ISIZWE
THE NATION

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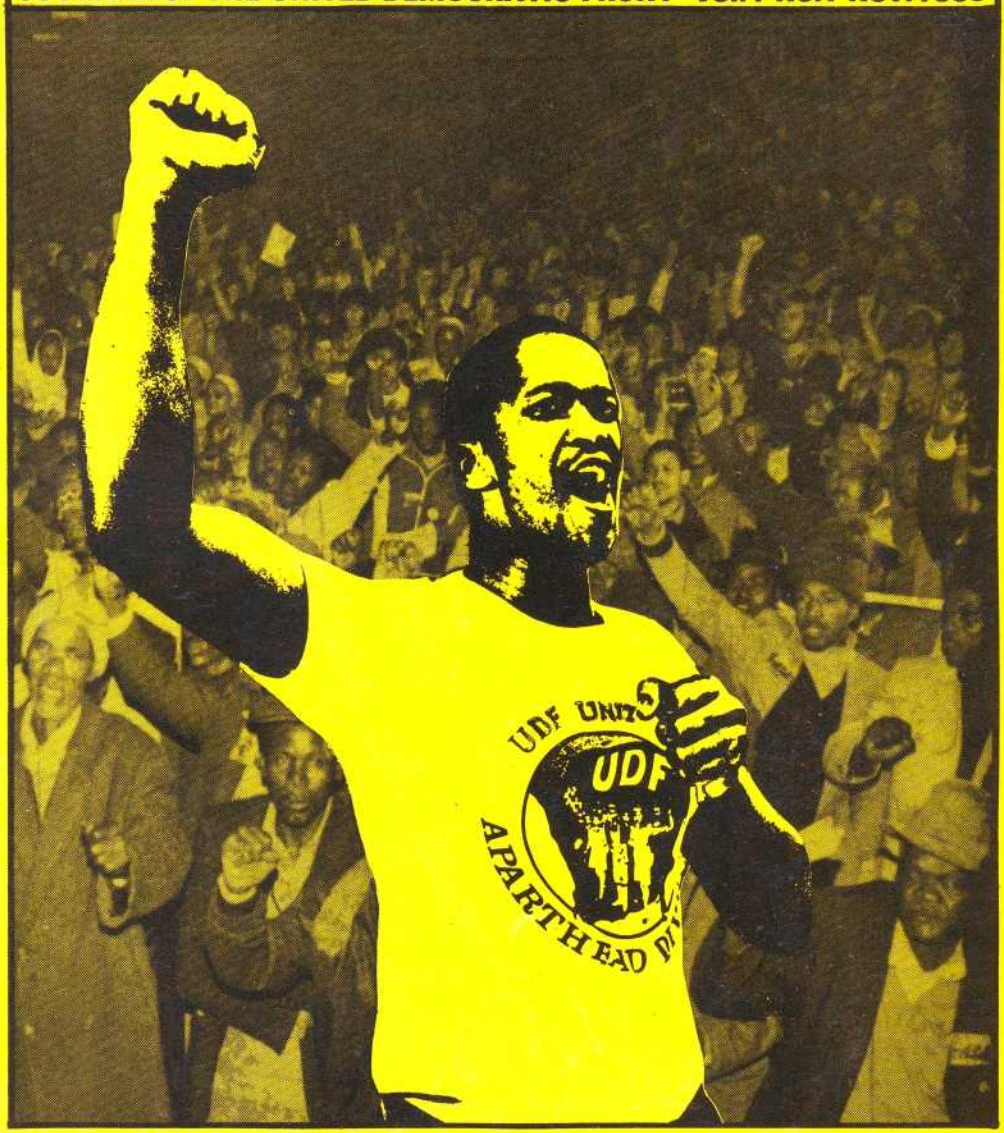

THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED

contents

		PAGE
1.	introduction	2
2.	tasks of the democratic movement in the state of emergency	4
3.	convention alliance	19
4.	on discipline	23
5.	unemployment	31
6.	udf and the international struggle	40

introduction

At the present moment, the apartheid government is going all out to crush the UDF. About two-thirds of our national and regional executive members have been out of action through death, detention or trial. Thousands of members of affiliates are in detention. A major UDF affiliate, COSAS, has been banned.

We are not surprised that the government should be attacking us in this way. It has singled out the UDF because of the role we have played in winning many victories in the two years of our existence. In these two years:

* The black local authorities system has collapsed.
* The tricameral parliament has been exposed as toothless and without support.
* Mass struggles against forced removals are beginning to win victories. At Driefontein, Kangwane, Magopa, Mgwali the apartheid criminals have been forced to retreat.
* The apartheid government is more isolated internationally than ever before. International sanctions have been widely applied. Ambassadors have been withdrawn. The government cannot pay its foreign debts. All of this has happened at a time when they have been trying to win foreign friends!
* above all, in towns and villages, in schools, mines and factories, the broad masses are on the

march. Through mass stay-aways, consumer boycotts, mass funerals and marches they have shown that no deals can be negotiated over the people's heads. The message "FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER!" has become more and more the demand of all freedom-loving South Africans.

In order to steel ourselves against the attacks of the government, and to carry forward our tasks, it is important that we should develop our understanding of the struggle. Let us use theory as another weapon in our march forward.

In this first issue of ILIZWE we look at some important issues for our struggle. The views expressed in these papers are not the official views of the UDF or any section of the Front. They are designed to encourage discussion, debate and education within our ranks.

THE UDF LIVES! FORWARD TO PEOPLES' POWER!

the tasks of the democratic movement in the state of emergency

Throughout the country, the people and their organisations are experiencing repression on a scale that is extraordinary, even by South African standards. Consequently, when we speak of the State of Emergency, we refer to a situation existing in the whole country, in some places formally declared, in others existing in fact, even if not officially.

Until now our reaction to the State of Emergency has tended to be on the state's terms. We constantly ask ourselves: What do they intend to do? - To ban us? Or to crush us, but allow us to exist formally?

Now more than before, it is important to realise that we are not passive onlookers. We have already shown, in these difficult conditions, that we can make interventions, as we have done in regard to Botha's "rubicon" speech, the so-called Convention Alliance, the distribution of our newsletters, Update and other literature.

At the same time, mass resistance to apartheid repression has spread and taken on ever more militant forms throughout the country.

It is important to see ourselves, as we are and were prior to the Emergency: as actors. When we ask: How long will the Emergency last? When will it end? - the state alone will not determine the answers to these questions. What we have done, what we do now and in the future, will have a great effect on the long term outcome of the Emergency. For this reason, this paper situates the Emergency within the framework of our goals, instead of situating ourselves within the state's goals. We try to understand the conditions under which we have to work. How we deal with these, the extent to which we master them, will determine how this phase of the South African struggle will end.

The question is who will be better equipped to continue the struggle from this period onwards? To what extent will the war against the people have weakened us? To what extent will the people's continuing resistance and the developing divisions within the enemy camp have weakened them?

before the state of emergency:

strength of the people

The rise of mass democratic struggle in the late 70's and early 80's brought back a form of struggle that had been eradicated for 20 years. What this meant was the re-opening of a front of struggle. While engaged in military struggle against SWAPO and the ANC, the state now also has a substantial internal mass struggle to contend with.

This mass struggle forms part of a democratic tradition. It is a movement of the majority of South Af-

ricans against white minority rule. It aims to ensure that "the People Shall Govern". It tries to draw in all oppressed and democratic South Africans, under the leadership of the African people and the working class. While neither of these leadership goals have always been adequately realised, the form of struggle represents an attempt to fuse two strands of the South African movement for liberation - the national (for the people to rule their own country) and the workers' struggle for socialism.

These national and democratic characteristics derive from the nature of the apartheid system and the strategy and tactics used to combat it. While the South African social order is based on a capitalist economic system, this coexists with the national oppression of all classes of blacks. This means that all black people have an interest in ending apartheid.

One of the significant features of the period immediately prior to the Emergency declaration was the extent to which the people's organisations were determining the course of political events. 18 months earlier the enemy had taken most of the initiatives. But in the period prior to the Emergency and during the Emergency, the government has found itself in a defensive position. It has been and continues to be primarily occupied in trying to contain the popular surge forward.

After the 1976 rising, the Nationalist Party had established elaborate schemes for the cooption of sections of the black population - in order to broaden the base of the state and to divide the oppressed. This went together with a wider reorganisation of the state.

In the early years of the Botha regime there was considerable momentum on the side of the government. There was also a developing alliance with the bosses.

Less than 18 months ago, the Botha regime presented a clear strategy, forcing the oppressed to struggle mainly on terrain of the state's choosing. The government's dynamic approach was partly a result of their closer link with big capital. This alliance to some extent made up for the Conservative Party breakaway.

This was a period in which state initiatives flourished, there was an appearance of confidence as they produced Wiehahn, Riekert, de Lange reports, started to implement Black Local Authorities (BLAs) and other schemes.

Much of the early Botha initiatives were under the protective umbrella of "constructive engagement". While this provided much needed international support it also demanded a specific kind of conduct. The South African regime had to be closer to the model of a "normal" capitalist state - or at least appear to be so. This meant less open repression, the appearance (and to some extent, the reality) of open, democratic discussion, the attempt to depict South African society as involved in a process of ending apartheid.

Conceding space for a legal front of struggle can be explained by a combination of factors. The pressure of the democratic movement itself and the fact that such legal struggle might have been viewed by the state and capital, as a safety-valve, as an alternative to armed activity. At this time, the white ruling bloc was sufficiently strong and cohesive to feel able to contain democratic opposition.

The imperialists and big business were particularly keen to have evidence of democratic discussion and acceptability of the new constitution. They were aware that suppression of such discussion would make its already dubious legitimacy even more questionable.

The people's organisations used the space allowed for open democratic struggle to mobilise millions of people. Certain specific goals were achieved.

* The new South African constitution was born without any legitimacy and there was countrywide rejection of BLAs.
* Democratic symbols were popularised. Steps were taken towards creating a common understanding of the nature and goals of the national democratic struggle.
* There was extensive national mobilisation. The struggle was taken to many rural areas. It did not, however, reach the bantustans or farms in a systematic manner.
* Organisations were created where there had been none before and organisations with a national base were established.
* People were organised in a number of sectors around a wide range of issues such as women, workers, youth and students - around such issues as rent, GST, electricity, gutter education and retrenchments, etc.

Although we played the major role, not everything that contributed to the state's disarray over this period was initiated by the UDF and its affiliates. For example, FOSATU conducted its own campaigns against the constitution. At the same time, the continuation of the armed struggle by the ANC continued to extend the forces of the apartheid state.

The combined effect of struggle on all these fronts has smashed the enemy's plans. The NP has been paralysed since the rejection of the constitution. Bankrupt of alternatives they have increasingly resorted to pure repression. The initiative prior to the declaration of the Emergency passed to the people. The state was essentially engaged in holding action. It was on the defensive, trying to keep the lid on the people's resistance. The declaration of a State of Emergency was an admission of defeat.

what does the enemy aim to achieve through the state of emergency ?

The broad aim of the emergency was to reverse the gains made by the democratic movement over the last 18 months, to resuscitate discredited leaders and to re-create the space for puppet solutions and structures. The regime realises that only by crushing the uprising and the people's organisations can it hope to win a measure of consent and collaboration in the revival of apartheid structures.

SMASHING OUR ORGANISATIONS

Different sections of the ruling bloc and its allies have different intentions as regards the smashing of the people's organisations. In the case of the Nationalist Party and Inkatha the intention is to completely wipe out democratic organisations. With regard to COSAS, this has taken the form of outright banning. (In fact, COSAS along with AZASO, was already banned in 1983 in Kwazulu by Inkatha.) This strategy could still be applied to the UDF. In the case of other democratic organisations, the option may be to allow the organisations to continue in name, but to ban their activities in practice. This policy has different aspects: the mass detention of activists, the harassment and murder of UDF activists in Natal by impis. An analogy can be drawn with the way in which the South African regime has dealt with SWAPO in Namibia. While the organisation is not formally banned, it cannot operate freely and openly. The banning and disruption of meetings, confiscation of literature, all aim to prevent effective, open organisation.

In the case of the PFP and sections of the bosses

the attempt appears not to smash organisation, but to render it ineffectual. This strategy is aimed at a long-term co-option of both the leaders of these organisations and their programmes. (See discussion of power sharing below.)

SMASHING THE UPRISING

The second aim of the ruling bloc is to smash the uprising in the townships. Under the guise of maintaining law and order and the protection of private property, all sections of the ruling bloc (including the bosses) supported this objective at the time of the Declaration of Emergency.

What this Emergency means in practice, is the occupation of the townships by the police and the SADF to wage a war of terror on the entire township population. The youth have born the brunt of this, although it affects all residents.

political options of forces of reaction

In considering the options at the disposal of the enemy forces, we will see that, while the various sections share certain aims, there remain distinctions between them. But even if all sections of the ruling bloc were to secure agreement as to their approach, there plans could not simply be implemented.

The ability of the ruling bloc to carry out its plans also depends on the people's resistance. As a result of popular resistance, there has been a great deal of vacillation on the part of the ruling bloc. The

people's resistance has created and exacerbated differences between them. As one initiative after another collapses, their aims have to be modified.

Whatever differences there are between the NP on the one hand, and sections of the bosses, the PFP and imperialism on the other, we must clearly understand what is fundamental and common to all these forces. This is their intention to seek a solution over the heads of the people, one that excludes the masses.

The fundamental ideological concepts used to mobilise people behind the type of solution favoured by the ruling bloc as a whole is "power sharing". Although the form in which it is applied will vary, it is a conception shared by the entire bloc. The concept of "power sharing" is counterposed, by its supporters, both to white minority rule and universal suffrage in a united South Africa.

"POWER SHARING"

"Power-sharing" is clearly intended as a form of evolutionary change. It suggests sharing what exists. The existing cake should be more equitably divided. Some who were not invited to taste the fruits of power should now be allowed at the table to eat, or at least to nibble. This is a revivial of what SPROCAS called a "taste of power" more than a decade ago.

Central to the politics of negotiation outside the NP is the conception of the extension of civil rights. It is worth spelling out that a national liberation struggle does not seek to be "accomodated" within an existing order, nor merely to have rights gradually extended to the majority of the people. It is a call for the People to Govern - not to share power as if the minority were equals of the majority.

Power sharing is essentially political change from

the top, at the top, though the range of people involved in decision-making would be widened. This conception of politics operates through "leadership figures" negotiating deals. The extent to which individuals may be brought into this process would depend on the constituency they can command and control, or are thought to be able to do so.

For the system to operate effectively, every leader should be able to "deliver" a constituency. Thus Hendrickse was brought in to "deliver" the coloureds, Rajbansi the Indians, and so on.

The differences between the NP and some other sections of the ruling bloc is not about negotiation over the heads of the masses, but about who should be included in the negotiation process. While the NP is generally not keen to enlarge the range of negotiating parties, certainly within the central political system, other groupings argue that this system will only be viable if others are included. Its present instability, they would argue, is that it involves negotiation with too narrow a range of people.

Amongst some of the "reformist" school of thought there is a call for Mandela's release and his inclusion in negotiations. What one needs to understand, however, is that negotiations are intended to be with Nelson Mandela the man - not as representative of an organisation to which he is responsible. What these people have in mind, also, is negotiating on an "open agenda". One cannot come with "preconceptions" or non-negotiables such as universal suffrage in one South Africa. In supporting the Slabbert/Buthelezi call for a National Convention Alliance, one writer argued in the Star of 6.9.85: "The less non-negotiables brought to the conference table, the more successful negotiation is likely to be, for non-negotiables could scuttle the process before it is even begun..."

Because he has demonstrated the necessary "generosity" and "flexibility" someone like Buthelezi has considerable appeal in some circles, as a partner in such a process. The Sunday Times explains in an editorial of 11.8.85:

" In sharp contrast to the sloganeers of violence, the Kwazulu Chief Minister has never demanded more than should be given, but despite extreme pressure from the radicals, has skilfully practised the art of the possible, tailoring his demands to the realities of white fears."

In the same issue, Ken Owen acknowledges a "sense - no more than intuition - that Inkatha may be fraying at the edges". It is, he argued, therefore urgent to deal with Buthelezi before Inkatha has lost all support.

The question of "negotiation" has become a pressing one during the Emergency, precisely because of the patent incapacity of the existing negotiating partners to command/control more than a trifling portion of the population.

our tasks during the emergency

Before we can form an adequate response, we need to assess correctly what the State of Emergency means. Our view is that it is at once an admission of weakness on the part of the regime but also an alteration of the terms under which we conduct our struggle. The extreme repression that we are now experiencing is an attempt to "roll back" the forces of democracy to reverse the gains that we have made in recent months.

There may be some intellectuals who see value in repression because vicious acts "unmask" the enemy. (In fact the people have never had such illusions about the enemy's vicious character, since they experience it daily). There is another brand of left lunacy which thinks that the greater the repression the more symptomatic it is of "death agonies" and the closer we are to radical transformation.

Our view is that these new conditions create new problems and pose new challenges to us. We need the broadest possible space and opportunities to build oursleves.

But in a struggle like ours, we must constantly prepare ourselves for the possibility of altered conditions. We cannot allow ourselves to be paralysed by such changes. The difficult conditions under which we work now can, we will argue, in fact be turned to our advantage and be used to deepen organisation, to enhance our capacity to advance the struggle.

Our view is that we must not give up our space, we must continue to assert our right to exist as a legal democratic movement. At the same time, the manner in which we do this must be with sufficient responsibility to avoid needless arrests and weakening of our structures.

ISOLATE THE ENEMY

In the first place, as always, our job is to isolate the enemy. While this is a "traditional" task, we are now concerned with something more elaborate than undertaken in the anti-constitution campaigns. There we frustrated attempts to coopt significant sectors of the Indian and coloured communities, just as the rejection of BLA's ensured that only puppets would staff those structures.

Now we are speaking of something broader. We have noted the differences between sections of capital and the NP. We want to maintain that division. But that does not mean we draw big business into the camp of the people. That can never be. Our aim is, however, to neutralise sections of the enemy camp or its allies and thus to dislocate their attempts at unity.

But how do we intervene to achieve this? One of the ways we do this is to ensure that they have no illusions about puppet solutions. eg. every time we reject PW's offers - it actually energises business to come up with their own vision and that again exacerbates the split. The fact that business has met with the ANC is partly a result of popular rejection of government initiatives. In a sense, every time we sucessfully remove the legitimacy from a government initiative by getting the masses to support us, we further sharpen the division within the ruling bloc.

HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN OUR ORGANISATIONS ?

At the beginning of 1985, the UDF adopted as part of its theme "From Mobilisation to Organisation". This theme has become more important in the current emergency than ever before. Developing mass based democratic organisations is our surest weapon against the two pronged offensive of the ruling bloc. Such organisation is our best guarentee against the attempts of the state to crush us through repression, and the attempts to bypass us through 'power sharing' reforms.

To speak of developing organisation out of the mobilisation that we have achieved, does not mean that the task of mobilisation has ended. Mobilisation whatever and whenever possible, through mass campaigns (marches, rallies, pamphlets, boycotts) remains a major component of our struggle. However,

we must try also to organise the maximum number of people. Without strong, mass based democratic organisations we will not attain victory.

Let us remind ourselves why such organisation is important. It is only through such organisation that ordinary, working class people can participate, take control and assume collective responsibility for the running of their lives. It is through such organisation that the working masses can develop leadership skills. Without organisation, our struggle will risk becoming chaotic, we will not be able to learn from our victories and from our mistakes. Each day will be a new day.

But above all, we need to understand that mass-based democratic organisations are not a luxury, not somesomething that we talk about because we think 'democracy' is a nice word. It is an absolute necessity for the survival of our struggle, that we develop well-knit, cohesive mass organisations. If our ranks are made up simply of a few thousand activists and some leading personalities on the one hand, and tens of thousands of sympathisers on the other - then we are playing into the hands of the apartheid government. We are making ourselves vulnerable to annihilation. Our greatest struggle, the guarantee of survival, lies in mass-based organisation, that will endure through the detention of leaders.

Such mass-based organisation is also the best guarantee against the attempts of the local capitalists and international imperialists to detach leaders from the ranks of the people.

LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

One thing that we must be careful about in this connection is that our organisations do not become

too closely associated with individuals, that we do not allow the development of personality cults. We need to understand why we regard people as leaders and to articulate these reasons. Where people do not measure up to these standards they must be brought to heel - no matter how "charismatic" they may be.

No person is a leader in a democratic struggle such as ours simply because he or she makes good speeches. Those speeches are good if they are able to reflect people's aspirations, and where they reflect prior consultation.

We are not interested in good ideas or interventions for their own sake. A suggestion that arises after democratic discussion is one that we may support. A decision made with people's consent is one we will recognise.

No individual may make proposals on the people's behalf - unless mandated by them. No person is a leader who acts without such a mandate, without a sense of responsibility and accountability to the people through their organisations.

We need to say these things because there are some people and interests who are trying to project individuals as substitutes for political movements. We need to be wary of this, especially now that we are facing the possibility of banning. If we were to consist of a few individuals what would exist after the banning?

When we say that someone is a leader we therefore mean someone who stands in a particular relationship to the people through their organisations. When we call someone a people's leader, we mean that such a person recognises that responsibility to the people.

Business, the state and the imperialists are engaged

in a concerted attempt to co-opt leaders as opposed to organisations and the people. No human being is infallible. The only guarentee against co-option is people's power and accountability.

conclusion

We have already won the first great battle for our existence, the battle against the new constitution and the Koornhof Bills. Let us now win our second battle, the battle for survival. Let us build people's power, street by street, house by house.

VIVA UDF! FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER!

convention alliance

This article appeared in the Cape Times during September 1985.

Two years and one month after its inception, the UDF finds itself bearing the full brunt of the government's onslaught. Two thirds of our national and regional executive members are out of action through death, detention or trial. At least two thousand rank and file members of UDF affiliates are in detention. A major UDF affiliate, COSAS, has just been banned.

It comes as no surprise that we should bear the weight of the government's onslaught. It is, of course, a back-handed compliment. The wave of repression, as many foreign and local journalists have noted, has merely served to boost the status of the UDF. However, we have not invited this repression for its own sake; it is the consequence of the effective challenge we have mounted to the government's "reforms".

Indeed, the "reforms" and repression are not in contradiction to each other. Both are intended to give a crisis-ridden regime time and space to perpetuate itself. Above all, both the "reforms" and the repression are designed to shut out mass-based, democratic participation in the transformation of our country.

The same excluding intentions lie, unfortunately, behind the many recipes for hope and dialogue that are now flourishing. The political bankruptcy of the government, coupled with the onslaught on the UDF, have prompted a rush for the limelight in certain quarters. Each day brings a new recipe: Anton Rupert ("a man of vision is needed..."), Raymond Ackerman ("an alchemy of great vision is needed..."), Buthelezi (every night on SATV).

Since the mid-70's when he was still offering Lebanon as an outstanding example of an effective, multi-ethnic "constitutional" system, Van Zyl Slabbert has advocated a particular brand of "negotiation" politics. Specifically, he has sought closed-door talks between representative political elites (his term, not ours). It is this vision of politics, we believe, that underlines the national convention alliance. We see in this iniative another attempt to keep the broad mass of South Africans off the political stage.

The UDF insists that there can be no meaningful change in South Africa, and consequently no peace, without the unbanning of all political organisations, the unconditional release of all detainees and political prisoners, the scrapping of the racist constitution, the pass laws, group areas and bantustans.

All restrictions on workers' ability to organise themselves in trade unions must also be removed. These are not bargaining chips. They are the objective conditions necessary for developing a meaningful democratic participation and mass acceptance of any change.

When the UDF calls for the release of Nelson Mandela, it is not so that he can be whisked off to top-level negotiations behind closed doors (assuming that someone of Mandela's calibre and integrity would allow this to happen, in the first place). We demand that Mandela and all other political prisoners

be allowed to take up their rightful role in the development of mass-based organisation.

It is meaningless to push for national conventions at a time like the present. We assert this not out of any knee-jerk intransigence. The lesson of the last two years is, precisely, that you cannot negotiate "reforms" over the heads of the people. Without remedying the exclusion of the majority from democratic involvement, you will simply fuel the violence and bloodshed.

Where does this leave us, then? We in the UDF, no less than most South Africans, greatly look forward to the day when South Africa can live in peace with itself and the world. While there are no shortcuts, we are not pessimistic about the future.

We are greatly heartened by the growing participation of millions of South Africans in the running of their own lives. In a great many iniatives - local and national, rural and urban - we are seeing ordinary South Africans assert their collective right to democratic participation.

In the Vaal Triangle and New Crossroads, residents have refused to pay their rents for many months. They feel that they have no control over the way in which these funds are spent.

Nation-wide there are consumer boycotts against the state of emergency and the presence of troops in the townships. Collective resistance to forced removals has begun to mark up victories. Everywhere South Africans are organising with increased confidence.

In the Western Cape, where 465 schools have been shut down by ministerial decree, parents, teachers and students challenged the closure. But they were doing more than this; they were asserting that the schools belong to the community not to an illegitimate, minority regime.

We in the UDF are also greatly heartened by the growth of the independent trade union movement. The new federation of unions will represent another step forward in the struggle of the working class on the factory floor and beyond.

The last period has seen, then, the definitive entry of the broad masses of working class and democratic South Africans onto the political stage.

The collapse of the black local authorities, the tri-cameral parliament's lack of all credibility and the effective ungovernmability of many parts of South Africa are not the result of an anarchic conspiracy led by the UDF.

As the UDF Transvaal publicity secretary, Sidney Mafumadi, recently put it: "The UDF does not seek to make South Africa ungovernable. Our objective is to make our country governable - under majority, democratic rule."

on discipline

The UDF NGC has adopted the theme "From Protest to Challenge .... From Mobilisation to Organisation". In this short discussion paper we wish to consider the position of discipline and the very important role it can play in taking us from mobilisation to greater organisational unity.

When we talk about discipline we are referring to a political concept. Personal discipline (being reliable, being serious about one's work, setting a good moral example) is needed for political discipline. But personal discipline is not enough. Individuals who have personal discipline can be politically undisciplined. Nor is it enough to have a 'radical temperamant', that is, to sense what is right and to act on one's initiative. Ours is not a front of individual entrepreneurs, doing their own thing. Our concept of discipline arises from a political understanding. We are not referring to the type of discipline forced on people by the SADF. The discipline we speak of is a discipline that involves the conscious and willing decision to subordinate one's own will and immediate personal inclinations to that of the collective, or more precisely to the organisation to which one is responsible. We do not expect our activists to work like robots or unthinking sheep. The discipline we call for must be based on a clear political understanding.

moving to a higher stage of struggle

At our April National General Council the dangers of indiscipline were emphasised: "Unless indiscipline is eliminated, our organisations are threatened with disunity, division and suspicion. All forms of factionalism, regionalism, individualism and cliquism must be stopped. We are working not in our individual capacities but as activists of a people's front."

To call for increased discipline now reflects the fact that there have been acts of indiscipline. To some extent, then, we are concerned with a negative question, the question of the control of behavior of our own activists and followers.

But when we call for discipline, we are above all making a positive call to take the struggle to a higher level. Increasing our discipline will make it possible to move from protest to co-ordinated challenge, from mobilisation to high levels of organisation.

At the present we have a situation where the apartheid government has been faced with a total inability to carry out it's reforms'. We also have the worst economic crisis since the 1930's.

But our own level of organisation is not adequate for us to take full advantage of the government's crisis. We do not have the ability to co-ordinate and direct our forces in a systematic way. Higher levels of discipline will help us to direct our forces to where they are most needed, to where we can most effectively counter the government and frustrate its initiatives. We would be able to entrust our activists with tasks, that might be difficult and inconvenient,but we would be sure that they are carried out.

Just as we need such discipline in order to advance, so we must understand that any act of indiscipline is an act against the struggle, against the people. An act of indiscipline aids the enemy. To reject discipline is to disarm the people and willingly assist the aims of the enemy. To avoid or neglect discipline whatever one's intention, has the same effect. Our greatest weapon lies in our collective, organised strength.

We must remember that the enemy is not sleeping while we plan our activities. We know that it openly attacks us and the people as a whole. But it does not only operate from outside our ranks. It also operates from within our organisations.

From within, the enemy takes advantage of any signs of indiscipline, any disunity, every weakness. It does this in order to confuse our people, in order to increase indiscipline and sow chaos in our ranks.

discipline and understanding the struggle

The UDF is a broad front of organisations. In the short period of our existence, we have mobilised tens of thousands of South Africans into our ranks. There has been a massive growth in terms of our numbers. Those drawn into the front have come from many different backgrounds, and sometimes out of different political traditions. It is not surprising that we should find that there is much uneveness in the understanding of our struggle.

At the moment there is a limited understanding of many basic issues within our ranks. There is also an unequal development, and differences in the way in which we see issues such as national democratic

struggle, working class leadership, etc. It is essential for our unity, and for our ability to oppose the enemy effectively, that we begin to overcome these problems.

Problems of discipline are partly based on this uneven development of political understanding. Higher levels of discipline, on the other hand, will make possible more thorough political discussion and the development of a more unified understanding of our struggle. Education and training within our ranks is a crucial part of developing discipline. It is important that such training is not confined to the leadership level. Organisations must make sure that education is a basic part of their ongoing work. Because the front structure is not centralised, it is very important that we reach a higher level of political understanding within and between our affiliates. Otherwise the Front's direction and unity will be confused.

organisational discipline

Discipline does not mean sheepishly taking orders fro our leadership. Rather, organisational discipline is a way of arriving democratically at collective decisions, and ensuring that these decisions are then carried out. We will look at these two sides to organisational discipline.

(i) Arriving democratically at collective decisions

To arrive at collective decisions involves honest discussion and the airing of differences. If differences do not emerge honestly in discussion they will always re-surface later in a destructive way. However, the discussion that takes place wit

in the the organisation before arriving at a democratic decision must itself take place in a disciplined way. This means that:

a) Differences must be discussed in a comradely manner. Different viewpoints must be respected. The discussion must be conducted at a political level, and differences must not be personalised.

b) Contributions to the discussion must be constructive. This excludes negative and divisive approaches, as well as arguments that go against the basic principles of our struggle.

c) Comrades must always be sensitive to the security situation facing our organisations. Comrades must restrain themselves from making ill-considered statements, full of "revolutionary" rhetoric.

ii) Carrying out organisational decisions

A decision is made once a line has been democratically established. The second stage of organisational discipline consists in effectively carrying out that line. Everyone is bound to stand by the collective decision, and to defend it, no matter what their own position was during the discussions.

All activists have a duty to explain the decision to others, or if they do not understand it, to discuss it and to come to an understanding. Any person or group that tries to overturn such a decision, or to criticise it outside the organisation, is being factionalist. Fully democratic practices, on the one hand , and organisational discipline on the other, are our weapons against factionalism.

This is not a static process. If members of organisations are unhappy with a line or decision, they must raise this in a responsible and comradely fashion through the democratic process. In this way, a disciplined approach allows the organisation to develop in an ongoing way.

discipline and our style of work

There are also some other aspacts to organisational discipline related to our'style of work'.

One of the major problems of discipline in our Front is the question of punctuality, arriving on time. How many of our meetings ever start on time? This lack of punctuality then becomes a disease, people come later and later because they never expect a meeting to start at the announced time. To be late may seem to be unimportant. But every time we are late we are keeping others waiting.This means that we are keeping others away from their political work.

Another aspect of discipline is the duty to respect and follow the leadership of democratically elected leaders, to defend them from enemy attacks and slander. But equally, leadership are servants of their organisations. They are accountable to them. They must carry out the decisions of the organisations that have elected them.

In our style of work it is of great importance to ensure that there is not the slightest trace of sexism in the behavior of our activists. Any attitudes or practices which treat women as inferior must be criticised and eliminated. As for more serious forms of sexist indiscipline, there can be no place whatsoever within our ranks for those guilty of sexual violence

or rape.

Discipline in our style of work also means planning, using strategy and tactics. In politics it is often necessary to seize the moment, to act very quickly and decisively. But this must always be based on a clear and disciplined assessment of the possible gains and goals of this action. A disciplined approach refuses to give in to pressures to "do something". Even when emotions run high, the correct decision might be to hold back and actively build one's strength. This often requires more discipline and courage than a more emotional response.

discipline beyond our organisations

Organisational discipline is not only an internal discipline. We must always have a correct and disciplined approach in our contact with the masses, and with activists, officials and members of other organisations which are not in the enemy camp.

At the level of contact with the masses, our activists are seen as representatives of our organisations. Our organisations will be judged by the standard of their behavior. If we want to build our organisations as democratic alternatives, they must enjoy the highest reputation amongst the people.

What about organisations and tendencies outside of the UDF ranks? Our conduct towards these will depend on whether they are in the people's camp, or in the enemy camp. Who the pepple are, and who the enemy is, is not an unchanging thing. It may alter over time.

In general, whoever is part of the broad national democratic struggle we try to win over and co-operate

with as much as possible. Often, in such matters, it is necessary to distinguish between the leadership of such organisations and the ordinary rank-and-file members. While the leadership may be complete sell-outs, we must still win over the ordinary members who are misled.

With regard to those in the enemy camp, we wage a ceaseless, unremitting struggle.

It is important, then, to see the political importance of discipline. The question of discipline is not mainly a negative thing. What we need now is a sustained effort to build our unity, to engage in persistent struggle to eliminate our weaknesses. This will help us to take our struggle to higher levels, to make a far more powerful challenge, and to bring closer the day when we free ourselves from apartheid, and establish a People's South Africa.

questions for discussion

1. Discuss the connections and differences between personal and political discipline.

2. What are the main forms of indiscipline that affect the daily work of your own organisation, and of our broad Front?

3. What role can discipline play in overcoming factionalism?

unemployment

There are more than three million people unemployed in South Africa today. For every three South Africans who have a job, there is another South African who should have a job but cannot find one.

When we think of unemployment, we think of the suffering of those unemployed and their families. But, our whole society suffers. At the moment, one quarter of our workers are going to waste. Those who are unemployed want to work, and they could add to our country's wealth. Unemployment stops them from doing this.

What can we do about this problem? Many people just shrug their shoulders and say: "Unemployment, there is nothing we can do. There are just not enough jobs." The bosses and the apartheid government tell us that all over the world the economy is in a bad shape. They talk about unemployment as if it was a natural fact, like the weather - one day sunny, one day rainy, but there is nothing we can do about it. That is the story the government and the bosses want us to believe.

But this strange situation where we waste one quarter of our workers has everything to do with the kind of society we live in. South Africa is a CAPITALIST society, and capitalism causes unemployment.

capitalism causes unemployment

In earlier societies (like tribal societies) there was no unemployment. If you were old enough and healthy enough, you worked. You helped everyone else. You gave your share of work, and you benefitted from everyone else's work too.

Also, in modern socialist countries, like Cuba, there is no such thing as unemployment. The fields and factories belong to the whole Cuban working people. Everyone who is old enough and healthy enough is expected to work, to build up the wealth shared by all Cuban working people. Work is guaranteed to all citizens in socialist countries. Work is not seen as an unpleasant duty, it is not slave labour for a boss. In a socialist country work is a way of developing yourself as a full human being, learning skills and working together with others.

If there is no unemployment in tribal societies, or in socialist societies, why do we find so much unemployment in our country today? In all capitalist so-countries there is large unemployment. Not only in South Africa, but in the richest country in the world - the United States - millions of workers cannot get jobs. The same is true in the other capitalist countries - Britain, West Germany, France, Japan.

Why are such rich capitalist countries not able to solve the problem of unemployment? Sometimes we are told that it is just at the moment that things are like this. We are told there is a world-wide recession (this means the economy is going down). But, we are told, we must wait, sooner or later the economy will get better.

Is this true? The answer is: Yes and No.

Yes, capitalist economies do go up and down. Yes,

when they are down, when there is recession, then millions of workers lose their jobs. Unemployment increases.

But the answer is also No. It is very important to remember that: there is always unemployment in capitalist countries. It does not matter whether the economy is going well or badly. When it is going well there is unemployment; when it is going badly, there is even more unemployment. Let us give one example. In South Africa, between 1979 and 1981 there was an economic upswing. The South African economy was very wealthy, but we still had two million unemployed. The same applies to all capitalist countries - even in good times, there is large scale unemployment.

But, why is there this huge waste of workers?

capitalism and the class struggle

Capitalism is a system where a few bosses own the factories, big shops, banks, mines and big farms. They pay wages to workers who labour in these factories, farms, etc. The bosses aim to make as much profit as possible. This means that the bosses try to get the workers to work as hard and as long as possible for low wages.

The workers, of course, struggle against this. They struggle to earn more and to work less hard. Between the bosses and the workers there is always, every single day, a struggle of this kind. It is against this background that we can understand the three main causes of unemployment:

i) The reserve labour army
ii) Demand shortage

iii) Labour saving machinery

i) The reserve labour army

If everyone was employed in a capitalist country, the workers would be much stronger in their battle with the bosses. It would be easier for workers to demand better wages, or a shorter working day.

But, when there are unemployed workers desperate for jobs, this strengthens the boss's hand. If employed workers make demands, the boss can say: "If you don't like your wages, you can leave! There are plenty others looking for work."

It is for this reason in capitalist countries you will always find unemployment. The bosses are careful not to employ everyone. They like to have a safety-valve, a large number of unemployed workers hungry for jobs. This safety valve we call the reserve labour army.

ii) Demand shortage

We have seen that unemployment is not a natural thing, like the weather. Unemployment is caused by capitalism. We have also said that recessions, or when the economy goes down, makes unemployment worse. Recessions lead to even more unemployment.

Again, the bosses and the apartheid government speak of recessions as if they were natural facts like the weather. And again it is important to understand that recessions are also caused by capitalism. The one big reason for recessions is the greedy selfishness of the bosses.

Every boss pays his worker as little as possible. That way he can make big profits. But every boss would like other bosses to pay their workers more. Why? Let us take an example.

Imagine you are Raymond Ackermann, the boss of Pick 'n Pay. If you were Raymond Ackermann you would like the bosses who own clothing factories, and car factories, and tyre factories, etc. to pay their workers more, so that these workers could buy more from Pick 'n Pay. But at the same time, you, Raymond Ackerman, want to keep your own profits high, so you pay low wages to your own workers.

So you can see why things don't work out so well. Each boss is selfish, and pays his own workers very little. In this way all bosses suffer from each other's greediness.

For this reason, in capitalist countries, you will find factories that can produce thousands of cars, TVs, clothes, etc. work only to half their capacity. Or, you find these factories closing down. This is not because people don't want cars, TVs or clothes. It is because there are not enough people with enough money to buy these things. Because the bosses pay so little, there is not enough demand for their goods. This leads to recessions, and this leads to more unemployment.

iii) Labour saving machinery

This is the third cause of unemployment. Again, the bosses and the apartheid government make this sound like a natural fact. They tell us: "We've got to keep up with the times. We've got to introduce the latest machinery."

Once more this so-called natural fact is rooted in the capitalist system. It is a system based on profits for the bosses, and not on the needs of society.

In capitalism there is not only a constant struggle between the bosses and the workers. There is also competition between the bosses. Each boss tries to take the other bosses' customers away. One way of

doing this is to produce more goods more cheaply by using new fancy machines. These machines employ fewer workers and make more goods.

Now it is true that labour saving machinery can help a society, can produce more wealth and cheaper goods. But in capitalism, the introduction of this machinery is not based on the needs of the society, but on the profits for the bosses. So new machines often mean that thousands of workers lose their jobs. "What can we do? It's competition", say the bosses.

In socialist countries, there is much advanced machinery. But the use of this machinery is based on what society needs, and on whether jobs can be found for those who will be replaced by the machines. In socialist countries, they may decide to keep old machines if this will benefit society more. It all depends.

Once again, the third cause of unemployment only seems like a natural fact if you are sitting inside the room called capitalism, and if you forget to look outside of the window at other possibilities.

apartheid and unemployment

We have looked at the three main reasons for unemployment:

i) The reserve labour army
ii) Demand shortage
iii) Labour saving machinery

In South Africa you will find all these causes. This is because South Africa is a capitalist society. But South Africa also has special things about it. Besides capitalist exploitation there is also national

opppression of the majority of our people. This national oppression adds to the unemployment problem.

The white settlers came to South Africa long before capitalism developed here. These white settlers stole the land from the people. They pushed the local people into reserves. They made them carry passes. The African majority became foreigners in their own land.

This national oppression was here before South African capitalism started. Then, at the end of the last century, with the development of diamond and gold mines, this national oppression was adapted to help capitalism.

When we speak of national oppression, we are speaking of many things: pass laws, forced removals, job reservation, the Bantustan system, separate and gutter education, etc. All of these aspects of national oppression add to the problem of unemployment in South Africa.

i) National oppression and the reserve labour army

In all capitalist countries there is a reserve of unemployed. In South Africa, the pass laws and the Bantustans are used to control and support a huge reservoir of unemployed. Ever since the beginning of capitalism in South Africa, the reserves have been used as a cheap way of keeping reserve labour.

In this way, the unemployed are kept away from the cities, away from the political and economic power centres in our country. For this reason, the South African bosses and the apartheid government are comfortable with a much higher number of unemployed than in other advanced capitalist countries. We just bury the problem in the starvation camps in the Bantustans.

But while this works in one way for the South African

bosses, it makes the demand shortage greater in our country.

ii) National oppression and the demand shortage

The demand shortage is even greater in South Africa than in similar capitalist countries. With millions of unemployed starving in the Bantustans, they can hardly think of buying cars, TVs, or new clothes.

It is not just the Bantustan system that causes this demand shortage. The general poverty and oppression that hits the black majority in our country, means that South Africa has a much smaller home market than is usual for an advanced capitalist country with 30 million people.

This brings us to the third capitalist cause of unemployment.

iii) National oppression and labour saving machinery

Because of the small home market, many South African bosses are forced to sell their goods overseas. In fact, from the start, South African capitalism was largely directed to selling overseas. For many years gold was the major thing produced by South African capitalism. Most of this gold was sold overseas. Because South African bosses export a lot of their goods, they also have to compete with powerful foreign bosses.

Of course, it is not just South African bosses who operate here, there are also many overseas bosses (imperialist bosses) operating in South Africa.

In all these cases, we often see the use of labour-saving machinery that needs less and less workers. The kinds of factories we have depends on South African bosses, and not on the needs of South African workers.

This new machinery often uses a few skilled workers, and here again national oppression adds to unemployment. Gutter education, cultural oppression, job reservation, all these things hold back the black majority of our country. It is very difficult for blacks to gain skills. Today we have the terrible situation where South African bosses and the apartheid government are paying large amounts of money to attract skilled workers from Europe, while millions of our own people are unemployed.

conclusion

We have seen that capitalism causes unemployment. We have also seen that in South Africa the national oppression of black people adds to this problem of unemployment. It is for this reason that we say that the struggle against unemployment is also a struggle against capitalism and national oppression.

questions for discussion

1. Discuss the 3 main causes of unemployment in all capitalist countries. Do you understand these 3 causes? Do you agree that capitalism causes unemployment?

2. Discuss the ways in which apartheid makes unemployment worse.

3. Discuss the possibilities, the importance and the difficulties of organising the unemployed.

udf and the international struggle

The international goals of the United Democratic Front are in no way different from its internal goals. We seek to end apartheid, to free our people from the scourge that makes their lives miserable. To effect this, we engage inside the country, in mass political action to demonstrate our rejection of apartheid and especially its most recent manifestation in the New Constitution and the Koornhof Bills, and the State of Emergency.

The UDF is only two years old, but already behind us we have a lot of experience in the struggle. It is important for us to learn what we can from our own short history. Here we will look at how the UDF was able to make important international gains in the so-called "Consulate Affair".

In both internal and external struggles our strategy has been to isolate the racist regime from any support, to mobilise the greatest possible support behind the democratic movement and to encourage any action that will reduce the capacity of the regime to continue its oppressive system.

For our internal strategy to succeed we need to take into account the concrete conditions existing locally. Equally, the way that we wage the struggle

on an international level must take account of the special character of international relations, its specific dynamics. The way that one conducts the international struggle is not the same as mounting an internal campaign.

When you are fighting in the mountains and jungles you cannot apply the same strategies and tactics that you do when you are fighting in the desert. Your goal will be the same, but your strategy and tactics cannot be identical. We need to know the terrain, and we need to develop appropriate tactics and strategies.

need for international support

We need to form a correct assessment of the complex international relationship of forces. Neither the forces against apartheid, the Socialist States, African and non-aligned states, some of the more democratic Western and Latin American states, nor the more collaborationist Western and Latin American states, are monoliths. We need to understand the strengths, divisions and weaknesses within and between these states and groupings of states. If we are able to make an effective intervention we cannot settle for easy simplistic analyses that ignore the complexity and precise character of international relations.

We need, in our international activities, to form a variety of types of relationships with international organisations, states, political organisations and church groups, etc. In each case we have to assess the character of each organisation or state. One cannot make identical requests, nor expect identical relationships with every type of state. International

relations are governed by diplomatic conventions and the observance of protocol, and these should be respected.

Similarly, we need to evaluate the limits to our expectations in any particular relationship. Certain states and organisations will genuinely assist us because they support our struggle and understand that it is a national liberation struggle. Other states and organisations may hope to drive a wedge between the various components of the forces struggling for liberation. Such states might try to mute the most advanced sections of the democratic movement, seek to transform our struggle into a civil rights movement and attempt to project a 'third force' outside or within our struggle.

The fact that certain states and organisations may not totally share our goals or may not share most of our goals, the fact that certain of their motives in entering the relationship may not coincide with ours, does not bar us from forming a relationship on terms favourable to us. Certainly it does not mean that such a relationship is without advantages for us.

We can learn from the international strategy of the Vietnamese in their epic struggle against imperialist occupation. At one stage the Vietnamese liberation movement sought United States support against the French colonists. Then, in the second phase of struggle after defeat of the French, the Vietnamese played off the French against the American imperialists.

Neverless, whatever relations we enter into, whatever diplomatic initiatives we undertake, must be measured against our overall goals. We must therefore ask, when evaluating any particular action or possibility: does it or will it advance the struggle to end apartheid, either by widening or strengthening the anti-apartheid forces, and/or by weakening the regime and/

or by exposing its criminal acts to the world and/ or by loosening the ties between the regime and its sympathisers?

Alternatively, any activity that might diminish the power and prestige of the democratic forces against apartheid, any activity that might set the struggle back, must obviously be rejected.

Just as the UDF is formed internally on the basis of a united opposition to apartheid shared by a variety of groupings, externally it seeks support from all opponents of apartheid. Generally our relations are close to those who are sympathetic to the UDF and with whom we share a generally similar understanding on a number of issues. But we have to establish correct and principled relationships with other states and organisations. It may be very difficult to establish meaningful relationships with states which condemn apartheid on the one hand, but whose internal policies we may find repugnant, or whose attitudes on certain issues may be different to ours. It may, nevertheless, be in the interests of the UDF to establish and maintain certain of these relationships - provided that they serve to advance our struggle.

If we are to conduct a sophisticated domestic and foreign policy, we have to be adept not only at direct attacks and responses, but also at spotting and exploiting differences in the enemy camp. Even with out-and-out reactionary governments our job is to make it difficult for them to collaborate with apartheid. And within reactionary states, our quarrel is not with every party or organisation in such a state. Nor do we have any quarrel with the ordinary people who generally support our struggle.

These are, then, some of the considerations that should guide our international policy. How this has been pursued in relation to the elections and their after-

math, especially the consulate affair will now be considered. Finally, attention will be given to future priorities.

elections and their aftermath

During the recent elections for the new 'tricameral' parliament, the UDF sent letters to various national and international organisations and states, explaining its objection to the new constitution, emerging from a regime that has no right to govern the people of South Africa. It called for expressions of solidarity. Amongst the most significant were that of the late Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, who called for a boycott on the eve of the polls, and the unprecedented statement of the United Nations Security Council, declaring the new Constitution to be null and void.

Since the elections, the popular resistance has thrown the regime into a panic. Not only have leading democrats been arrested, but state terror has been unleashed against ordinary people on an unprecedented scale.

What would be the correct response of the UDF in the situation? The scale of repression appeared to signal a return to 'darker times' with a possible banning of the UDF, wholesale banning of affiliates and leaders. The job of the UDF , it is suggested, was on the one hand to take defensive action, whatever action that could give our organisations protection. At the same time it had to intensify its offensive against the apartheid regime and its allies. In a changing situation

it had to adopt flexible tactics in order to obtain maximum advantage. Its job was to ensure that whatever the regime sought to do to the democratic movement, would cost it a great deal, whether in internal resistance or increased international embarrassment and isolation. For everything that is done to us, we must try to exact a price, sufficiently dear to make the racists think again before they attack us.

occupation of the consulate

After being freed by the Natal Supreme Court on the basis that their detention orders were defective, 5 UDF and Natal Indian Congress activists went underground. After the orders were modified, police launched a massive search for them. Had they simply given themselves up, these men would undoubtedly have been 'victims of apartheid'.

Instead of being objects of our pity and/or protest alone, the five UDF and NIC leaders, joined by Paul David, who was also being sought, presented themselves at the British Consulate and applied for temporary asylum.

Kader Hassim of APDUSA (before giving himself up to the police) suggested that he did not want to go the consulate because he did not want to give Britain the opportunity of appearing to be the champion of South Africa's oppressed people. "Britain is not an ally or friend of the oppressed and exploited people here or anywhere else". "Britain, together with the other Western powers, are the technical advisers of the Botha regime". (City Press 23.09.84)

Now I am sure that the Consulate Six had no illu-

sions about Thatcher's government. Let us examine what they achieved, by creatively exploiting international contradictions:

* Instead of giving themselves up and going meekly to prison, they took the initiative and created an entirely new theatre of struggle.

* This threw into the international limelight the repression of democratic leaders, whose "offence" was to have campaigned against the racist constitution of an illegitimate regime. The popular victory against the constitution, which was well known within the country, became internationally publicised.

They were thus able to externalise and take forward the offensive around the constitutional 'reforms' by providing an international issue through which the allies of the South Afircan people could focus attention on the various atrocities being perpetrated by the apartheid regime.

* This wiped out what 'gains' had been made in PW Botha's European tour in 'respectabilising' the regime - and upstaged his inauguration as State President.

* Simultaneously, these events drove a wedge between the South African and Thatcher regimes. The UK government was unable to kick the UDF leaders out. South Africa was unable to march into the consulate and retaliated by refusing to send its alleged arms smugglers back to Britain. The result was increased tension between 'friends'. One

symptom of this tension was the United Kingdom's voting in favour of a militant anti-apartheid resolution in the UN Security Council. Normally, they would abstain or veto such resolutions.

* These actions drove a further wedge within the Western Five. While the UK and US were demonstrated to be collaborators, France sought to distance itself, with an unprecedented appearance before the special committee against apartheid.

*Anti-apartheid demonstrations in the United States on South African Consulate premises have clearly been influenced by the Durban Consulate occupation. These activities have increased the pressure on the policy of "constructive engagement" and forced Reagan to condemn detentions and apartheid in general.

* The Consulate Six made use of international media coverage to speak about events well beyond their own personal situation.

Their occupation of the consulate provided a means for throwing the spotlight on racist repression in general, whether through detentions, shooting in the townships or other violence. It is unprecedented that we should read a statement by Archie Gumede, Billy Nair and Paul David on the front pages of not only overseas newspapers but as the lead story of our own newspapers. In the Star 18.10.84 we read of their call on the government that "in the interests of peaceful change to stop all police violence in the Vaal Triangle, meet the demands of the people in this area, return the four men to London to face charges of arms smuggling, stop all acts of denigration and threats against the United-Democratic Front and undertake to scrap detention without trial."

The entire consulate affair, taken together with heavy handed responses by Pik Botha, Le Grange and others, served to reinforce the isolation and pariah status of the South African police state.

questions for discussion

1. What is meant by saying that the international goals of the UDF are the same as the internal goals, but the way in which we conduct these different parts of our struggle may be different? Do you agree with this?

2. Discuss the tactics and strategy of the Consulate 6, and compare these with the statement made by Kadir Hassim of APDUSA (see page 45 above)

3. "The struggle will be won inside South Africa, not outside ... therefore UDF should forget about the international struggle". - Discuss this statement.

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