February 1988.

1. Pietermaritzburg

The most important test for the Front's policy against vigilanteism came in October 1987, when UDF structures came under a sustained assault from Inkatha.

Outline response of Front, cemented relations with Cosatu, negotiations, the Front being built in struggle against vigilanteism etc. (Add)

V. Consolidating

Consolidation for the Front meant, firstly, adapting its method of work to ensure survival. Murphy Morobe told the Weekly Mail in June 1987 that "when the UDF was launched in 1983, one of its hallmarks was those momentous mass rallies and colourful festivals that used to muster thousands of people. Those days have passed".

The May 1987 National Working Committee emphasised that the UDF had "mastered many of the techniques of secret, underground work". This tactical use of underground methods should not, however, be confused with the ANC's strategic option for underground struggle.

"For UDF, tactical use is made of some underground methods in order to continue open mass level work", the NWC