

17th March, 1988

## PROBLEM AREAS WITHIN THE MASS DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

The state of emergency has paralysed most of the UDF structures and affiliates, a fact which is further compounded by the recent clamp-down on the activities of the major democratic forces. Prior to this, most of the experienced leadership was already in detention and/or in hiding. The Front faced a number of political and organisational problems as a result.

### 1. Grassroots and regional structures:

For a long time, the Front has neglected the building of strong and cohesive grassroots and regional structures. In the OFS, there is no structured coordinating organ except for an Interim Area Committee covering only seven areas. Since the 1984/5 national uprisings and the regimes' backlash, the Eastern Cape remains emasculated and isolated from the rest of the country. The S/Tvl region is weak, although functional. Most of its cadres have been drawn into national structures without replenishing.

The UDF National has failed on a number of occasions to consult and involve the W. Cape and other regions in the decision making-process. At one point, the Region demanded that Head Office move to the W. Cape and threatened to disaffiliate from the Front. The Natal REC is restricted to the Durban Area, fails to intervene decisively and to guide branches. (Cabal factor to be referred to under factions).

In an attempt to transform itself from an issue-orientated forum, the UDF mistakenly flouted principles of a Front and assumed an organisational form restricting initiative from the ground - affiliates became dormant and waited for directives from the top.

## 2. Vigilante and death squads question:

Since the imposition of the SOE, the enemy has developed a fifth column in the form of vigilante and kitskostables. Activists are hunted and driven out of their operational areas. Most have become what is termed 'internal refugees!' The May 1987, National Working Council Conference addressed the question thus: "Social problems such as unemployment, tribalism, gangsterism and bantustan poverty have enabled the forces of apartheid to recruit people into death squads. The overwhelming majority of the death squads members are politically backward people."

A programme of isolating diehard elements and winning those hoodwinked through mass political education and propaganda, politicisation of sports and cultural groupings etc. has failed to take off.

## 3. Factionalism:

The cancer of factionalism is eating the mass democratic and progressive movement away and has been discussed a number of times. Organisational guidelines were worked out to ensure:

- decision-making processes always involve the maximum number of people
- representation in RECs have as main component people who represent constituencies to guarantee accountability;
- accountability to membership at all times. Individuals and groups who provide services must be integrated into organisations; and
- constant evaluation and reflection of activities at every level.

Despite the above decision, the problem persists.

al Cabal - the problem has re-emerged seriously towards the end of 1987 and is today compounded by the public flaring up after the NIC Congress. At its Nov. 87 NEC session, the UDF Chairman characterised the matter as follows: "..... the problem is not a new one and that it has always arisen whenever there are problems or a crisis within the Front .... will always come to the fore also if there are issues which are not well

understood by the affiliates or individuals within the Front ...."

Contributory issues were identified as follows:

- i) appointment of people to replenish the national ranks without broad canvassing of regions
- ii) poor communication between NEC and its affiliates and regions
- iii) the administration of finance and its distribution.

Since its inception, the Cabal problem is associated with elements within the NIC/TIC. Elements identified with the Cabal claim that in their endeavour to advance the Congress line they are 'labeled' by the church, white left, workerists/trots, petty bourgeois and some old guards. They (Cabal) see themselves as an advanced Congress grouping within the MDM.

b) **Freewayhouse (FWH)** - the issue was tackled and solution found: in the creation of a Board of Directors by the UDF and CRIC. However, political differences and approaches have not yet been addressed. Nusas, within which the grouping was strong, seems to have managed an uneasy truce to be consolidated through uniting different caucuses. Allegations that ultra-leftists publishers of 'UDF Militant' are linked to FWH, still to be confirmed.

c) **Release Mandela Campaign** - the launching of the RMC National without consultation with the MDM and fears of a parallel organisation, sparked off further rift between its leadership and the Front. The issue further complicated by RMC activities around the release of cde GM. But central to this problem are personality problems, 'cabal issue' etc. The solution is linked to the latter.

d) **The ultra left** - failing to win the mass movement to its side, ultra left elements have moved into the democratic movement. A new problem has emerged in the confusion created whenever they challenge the basic policy principles of the MDM, and its allies. It is mostly composed of intellectuals and students who see themselves as 'think tanks' for the masses but shun action. Target is youth and workers - problem acute in W. Cape and Border.

#### 4. Revival of Organs of People's Power:

The regime has succeeded to a certain level to crush or inhibit the activities of the street committees, greatly affecting the deepening of ungovernability. But the major weakness has been the lack of understanding by activists and leadership of the MDM of the **concept, role and tasks** of these alternative organs. Most have degenerated into 'makgotla's'. If we are to advance to our set goals, the confusion existing needs to be cleared. The mini-JMCs running parallel to them are an enemy counter tactic.

#### 5. Rural and bantustan mobilisation and organisation:

The MDM and the movement are the weakest in this sector. That bantustans are enemy creations 'does not mean that we have to neglect our people residing there - latent potential exists as reflected by the current upheavels involving 'army officers': Bophuthatswana and Transkei are examples at hand.

Crucial elections are to take place soon in KaNgwane and the enemy is not happy about Mabuza's cooperation with the MDM. What is to be our approach to elections in KwaNdebele?

#### 6. Pietermaritzburg and KTC conflicts:

The present PMB carnage does not enjoy the support of Inkatha rank and file, and even some persons in the leadership. The MDM has been at loggerheads on how to settle the problem. However, recently in February the UDF NEC accepted the proposal from cdes in PMB that "there should be inclusion in peace talks of four national people from UDF and four from Cosatu" with the proviso that the talks must be confined to the PMB violence - no discussion about ideological and strategic differences.

With regard to KTC, two UDF presidents are commissioned to be part of the peace initiative - COSATU and SAYCO are included. It should also be noted that the KTC problem has its roots among the "UDF/Congress forces" (ref discussion with KTC delegation).

**NB:** All these problems and their solutions have to be viewed now at the backdrop of the latest clampdown on the MDM. (ref. Assessment of the Political Situation and the PoA).