

# ISIZWE

## THE NATION



JOURNAL OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT Vol 1 No.4 March 1987



THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN



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The views expressed in ISIZWE are not the official views of the UDF or any section of the Front. They are designed to encourage discussion, education and training within our ranks.

If there are any issues which comrades would like ISIZWE to discuss, or if you are unclear or unhappy about what we have said, write to Isizwe through your organisation or local UDF REC.

# INTRODUCTION

We are now into the ninth month of the latest state of emergency. We in the UDF have no doubt as to who is the major target of the apartheid regime's repression. Despite losses and heavy blows from detentions, imprisonment and the murderous work of the vigilante death squads, the UDF continues to inspire millions of democratic, patriotic South Africans. We are once more proving that we will not be stopped.

Back in 1984 the regime boasted that it would 'finish off the UDF in 6 months'. They are still trying, and they will not succeed. They have completely underestimated the heroism and determination of millions of ordinary South Africans.

But this does not mean that we on our side can be complacent. To continue our struggle we need to broaden our unity, double our vigilance, and, above all, deepen our organisation. It is for this reason that this issue of ISIZWE puts special stress on organisational topics.

A LUTA CONTINUA !  
FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER !

# Notes on the present situation

( The following are extracts from a discussion paper prepared for the UDF NEC )

## INTRODUCTION - THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

Towards the end of 1984 the apartheid regime began to lose the political strategic initiative. In the wake of the massive defeat of its 'reform' initiatives, and the massive mobilisation that occurred around their rejection, a significant qualitative change began to take place in the people's camp. With the collapse of its lower levels in the townships, apartheid rule came increasingly to be challenged by the development of rudimentary organs of people's power within rural and urban townships.

For the ruling bloc, the resulting political crisis placed tremendous strains on its internal unity. In the course of 1985 the ruling bloc showed greater signs of internal division than previously. On the one hand, the ultra-right wing parties



and groupings (Conservative Party, HNP, AWB, etc. ) extended their influence and mobilisation considerably within the white working class areas and certain white rural areas. On the other side, more enlightened elements of the big bourgeoisie, the PFP and other groupings became less certain of their middle term future under white minority rule. They began to seek contact with the ANC and with the legal progressive movement.

At the same time, and for the same reasons, the major imperialist powers became increasingly nervous about the medium term prospects for capitalism in South and southern Africa, seeing the continuation of the apartheid regime as a major cause for mass mobilisation, deepening struggle, people's war and wide-spread anti-imperialist sentiment.

In the first few months of 1986 the regime found itself in a no-win situation. It is clear that towards the end of 1985 they had been contemplating the release of cde Nelson Mandela. Their political signals to this effect did not take the national and international pressure off them. In fact, they served to heighten the pressure. The Commonwealth's EPG initiative marked the turning point. Despite early misgivings about the initiative the UDF co-operated with the mission, and this proved to be a correct decision. The major demands of the the EPG echoed most of the immediate demands of the broad democratic movement - in particular, the unbanning of the ANC and the release of all political prisoners.

As a result of these combined pressures, in May 1986 a new tactical shift from the side of the regime became apparent. It realised that, both on the international front and the domestic front, its attempts to buy time for 'reforms' that would keep the basic structures of minority rule were failing. The regime abandoned pretences, and moved more aggressively ( raids against the ANC in the frontline states, enactment of the Le Grange Bills in the face of opposition even from their own puppets in the tricameral parliament, and the declaration of the second state of emergency on June 12th ).

This marked, of course, merely a tactical shift, a greater level of ruthlessness, within the broader context of continued, uninterrupted fascist terror against the South African majority, representative organisations and the frontline states. In the week preceding June 16th the regime launched a massive campaign of disinformation to whip up fear.

For the regime, the second state of emergency ( SOE ) is designed to achieve the following results :

- i. Smash the rudimentary organs of people's power - specifically street committees, people's courts, and initiatives around people's education ;
- ii. Destabilise mass democratic organisations, specifically the UDF. The regime possibly has the medium term objective of banning the UDF completely ;



iii. To obtain more information, through interrogation, on people's power and mass organisations. It is clear that the regime's information is extremely uneven ;

iv. To regroup and re-consolidate the ruling bloc. Specifically, to take back some of the language and symbols of the extreme right wing, and to be seen to be taking a hard line against 'revolutionaries'. In so doing, they hope to reclaim some of the support drifting to the CP/HNP/AWB. On the other hand, through promoting a sense of siege, of total onslaught, they hope to win back some of the more liberal waverers in the professional and big business sectors.

The main cost to the regime for this tactical shift has been on the international front. The shift marked an admission from its side to its imperialist partners that it was unable to meet the minimum demands emanating from these countries.

In terms of the four main aims of the second SOE, it is perhaps too soon to pronounce definitely about how successfully they will be achieved. Generally, the regime has achieved some success in regard to all four, but it has so far failed to recoup to the level of the 1983-4 situation ( itself crisis ridden ). For a number of objective and subjective reasons ( see Isizwe no.3 ) the regime is highly unlikely to achieve a roll-back of the popular forces in any way resembling that of the first half of the 1960s.

## INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

The current situation is marked by considerable tactical confusion amongst the major imperialist powers. With some R60 billion in direct imperialist investment in our country, SA is of considerable significance to these powers. Their broad strategy, developed over the last decades, is to arm SA as a mini-imperialist power and regional policeman for the entire sub-continent. It is a similar strategy to that developed for the Shah's Iran, Israel, etc.

The imperialists' main concern at present is the chronic instability, and the medium term viability of the apartheid minority regime. With the heightening of our struggle, the last three years have seen, in particular, a significant defeat for the principal aim of constructive engagement: to stabilise the South African situation, while bypassing the national liberation movement, and in particular its leading organisation, the ANC.

In the last year, as a result, there has been a growing tactical divergence between the main imperialist powers and the apartheid regime. For the imperialists, the main tactical thrust at present is to urge rapid negotiations, to forestall any far-reaching revolutionary change. They have realised that it is impossible to bypass the ANC. Instead they attempt to draw the teeth of the liberation movement, while calling for the unbanning of the ANC and the release of political prisoners. Insofar as they are applying limited sanctions is as a signal to the apartheid regime, tactical pressure to secure the conditions for negotiations.



For the imperialist powers, then, sanctions are not seen as one weapon amongst others, to completely remove the illegal minority regime.

One of the major weaknesses of the imperialist strategy is the significant absence of a viable collaborating group. Gathsa Buthelezi continues to be seen as a component of such a group. However, his local and international prestige is considerably more stained, and his local support base less solid. ( Even within the PFP there is a clear recognition that Buthelezi's participation in their failed 1985 National Convention Alliance proposal was a major weakness ).

In the light of this weakness ( i.e. the absence of a significant neo-colonial collaboration base ) we in the mass democratic movement need to be particularly vigilant. The last period has seen a vast increase in the sums of money being pumped into the country, for black education, rural, labour and community projects of all kinds. This funding has the capacity to reach into the soft underbelly of the mass democratic movement. We need, increasingly, and rapidly, to develop a uniform political approach to this funding. In particular, we need to guard against the following :

- i. excessive dependency by progressive organisations on foreign funding
- ii. the undermining of structures through corruption

- iii. the unnecessary disclosure of information about our structures and campaigns to foreign agencies
- iv. the tying up of leadership in endless overseas trips, when the priorities lie in building mass structures inside our country.

We need also to be clear that progressive organisations cannot accept money from sources that are using this as a justification for an anti-sanctions stance.

The situation in the southern African region, has generally deteriorated further in the last period. The destabilisation of the frontline states has unquestionably weakened our own struggle. The increased regional instability is likely to continue. As the apartheid regime faces the prospect of its own demise, so it drags the whole sub-continent into turmoil. The interconnectedness of our own struggle and the tasks of consolidating gains in Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe is more apparent than ever.

In the coming period, the mass democratic movement in SA has a special responsibility in this regard. With the exception of some memorial rallies for Pres. Samora Machel, and some pamphleteering around his untimely death, we have failed in the past period to adequately deepen the spirit of internationalism within the sub-region. The UDF should also take more responsibility for pressuring regimes within the region when they allow South African refugees to be harassed, detained and even handed over to the apartheid regime.



## THE ECONOMY

The economic crisis in South Africa is both partly independent and deeply related to the current wave of mass political struggles. SA, like many other relatively advanced but not major capitalist powers, has been severely affected by the prolonged, global capitalist crisis dating back to the early 1970s. In SA's case this crisis has been partially, but only partially, cushioned by its major export, gold.

This crisis in SA has, as elsewhere, taken the form of chronic stagflation - low or zero growth, coupled with fairly significant inflation. Although this is a crisis of South African capitalism, its effects are suffered most acutely by the working masses. Unemployment in our country has assumed enormous proportions - current estimates range between 4 and 6 million. The majority of these unemployed are, in fact, youth who have so often formed the shock troops in the struggles in the last period.

The economic crisis, and especially inflation, has also deeply affected the already desperate plight of the majority. The crisis has also severely limited the regime's ability to buy itself out of its political crisis. Even the limited 'reforms' envisaged on the housing and educational fronts, have been considerably more restricted as a result.

In turn, the political upheavals of the last two years have further deepened the economic crisis of the regime. Returns

on US investment to SA have declined considerably in the last six years as a result of the instability here. This simple fact of lower profitability, coupled of course with sanctions pressure, should be seen as a key motivation for the recent withdrawal of large US companies like GM and IBM. While the immediate economic impact of these withdrawals may not be great ( the companies have been taken over by South African shareholders ), it has medium term significance. It sets a trend and lowers the attractiveness of investment in SA. Politically, the less committed US companies are to SA, the less the South African ruling bloc can depend on imperialist support. No wonder a recent US State Department briefing document which suggested that SA was rapidly becoming 'just another third world, African economy', provoked considerable hysteria from the side of the Botha regime.

The regime's current, more aggressive tactical shift on the political front has its economic equivalents, and its economic effects. With the advent of the second SOE, and the resulting advance of international sanctions, we are seeing the development of a siege economy within the country. The siege economy is part and parcel of the regime's 'total strategy', which it has held in contingency planning for some years.

In practice, the siege economy will mean the deepening of collusion between state and big capital, and increasing secrecy in regard to economic information. The collusion between state and big capital is particularly



to be noted in :

- i. joint strategising on how to break sanctions ;
- ii. participation of political, defence, police and business personnel on the Joint Management Committees. It is here that detailed, localised strategies are developed in an attempt to break the wave of popular struggle.

Apart from its economic objectives, the siege economy approach thus serves to consolidate one aspect of the fourth objective of the SOE - the closing of ranks between the regime and big capital.

Another important outcome of the siege economy approach will be an increased monopolisation of our economy. Already four companies control 80% of shares quoted on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. This monopolisation will increase, and it will further worsen unemployment.

From this brief economic survey we can conclude that those of our campaigns that are centred around the economic hardships of our people ( rents, a living wage, unemployment, transport costs, etc.) will continue to be of central importance in the new year. The need for consolidating our united action with the trade unions, specifically Cosatu, is particularly relevant in this regard. The regime will certainly seek, henceforth, to blame all economic hardships on the sanctions campaign. It will be a major political duty of the mass movement to expose this propaganda, and explain the real reasons

for the economic crisis in our country.

### REGIONALISM AND FACTIONALISM

The current period requires even greater efforts than in the past to ensure the unity of the UDF. The UDF has over 700 affiliates, it is a broad alliance that came together around a specific campaign, and the momentum of mobilisation and organisation built up in 1983-4, have kept the Front moving forward. In so doing the UDF has been occupying the terrain of open, mass political struggle, a terrain that had been more or less empty for over twenty years.

In the course of these developments, individuals, and groups from many different political, ideological, class and cultural backgrounds have been drawn together. Within the UDF today you will find activists and supporters whose backgrounds are Black Consciousness, liberal, Charterist, socialist, ultra-left, Christian, Muslim, and many more. We have also had to cope with differences between generations, which have sometimes been exaggerated by the long silence on the mass political front in the previous two decades. Generally, it can be said that the UDF has pulled these differences into a remarkable unity, beneath the broad hegemony of the national liberation front and the strategy of national democratic struggle. However, no-one should be surprised if this diversity also continues to have some negative effects.



## REGIONALISM

The very fact of rebuilding nationally on the front of mass struggle has underlined regional diversities. Some of these differences are of a subjective kind, reflecting the particular strengths and weaknesses of UDF leadership and structures in particular areas. But this is not the only, or even the main cause for regional differences. The UDF nationally has had to come to terms with regions that are, objectively, quite different- for instance Border and Eastern Cape on the one hand, and the Western Cape on the other. The former regions have large African populations and strong Charterist traditions. In the Western Cape, the African population is relatively smaller, and the large coloured sector does not have strongly rooted Charterist traditions.

Generally speaking, the UDF has learned to work with these differences, while seeking, at all times, to advance national unity in action and a broad uniformity of approach. In the last period most of the sharpest regional differences at the ideological level have been overcome. Our Second National Working Committee, held last year, and attended by many delegates from all over SA, witnessed a new level of national unity and uniformity of approach.

## FACTIONALISM

A more serious problem within a front like ours can be the problem of factions. While genuine political differences do certainly play a role, factionalism is often more related to styles of work, and

competing networks of influence and control of resources, and to certain personalities displaying individualism, ambition and other petty bourgeois tendencies.

There is a natural tendency, however, from within factions to justify their existence on allegedly ideological grounds. They will also attack other factions ( real or imagined ) on ideological grounds. All of this generally serves to obscure the real root of the problem. These false ideological justifications generally take the form of claiming to represent the 'authentic Movement position' - as opposed to the 'others'. The incorrect, and often highly undisciplined introduction of this particular dimension, merely makes resolution of the problem even more difficult.

In understanding the existence of factions, we need to consider the importation of certain styles of work into the UDF from the late 1970s and early 1980s. Positive work in this earlier period was performed and made possible, arguably at least, by certain styles of work - tight caucusing, advanced groupings working within the broader leadership of organisations, etc.

However, the huge development of mass based democratic organisations, and the overwhelming acceptance of the broad charterist perspective, has made these old styles of work unconstructive. The broad charterist position no longer needs safeguarding from the basis of self-appointed, independent small advance networks that bypass the democratic processes of mass organisations.



The UDF has identified the following basic principles as our chief weapons against factionalism :

- i. the upholding of democratic processes of our affiliates and of the front itself, even under conditions of the emergency. There must be no casual bypassing of these democratic processes - even if they need to be substantially adjusted because of repression. No such bypassing can be justified in the name of the 'authentic Movement line', or whatever. The UDF and its leadership is not an alliance, or conglomeration of factions. This is an important assertion, unfortunately in many quarters within our ranks there is a dangerous assumption that the mass democratic structures are purely formal, and that somehow everyone must also sign up with one or another faction. Against these tendencies we must ensure that our activists learn to act in accordance with the merits of a particular line, democratic-ally determined, rather than on the basis of this or that individual authority or factionalist line.
- ii. a clear understanding of the different levels of discipline. Characteristically, factions operate in a cloudy, intermediate area, without being under the discipline of any real organisation - legal or otherwise. However, underground levels of discipline are sometimes falsely invoked ( often publicly ) to justify bypassing the discipline of UDF structures. It needs to be understood that no independent group, or individual can designate itself as 'authentic'.

It also needs to be understood that the use of such alleged authority in open public forums is entirely incorrect if not downright suspicious.

- iii. democratisation and answerability of service organisations to elected structures of our mass organisations. These service organisations often command considerable resources, and employ many more activists than our affiliates and central front structures themselves. Such service organisations can disrupt the processes of the front if they make independent interventions, or understand their answerability to mean answerability to merely some elected leaders, of their own choice.
- iv. uniform, national programmes of education and training - particularly designed to underline our unity, and to emphasise that factionalism is currently not fundamentally rooted in ideological differences.
- v. the deepening of constructive criticism and self-criticism within our ranks. UDF and affiliate structures must be able to accommodate ongoing constructive criticism. At the same time, loose talk, gossip and slander cannot be tolerated. Those with criticisms must make them within the democratic structures of the mass movement.

The dangers of factionalism cannot be overstated in a situation in which there is a relatively vigilant enemy, constantly on the look-out for gaps within the people's camp. The UDF and its affiliates need to



act democratically, but also boldly and quickly against individuals guilty of gossiping and involved in faction forming. Too often we have waited inexcusably long, allowing factionalism to deepen and spread.

Finally, it should be stressed that the struggle against factionalism must in no way be equated with the attempt to stifle debate, or disciplined diversity within the framework of the basic ideological and organisational principles of the front.

### THE DEBATE ABOUT SOCIALISM

In the last year, there has been a growing mass interest within the UDF and Cosatu ranks, in socialism. There is a great hunger for more information about socialism, and for wider discussion about a possible socialist future in SA. These developments are widespread and national in character. Several commercial surveys, in fact, have shown that a majority of blacks support socialism. (The Financial Mail, for instance, reported a poll that indicates 77% support from urban blacks for socialism.)

The handling of this reality from the side of the UDF leadership has not always been self-assured. It is clear that the UDF is not, and should not be a socialist front. The UDF and the broader liberation front include both socialists and non-socialists. This is not a shortcoming. The last three years of intense struggle have confirmed, once more, in the hard school of practice, the absolute correctness of the broad strategy of national democratic struggle. Any individual who imagines that the NDS strat-

egy is a delaying tactic, or the result of a 'petty bourgeois takeover' of the liberation movement, is lacking in any concrete understanding of the material conditions in SA. ( And, it should be said, such an individual is also lacking in any understanding of the real possibilities of transition to socialism in our country.)

On the other hand, a genuine interest in socialism and its propagation is not to be equated with dissidence, workerism, or any other deviation. Where such accusations have been made, where for instance interest among youth in socialism is dampened or suppressed, this merely encourages divisions between generations, and the formation of factions.

More positive, open discussion on the future of our country needs to be encouraged within the ranks of the UDF.





# DEMOCRACY

We are involved in a national DEMOCRATIC struggle. But what do we mean by democracy? How does our approach differ from other approaches to democracy? Under the state of emergency are democratic procedures possible within our organisations? These are just some questions that arise when we speak about democracy.

To understand our approach to democracy, it is useful to consider the question at two different, but connected levels.

1. In the first place, democracy is the fundamental aim of our broad national democratic struggle - to bring about a united, democratic South Africa. This aim is summed up in the demand: The people shall govern!

2. In the second place, there is the question of democracy within our existing organisations.

It is useful to separate these two levels, but obviously they are also connected. By developing active, mass-based democratic organisations, we are laying the basis for a future, democratic South Africa.

Let us consider each of these levels in more depth.

### DEMOCRACY, THE BASIC AIM OF OUR NDS

We are struggling to build a future SA in which the broad working masses of our country have a real control over their lives. This means control over all aspects of their lives - from national policy to housing, schooling and working conditions. This, for us, is the essence of democracy. When we speak of majority rule, we do not mean that black faces must simply replace white faces in parliament. When we demand that the people shall govern, we mean at all levels and in all spheres, and we demand that this must be a real, effective control on a daily basis.

To place stress on this understanding of democracy, fundamentally distinguishes our position from various liberal versions of democracy. These liberal approaches look at abstract models, and, in particular, they lay great stress on multi-party systems as opposed to supposedly 'undemocratic' one-party states. A future, liberated SA may have a one-party or a multi-party system. That, for us, is not at all the most important question. Indeed, in different liberated countries there are advanced



democracies that involve one party systems in some, and multi-party systems in others. In all progressive countries, seeking to build and deepen democracy, it is not a question of how many parties are to be included, that is not the central question at all. The key to deepening democracy lies in deepening mass organisations in all sectors of society, and in creating the right social and economic conditions in which power is no longer in the hands of a small class of exploiters.

Reflecting this approach to democracy, this is what Sandinista leader and Nicaragua vice president, Sergio Ramirez says :

"Effective democracy, like we intend to practice in Nicaragua, consists of ample popular participation : a permanent dynamic of the people's participation in a variety of political and social tasks ; the people who give their opinions and are listened to ; the people who suggest, construct and direct, organise themselves, who attend to community, neighbourhood and national problems ; a people who are active in the independence of the country and in the defence of that independence and also teach and give vaccinations ; a daily democracy and not one that takes place every four years, when at that, or every four or five or six years when formal elections take place ; the people don't go as a minority but in their totality ; and they consciously elect the best candidate and not one chosen like a soap or a deodorant, a vote freely made and not manipulated by an advertising agency ... for us democracy is not merely a formal model, but a continual process capable of giving the

the people that elect and participate in it the real possibility of transforming their living conditions, a democracy which establishes justice and ends exploitation."

The rudimentary organs of people's power that have begun to emerge in SA (street committees, shop steward structures, SRCs, PTSAs ) are the beginnings of the kind of democracy that is already being built in Nicaragua and elsewhere. Clearly, this approach to democracy is very different from the abstract, liberal view of democracy, of political parties competing every few years for elections.

But it is not just liberals who approach the question of democracy in this way. At present, there are supposedly 'progressive' groupings who, in speaking of democracy, put all their stress on the 'right to differ', 'the need for criticism', etc. Neville Alexander is one of the leading voices in this little choir :

"Provided a particular position is not clearly an enemy viewpoint, we should, as far as possible, tolerate differences, 'allow a hundred flowers to bloom and a thousand schools of thought to contend', for this is the essence of the democratic ideal."

It is true that the right to constructive criticism is of great importance. We in the UDF also understand very well the need to work with and unite a variety of different tendencies and social forces. It is one thing to say this, it is another



to portray the 'essence of democracy' as lying in the blooming of a hundred flowers, and in the contest of a thousand schools of thought. As we have said, for us, the essence of democracy does not lie in this debating society view of politics, but in the ability of the working masses to effectively control their lives.

Alexander's approach to democracy brings him very close to a liberal pluralism. In fact, he even uses the example of bourgeois political practice to justify his own stand :

"It is very seldom that one organisation alone represents the interests of a given class. We need only look at the different parties that represent the interests of the (white) capitalist class in SA (National Party, PFP, NRP, etc.)"

The example betrays the source of Alexander's error. The power of the bourgeoisie rests in its ownership and control of the economy, and in its influence over the army, police, prisons, courts and administration.

Bourgeois party politics happens behind the screen of this economic and state power, a power that exploits and oppresses the majority. Meanwhile, behind this screen, bourgeois party politics is fundamentally a question of competition between ruling factions, of dividing up the spoils of exploitation, of lobbying and dealing, of a hundred schools contending.

To present this to the oppressed and exploited masses as 'the essence of democracy' is, in fact, to disarm the popular classes. In the face of exploitation and oppression,

the major weapon of the broad working masses lies in their numbers and in their capacity for united, disciplined action. It is united, disciplined mass action, and not left-wing debating societies that will lay the basis for real democracy in SA.

If we have looked at Alexander at some length, it is because at present these 'pluralist' ideas ( democratic in form, and sectarian in essence ) are being expressed in a number of places. We have looked at the demand : The people shall govern. Let us now consider democracy within our existing organisations.

### ORGANISATIONAL DEMOCRACY AND THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

The state of emergency can make the fullest practice of democracy difficult within our organisations. Open general Councils, or AGMs may be dangerous or impossible to organise. But this does not mean that the basic principles of organisational democracy should now be forgotten. In fact, the conditions make it crucial that we ensure that the widest democratic consultation and discussion takes place. Without this, members will become demobilised and out of touch, even dissatisfied. Without democratic involvement of all members, leaders lost through death or detention will be hard to replace.

At the same time we must not be simple-minded about the security situation. When we say that all members must participate in decision making, we are



not saying they must do this in a meeting of 200 people, or even 50 people. To ensure democracy is practised in this period, we need to improve our organisation. We need to build many smaller units within our organisations. It is in these units, and through mandating and reporting between units and higher structures that democracy can be maintained, and even deepened. To elect a new executive of a youth affiliate, for instance, a full AGM may not be possible. But this does not mean that elections cannot happen, or policies cannot be reviewed and changed. This can be done through voting processes from the smaller units, to branches, to the central structure.

Although conditions have changed, then, in the emergency, the basic principles of organisational democracy remain. They are :

1. ELECTED LEADERSHIP. Leadership of our organisations must be elected ( at all levels ), and re-elections must be held at periodic intervals. No single individual must become irreplaceable. Elected leadership must also be recallable before the end of their term of office if there is gross indiscipline, or unsuitability.

2. COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP. At all levels we must practice a collective approach. There must be continuous, ongoing consultation. We must always work as a team. Executives, committees, must be seen as collectives - five brains are better than one. This collective approach spreads leadership skills, and is therefore also a measure against possible disruption due

to detention, etc.

3. MANDATING. Leaders, delegates, etc. are not free-floating individuals. They must always operate within the democratic mandates of their positions and delegated duties. How often do individuals, who are supposed to be delegates, for instance, speak their minds without making it clear that these views have not been mandated by their organisation/region/branch ? This is not to say that individual views must never be expressed, or that they are not often valuable - but the meeting must be clear as to what is mandated and what is personal.

In speaking of mandates, it is important to remember that there are different kinds of mandate. Let us take the case of a UDF publicity secretary. For this work to be effective, for the UDF press statements to be up to date, there is no possibility of waiting for a tight mandate on each and every issue. We expect our publicity secretary to be able to react swiftly on issues, and in so doing reflect the broad policy of the UDF. But this does not mean that the publicity secretary, for instance, works unmandated - merely within the boundaries of a broad mandate. On other issues tighter mandates will be needed.

4. REPORTING. Reporting back to organisations, areas, units, etc. is an important dimension of democracy. As we have already said, with the emergency this work becomes



even more important, because we need to have many more smaller meetings.

Reporting back is a basic democratic principle that is often not treated with enough care. Too often delegates report back in a sloppy way. They will remember what they can, or read long boring details all jumbled up from the notes they made at the meeting. Often they have not even looked at these notes, or thought about them since that time.

To enable full democratic participation, the task of reporting back must be taken more seriously. Prepare yourself for your report back, be clear of the main points. This helps those you are reporting to, to participate in a meaningful way in the issues raised.

5. CRITICISM AND SELF CRITICISM. No organisation is perfect, the most effective organisations are those that know how to learn from their mistakes and correct them. To do this evaluations, questions and criticism must be encouraged. Obviously these must be constructive, not endless demobilising moaning. The task of criticism is to improve our work, not to turn our fighting organisations into debating clubs. In criticising a comrade, we must do so as friends, as comrades concerned about the person, hoping to improve his or her work for the sake of the whole organisation. To criticise is not to turn a comrade into a victim.

We should always be ready to practice self-criticism, to recognise our own

faults, and be the first to speak about them for all to learn. The purpose of self-criticism is not to make a confession and to ask for forgiveness. It is also, obviously, not designed to win time, so that we can go on making the same errors. The purpose of both criticism and self-criticism is to improve the work of all.

These five basic organisational democratic principles are not a luxury, they are a fundamental weapon in our struggle. Organisational democracy properly applied is the means to achieving the fullest, most active and most unified participation of the working masses in our struggle.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Would you agree that 'expressing different viewpoints' is the 'essence of democracy' ?
2. How can democracy within our organisations be maintained and deepened at a time of emergency ?
3. Discuss the five basic principles of organisational democracy. Are they being applied within you affiliate, branch or region ?





# MONOPOLY CAPITAL

South Africa is, of course, a capitalist country. But capitalism goes through several different stages of historical development. At present our economy is in the stage of advanced, monopoly capitalism. This means that our economy is dominated by a few, giant capitalist companies. In fact, four monopoly companies control more than 80% of the shares in all South African firms !

The big four monopoly capitalist companies in South Africa are Anglo American, SA Mutual, Sanlam and Rembrandt. Besides these big four, but linked to them, are other big monopolies, including the big banks, supermarket chains, newspapers, and agricultural companies.

It is not just the overall, total picture that shows such a high degree of monopolisation. In just about every separate branch of indust-

ry, you will find two or three companies producing more than two thirds of the goods in that branch of industry. In turn, these monopolies within different branches are linked in a thousand ways to the big four.

How can it be that so few companies dominate the South African economy ? Are we not told always that capitalism is all about 'free enterprise', with thousands of different firms 'competing' against each other ? Yes, that is the story, but if we look closer we will see that reality is quite different.

Although there might seem to be thousands of separate companies, the actual ownership and control of the majority of these companies is dominated by the very biggest monopolies. This, then, is the reason why we say that South Africa's economy is in the stage of advanced monopoly capitalism. But what are the effects of monopoly capital on our country's economy ?

## HIGH PRICES

In a situation where one parent, monopoly company might own hundreds of factories, all sorts of price manipulations become possible. Let us take a fairly small example.

In Cape Town there is a well-known bus company which owns the only registered bus transport firm in the city. The same company also owns an insurance company, a company that prints bus tickets, and the garage that supplies petrol for the buses. The parent company lets the ticket company, the insurance company and the garage charge much higher than normal prices when selling



to the bus company. In this way these companies make huge profits.

But, you will ask, if all the companies are owned by the same parent company, isn't this just a case of one hand taking from the other hand? But wait ...

While the insurance company, the ticket printing company and the garage are making big profits, the bus company goes to the government and says it is poor. It can even open its books to show it is hardly making a profit. It says it needs a government subsidy and that it needs also to put up fares to be able to continue operating its 'service to the community'. And so, while the commuters are paying higher fares, and we all pay higher taxes for the subsidy, the owner of the bus company, who is also the owner of the insurance company, the ticket printing company and the petrol garage, is laughing all the way to the bank. That is 'free enterprise' for you.

Even where there is not a single controlling company, as in this example, monopoly capital is able to push up prices. Because there are so few big firms in just about every branch of our economy, it is easy for them to get together and decide how high to fix prices. Thus, last year, the economy hardly grew at all, the times were very difficult for working people. Yet all the big companies pushed up their profits, some by as much as 19% ! They did this by making the people pay high prices. In fact, inflation was more than 20% last year, and many South African went hungry.

## EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS

Monopoly capitalism also enables the bosses to exploit workers more completely. Monopoly capitalists increase their power over workers by owning factories in many different sectors of the economy.

The Anglo American Corporation, for instance, controls more than half the economy. It has gold and coal mines, metal factories, chemicals, banks, property, big stores and farms. Amongst the stores in which Anglo American has a powerful presence, is OK Bazaars. If there is a strike in OK Bazaars, as there has been, Anglo American can hold out against the workers for months by getting its profits from all the other companies it controls.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

The South African monopoly capitalists work very closely with foreign investors. They use a lot of advanced, imported machinery. The monopolies' only interest is in profit. They do not care if the machinery, like computers, that they import puts many thousands of workers out of their jobs.

In fact, monopoly capitalists, with their love for sophisticated technology, are one of the main causes of unemployment today.

## THE WEALTH SHALL BE SHARED

We have looked at some of the harmful effects that monopoly capital has. But not everything is going the way of the monopoly capitalists. In fact, in the last few years



they have become more worried about their future than ever before. More and more oppressed and democratic South Africans are questioning the so-called free enterprise system in South Africa. Workers and youth are talking about socialism. Even small traders are realising that they cannot make a living in the face of the powerful monopoly capital sector.

In the face of this unpopularity, monopoly capital is trying to protect its long-term future. Some big firms are worried that apartheid has radicalised blacks. They hope to co-opt some blacks into the ruling class, with elitist education schemes and offering them cosy company directorships.

But the biggest problem for monopoly capitalism is the very labour army it has assembled. Tens of thousands of workers are employed by a few big companies. They are paid low wages and suffer bad working conditions in their factories. They are no longer fooled by the sweet talk of the bosses. More and more organised workers are realising their own collective power in the giant factories.

In the recent OK Bazaars strike, shop stewards from all the other companies owned by Anglo American met together. The workers warned that if Anglo did not settle the OK dispute, they would all take action. This was an important factor in forcing the bosses to settle in the end.

It is important for all democrats and patriots in South Africa to realise that the struggle against monopoly capital is not separate from the national democratic struggle. There can be no meaningful national liberation

while our economy is monopolised by a handful of white capitalists working closely with imperialism. Equally, there can be no political democracy while the economy is in the hands of this tiny minority. What does it help to have majority rule if 80% of company shares are controlled by monopolists, black or white, with the power to push up prices, exploit workers and put millions out of jobs ?

It is for this reason that the Freedom Charter's first and major demand : 'The people shall govern !', cannot be separated from its key economic demand : 'The people shall share in the country's wealth !' This clause of the Freedom Charter goes on to add : 'The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole.'

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In recent times some major monopoly capitalists have criticised the apartheid government. How would you explain this ?
2. Is the answer to the problems caused by monopoly capitalism a return to a more competitive form of capitalism ? Or does the answer lie in popular control by the working people of SA over the major banks, mines and other monopolies ?





# WHY WE ORGANISE

In the last two years our struggle has reached new heights and is more deeply rooted. Many more people are actively fighting for their rights, they are more united and more aware. We have seen this, in the last period, in the sustained mass action countrywide - in factory and school, township and village, in the consumer boycotts, stayaways and rent boycotts, in the street committees and people's courts. Increasingly the people refuse to be ruled in the old way, and demand democratic self-government over their daily lives.

This fundamental challenge to apartheid rule did not just suddenly happen. Painstaking ORGANISATION, over many years, knocked down for our people the walls of passivity and powerlessness, of ignorance, division and fear. And it is organisation which remains the key to defending and taking further the challenge to apartheid rule.

## WHAT IS ORGANISATION ?

For us in the democratic movement the concept 'organisation' has a particular meaning. When we talk of 'organising' or 'organisation' we refer to a process which involves a number of things :

1. building the unity of our people
2. raising the level of understanding and awareness of our people
3. bringing about their active involvement in struggle and in the issues of daily concern to us all
4. giving this unity and involvement, structure and form, content, consistency and direction.

All of the above, taking place in an ongoing and living way, is the process of organisation. In other words, an organisation is not just a constitution or a committee. Organisation for us means fulfilling a key requirement in our struggle for national liberation.

## WHY WE ORGANISE

Denied full political rights and access to the wealth of the country, the daily lot of our people is one of poverty and hardship. Denied a democratic say and control over their lives, the oppressed have no automatic power to change this situation. The councils, management committees and other puppet bodies the government sets up for us are undemocratic and unable to do anything about our problems. But by uniting and acting on our problems, we gain the strength and power to challenge oppression and to



overcome it. Organisation is our tool to build this strength and power.

Central to our understanding of the need for organisation is our belief that it is only through our own efforts that we will be able to do something about our problems. We do not rely on the government and its dummy bodies. Their interests are fundamentally opposed to the interests of the oppressed. Their whole purpose is to maintain our oppression. Our experience has taught us that when we ourselves act on our problems, only then does change become possible. We have to take charge of our own lives in order to change them.

The efforts we talk of are the efforts of the mass of people. Not just of a few individuals, or a few enlightened leaders. Change in the true interests of the majority will come about only through the united action of the majority. So we organise to bring about the active participation of the maximum number of people in the issues of daily concern to them - issues of high rents and low wages, poor housing, forced removals and gutter education.

More and more the basis upon which our people are struggling is becoming more political as the government uses brute force to crush our struggles, and as our people become more and more aware that apartheid rule is the root cause of their misery.

In acting on our problems, we act in unity. Without unity we cannot effectively challenge our oppression and strike telling blows against it. We share common problems, and

by taking them up together we exercise greater strength and power.

The enemy will always try to undermine and weaken our struggles through dividing us - offering concessions to some and not to others ; trying to discredit and isolate democratic organisations and leadership from the people

Where the government seeks to divide us - parent from youth, homeowner from tenant, Zulu from Xhosa, urban from rural, Indian from African, black taxi-owner, nurse or trader from black worker - we organise to cement a lasting unity. Of course, we understand that not all the interests of these different groups and classes are exactly the same. The black working masses have the greatest interest in taking our struggle to its deepest conclusions. But all oppressed and democratic South Africans have an overriding interest in the final elimination of apartheid. Building the unity of our people around this unifying interest, maintaining and defending this unity, ranks in priority for us.

To survive, apartheid depends not only on our disunity and lack of action, but also on our ignorance. Ignorance of the reasons for our hardships. Ignorance of our right to a better life. Ignorance of our ability to fight for that right and to achieve it.

We organise to raise the level of understanding and awareness of our people. Through mass struggle we learn that there are reasons for our life of misery and oppression. We learn that our problems can



be overcome. We learn of the power of, and need for united action. We develop confidence in our ability to make decisions for ourselves, to take charge of our own lives, and to influence the course and outcome of events.

To give proper expression to our unity and action, to co-ordinate and direct it, to consolidate and build on it, we form organisations, structures and committees. Our organisations allow us to communicate with one another, to discuss matters and jointly arrive at decisions. Through our organisations we are able to plan action, implement and co-ordinate it. It represents our collective voice and ensures we act in unity. Organisations also help us to learn from our successes and failures. Without constant organisational assessments ( does this strategy work ? is this possible ? why did that fail ? ) there can be little scientific basis for ongoing work. Without organisation we can never learn from our collective mass struggle.

It is also within organisation that we develop democracy. The experience of our people in their own democratic organisations, is the experience of democratic participation. Our people are exposed to open discussion and a free expression of views; to working together and sharing joint responsibility; to discipline and accountability.

Through all of this - this dynamic process of organisation- we are protecting ourselves from attacks on our living standards,

fighting to improve the quality of our lives, and bringing about change in our interest. As we organise, not only are we challenging and breaking down the old and negative, but also creating and building the new and positive.

## FORMS OF ORGANISATION

The democratic organisations we establish take many and varied forms. The kind of organisations we form and the way they are structured, is determined by a number of factors. These include who is being organised, what their interests are, what issues we are organising around, what our goals are.

It could be hostel dwellers, students, commuters, teachers, or the unemployed who are being organised. The organisation we establish could be an SRC, a trade union, rent action committee or a political organisation.

Sometimes we form bodies for specific sections of the people like unemployed workers' associations or youth congresses. Some of these bodies may come together under a civic association to represent the total interests of all residents in the community, or all of them can come together under a broad national political movement like the UDF to fight for national liberation.

Organisation, we can see, occurs at different levels and assumes different forms. A careful reading of all relevant factors and conditions, and the lessons and experience we gain while organising, will guide us on the nature, form and structure of



organisation. But almost as a rule, it is crucial to achieve the involvement of the people who directly experience a particular problem or set of problems.

It is not good, for example, for youth to lead and dominate a struggle against high rents while the workers, parents and tenants are not actively involved. In the same way it is not good for the taxi owners and drivers to take decisions on a bus boycott and not the commuters.

### APPROACH TO ORGANISATION

We refer to our approach to organisation as the mass approach. This is based on our understanding that mass struggle is the key to change. Our mass approach means that we must always be at the level of the people. To confuse the awareness and commitment of the masses with that of activists, would leave us as a small peripheral clique isolated from the people. What are the feelings of the majority of people? How deeply do they feel about this particular problem? How far are they prepared to go with action? What is their level of understanding on this issue? These are important questions to ask for anyone who is serious about organising.

In line with this, our approach on any issue is one which seeks to win over as many people as possible. We are careful not to alienate people through ill-discipline, poor conduct or rash action. Important to this approach is consultation and hard work to ensure any decision or action enjoys the broadest possible support. Not only is this an important part of our democratic approach, but it is necessary for the success of that action.

All of this does not mean that our organisations must be passive in the face of those we seek to organise. We must also constantly provide active leadership to the people. To pursue a mass approach to organisation, does not mean folding our arms and moaning about the 'backwardness' of this or that sector of the people.

We must not be fifty steps ahead of the people. But equally, we must not fall behind them. To begin from where the people are at, this is the key to effective organisation. Organisation is the key to mass struggle. Mass struggle is the key to change.

### METHODS OF ORGANISATION

We employ all and any method which allows for contact, communication and consultation with the masses. Methods which allow us to know the real thoughts and feelings of the people, which promote the message of the organisation, and which will ensure the united response of the people.

Methods we use include posters, pamphlets, mass meetings, house visits and street meetings.

### NEW CONDITIONS - SAME TASKS

Under the present repressive conditions, where we are denied the the right to organise, where we are faced with bannings, detentions, vigilante action, soldiers and police, some of these methods are difficult to employ, if not impossible. But our task of mass mobilisation and organisation



remains. In fact, more than ever, we must deepen our organisational roots among the masses. This in turn requires the tightening up of organisational discipline, and a much higher level of vigilance and security consciousness within our ranks.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you believe are the most important reason for organising ?
2. What do we mean by the mass approach to organising ?
3. Are some sectors of the people more difficult to organise than others ? If so, why ?



# Defence committees in Angola

## INTRODUCTION

A recent United Nations report shows that 140 000 children under the age of five died last year in Mozambique and Angola as a direct result of the apartheid regime's policy of destabilisation. This means that every four minutes a small Angolan or Mozambican child is lost, who would otherwise have lived. This is just one more mass-scale crime against humanity committed by the fascist, apartheid regime.

The UN report speaks of "mass terrorism carried out by forces which have burned crops and farmhouses, pillaged and destroyed schools, clinics, churches, mosques, stores and villages, poisoned wells by throwing bodies down them, and attacked the transport system which is a vital part of rural life."



The report adds : "Health workers, as well as clinics and other health posts, schools, teachers and pupils, foreign aid personnel and vehicles transporting health and relief supplies, are all deliberately chosen as targets of the war for the purpose of causing a breakdown in civil administration."

Those who shout loudest in our country about attacks on 'soft targets' and about a 'terrorist total onslaught' are directly implicated in these horrific crimes in our neighbouring countries.

What is it that the apartheid regime fears so much about Angola and Mozambique ? PW Botha is terrified of the shining example of unity, democracy, non-racialism, peace , prosperity and progress that these countries with a socialist orientation can provide to the peoples of South Africa. The apartheid regime is determined by all means to destabilise these countries, so as to be able to say 'national liberation does not work, socialism does not work'

In Angola ( as in Mozambique ) patriots have learnt in many years of difficult struggle, they have one irreplaceable weapon : popular mobilisation and organisation. In this issue of Isizwe we present the first of a series of articles that will look at the major mass organisations in Angola. In future issues we will look at trade unions, and the women's and youth organisations.

## BACKGROUND

Just over 30 years ago, in December 1956,

Angolan patriots formed the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and demanded independence from Portuguese colonialism. The only response of the colonialists was to increase their military presence in Angola, and make arrests among the patriotic forces. The founding president of MPLA, Agostinho Neto, was deported to Portugal and held in jail.

The people of Kaxihane, Neto's birthplace, organised a peaceful demonstration calling for his release. The colonial army's reply was spelt out in machine-gun bullets. This massacre started a fire which the colonists would not be able to extinguish.

On December 6, 1960 MPLA announced the beginning of the armed struggle. In Malange province, peasants calling for an increase in cotton prices were bombed with napalm and thousands were killed and injured. On February 4, 1961, a group of MPLA militants, armed only with pangas carried out daring raids on the radio station, police posts and prisons in Luanda. The following day, the enraged colonial authorities took reprisals, and more than 3000 people died.

This was the beginning of the popular insurrection. Gradually, MPLA equipment, skills and experience improved. In the following years the MPLA opened the Cabinda front, and the eastern front. Liberated zones were established and these increased in size.

Under the combined pressure of national liberation struggles led by MPLA in Angola, and FRELIMO and PAIGC ( in Mozambique and Guinea Bissau-Cape Verde ) the Portuguese



colonial army collapsed completely in April 1974.

For the MPLA, however, the fighting was still not over. Another war began immediately, this time with the racist South African regime. The SADF invaded Angola to try to prevent the liberation of the country by MPLA. Independence was declared on November 11 1975 when the troops of the racist regime, supported by US imperialism, still occupied a large part of Angola's territory. With aid from their Cuban allies, the MPLA eventually forced the invaders to flee back into Namibia. By the end of March 1976, the last SADF troops had left Angola after suffering some significant defeats.

However, there was to be only a brief interlude. Since 1978, there have been continuing incursions, attacks and bombing raids. The SADF has occupied large areas in southern Angola on several occasions. The apartheid regime has also been making use of the UNITA puppet group to aid in its destabilising policies.

It is against this background that, one year ago, President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, in his New Year's message, said : "The year 1986 will be devoted to the defence of the popular revolution. No revolution can triumph unless it knows how to defend itself."

### PEOPLE'S VIGILANCE BRIGADES

For the MPLA-Workers' Party and the people of Angola, the defence of their country and their revolution is not just the task of the people's army FAPLA. Defence is

the task and duty of every patriotic Angolan. In order to better structure this work, the first Peoples Vigilance Brigade ( BPV ) was established in November 1983. Since then BPVs have been established all over the country.

Although the BPVs are, in fact, the most recently formed of all the major mass organisations in Angola, their membership has already grown to include about 800 000 people throughout the country.

The BPVs are under the direct discipline of the MPLA-Workers' Party, rather than under the military discipline of FAPLA. The BPVs are community based committees and their task is to watch for those seeking to undermine the revolution from within.

Brigade members are selected by the district MPLA-Workers' Party committee on the basis of their proven commitment. They receive basic military training, including the use of small arms. The majority of BPV members are workers and peasants, and their participation in the BPVs is part-time. However, a member may be released from work for brigade activities if the need arises.

Once a brigade is established, its first task is to do a thorough survey of the inhabitants of its district. This enables it to identify additional, potential recruits. In carrying out the survey door to door, the BPV members introduce themselves and explain their duties to the community. In this way they begin to seek the help of the entire community in isolating anti-social and criminal elements.



In certain districts where enemy agents might be active, the BPVs draw up guard duty rosters. Members then take turns to patrol their district and ensure its safety.

With the aim of increasing efficiency, the national co-ordinator of the BPVs, Balthazar Missoji, has suggested contact be maintained with foreign organisations established for the same purpose. Contacts and exchange of information have already been made with the Cuban Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, and Patriotic Front of Bulgaria.

Besides their major task of defending revolutionary gains within their own districts, the BPVs also play an important support role for various national campaigns. In particular, they encourage popular participation in those campaigns which set out to resolve the social and economic problems confronting this newly independent country. For example, BPVs are active in blood donation and vaccination campaigns. They have also been playing an important role in education and literacy programs.

Another area into which the BPVs have been drawn is the supervising of goods distribution in their districts. Their task is to ensure that workers and peasants are not exploited by individuals channelling scarce goods into the kadonga ( the black market ).

But, at this stage of the Angolan revolution, it is the defence task, maintaining local vigilance, that remains uppermost for the BPVs. In the words of President dos Santos, the task of defence is not just the specialised task of the people's army, "it calls for the

active participation of all Angolan citizens, from Cabinda to Cunene."

For the people of Angola, the defence of their hard-won liberation is not an easy task. There are many powerful forces determined to wreck their country. But, guided by the scientific approach of the MPLA-Workers' Party, and strengthened by mass mobilisation and internationalist support, the Angolan people will win through. They have shown their ability in the past to overcome the most formidable obstacles. A luta continua - but complete victory will be won.





# POEM BY NETO

we must return

To the houses, to our crops

to the beaches, to our fields

we must return

to our lands

red with coffee

white with cotton

green with maize fields

we must return

to our mines of diamonds

gold, copper, oil

we must return

to the coolness of the mulemba

to our traditions

to the rhythms and bonfires

we must return

to the marimba and the quissange

to our carnival

we must return

we must return

to liberated Angola

independepent Angola.

( Agostinho Neto, written in prison  
in Lisbon, Portugal, October 1960 )

But, at this stage of the Angolan revolution,  
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