

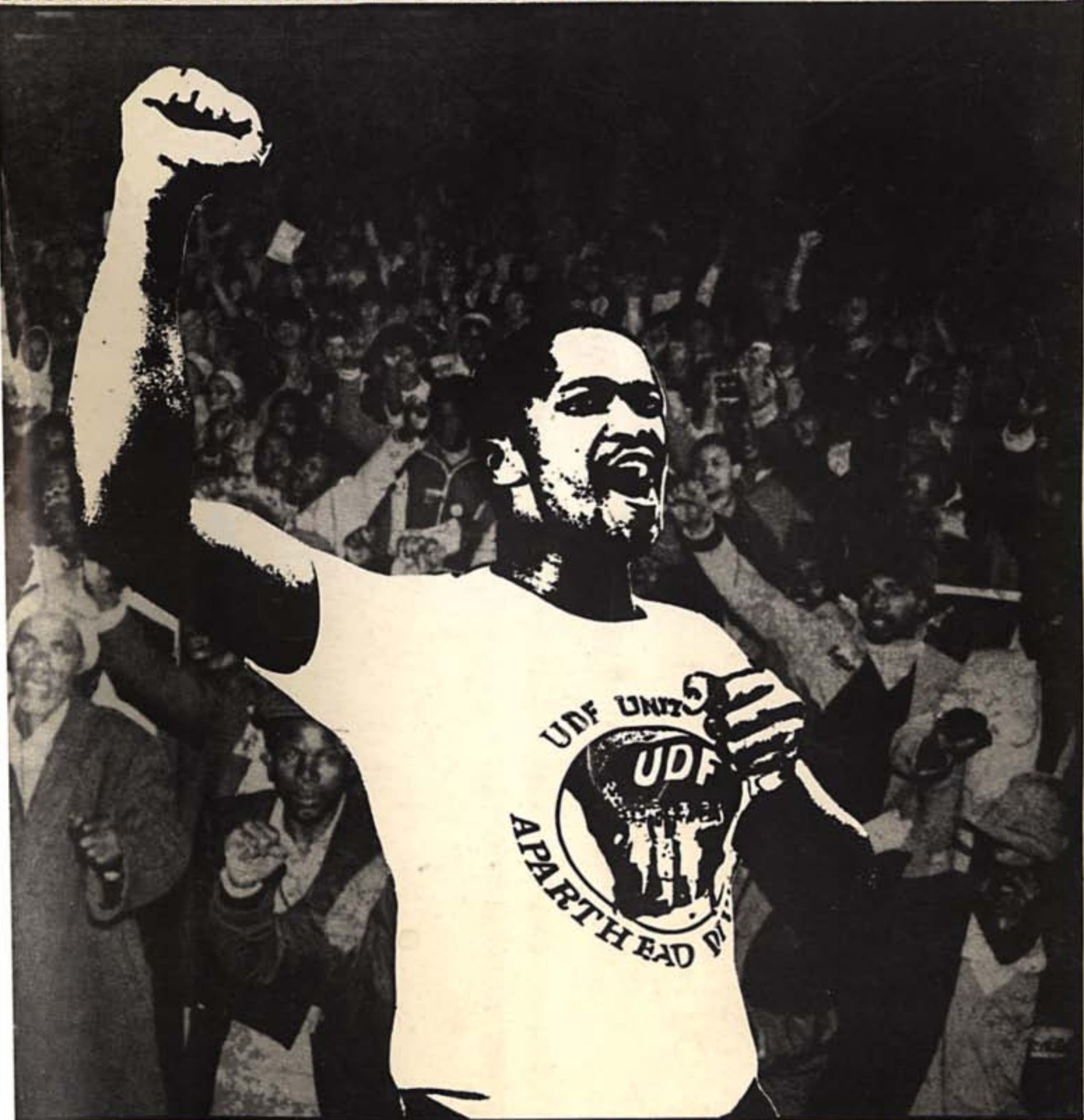
ISIZWE

THE NATION

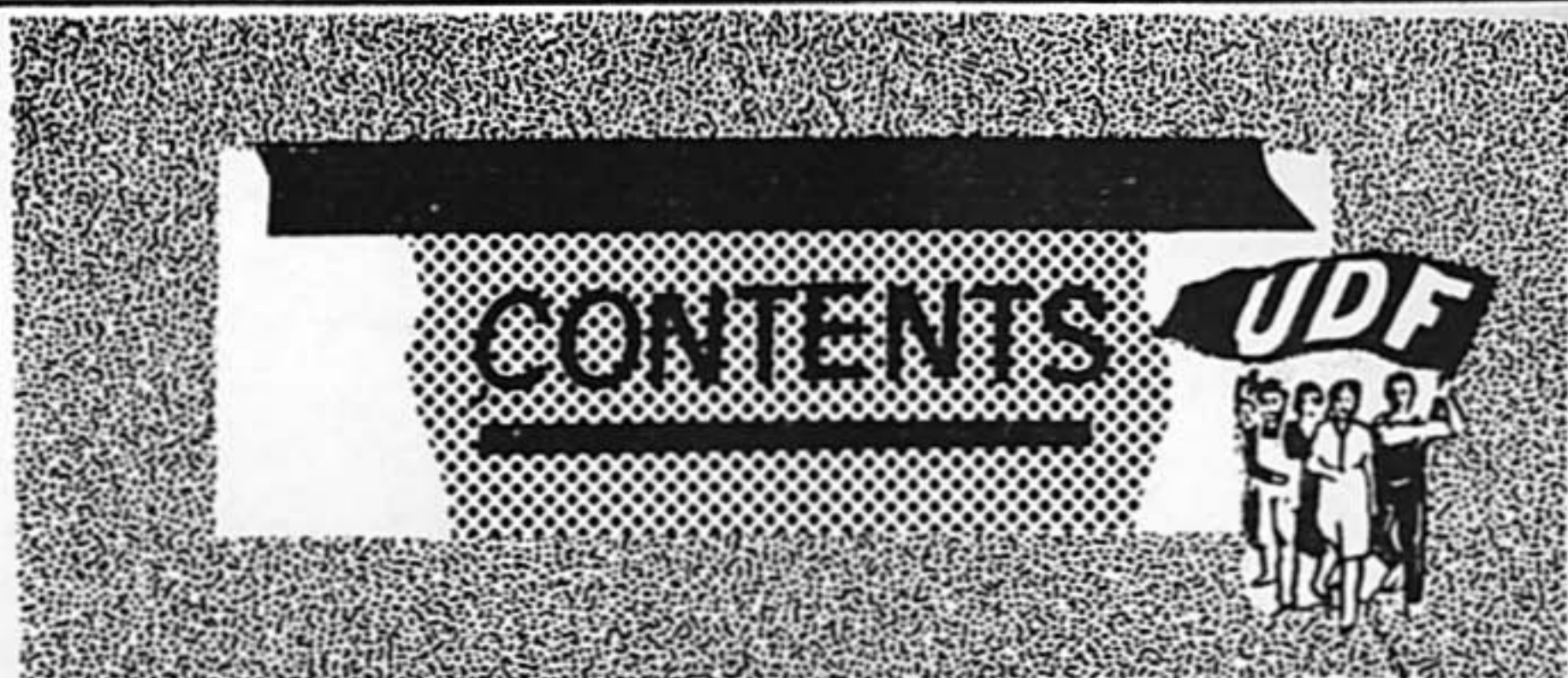


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JOURNAL OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT



THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED



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BUILD THE FRONT

The recent conference of the UDF National Working Committee, held in conditions of complete secrecy, brought together delegates from all over the country. But it was much more than a defiant act under the nose of the apartheid regime. Amongst other things, it enabled the UDF collectively to take stock of the situation and to note some of the significant shifts and developments in the character of the Front, and the tasks before it.

Many of these shifts and developments have been under way for some time. They are the result, often, of the enormous impact the UDF has made on our country. They also result from the pressures and demands on the ground, in a hundred different townships, in a thousand different battles. But our understanding of these developments has often

lagged behind practice itself. Because of this gap, we sometimes become confused, or fail to respond in the right way in different situations. We allow mechanical, formalistic understandings of the Front's character and tasks to obstruct our work. We behave as if UDF and the united front form of our organisation were not dynamic realities, transforming history and being transformed by it. We get used to one form of working and when this opens up new ways we do not notice. We are not building on our own victories that are changing the situation all the time. This allows us to be satisfied with running on the same old spot, when the political situation demands boldness and imagination. We must always ensure that we are making history, as we are well placed to do, or it will overtake us.

But what are the shifts and developments we have spoken of?

Perhaps the best place to begin, is to look more carefully at the theme we have adopted for the immediate future - DEFEND! CONSOLIDATE! ADVANCE!! This is not a slogan we found by accident, it is not a collection of fine-sounding but empty words. Understood correctly, the words have a profound meaning and a great relevance to our political and organisational tasks. Let us try to understand their meaning more clearly.

But first, a warning: These three watchwords do not belong to three separate time slots. We are NOT saying: first defend, then consolidate, and only afterwards advance. No - these three tasks are inseparably linked and must all be carried out at the same time. In

fact, they can only successfully be carried out if they are acted on simultaneously.

We cannot defend if we do not also consolidate. We cannot consolidate if we do not also advance. We are locked into a fierce political struggle, taking place in the middle of a state of emergency, in which the Front is the first and most immediate target. If we go simply on to the defensive, passively trying to hold what we have built, then we will be defeated. We must constantly advance, develop imaginative programmes of action that keep the enemy stretched nationally and off balance. On the other hand, if we advance militantly, without also carrying out defensive and consolidating tasks, we will become a narrow group of activists - an easy and isolated target for the regime.

All three tasks - Defend, Consolidate, Advance - are closely linked and interdependent. But this does not mean that they are exactly the same. Each involves specific tasks and a particular emphasis.

In what follows we will be looking in particular at the deeper significance of defence and consolidation.

DEFENCE

Defence of our structures, our activists and of our struggle involves many things. It requires many different tactics, there are many different fronts of defence. Defence can range from the most obvious physical defence and protection of township structures and activists against the attacks by vigilante

death squads - to the more technical use of the legal system, flawed as it is, to win some space.

But behind the great variety of defensive tactics there must be an overall, guiding political principle. In other words, defence, whatever form it takes, must always be grounded in a political approach. We have always opposed any attempt to allow defence to become simply mindless militancy without a clear strategy or purpose. Nor must defence rely too much on solving our problems through the courts. Politics must always be in command - militant politics, but politics.

The political key to defence lies in broadening to the maximum the people's camp, while isolating to the maximum the apartheid regime. This must be our political guiding-light when approaching the question of defence. To summarise this point : The attack on a single branch of a UDF affiliate must be felt by all as an attack on the people of South Africa.

A closer look at the apartheid regime's tactics over the last years shows why this approach is so important. Since 1976 we have seen the regime concentrate its forces now on one sector or region, then on another. In recent years we have seen a concentrated attack on the high school students, at other times street committees have been the main targets. At times it is the townships of Port Elizabeth, then Crossroads in Cape Town. More recently COSATU came under concentrated attack. The regime scored some successes, but generally it has failed to stop the onward march of our liberation struggle. It has failed because we have not allowed a

particular sector, or region, or the Front itself, to become isolated.

In the period ahead, the correct political line to guide us in the central task of defence can be summarised in three words : Build the front! But we must understand building the front in a dynamic and multi-dimensional way. It means several things :

1. Building and extending the structures of affiliates, and of UDF itself;
2. Deepening the unity in action between the UDF and its natural allies;
3. Broadening the UDF's political and moral influence over the widest possible range of South Africans.

1. Building the UDF

This speaks for itself. It means that, even in the period of an emergency, we must continue (as we have been able) to:

- a. gain new affiliates;
- b. open up new sectors;
- c. rebuild affiliates and regions that have been weakened.

Some areas where extension of this kind is needed were noted by the National Working Committee conference. They included the rural areas, women, the coloured and Indian townships, the white sector, sport and cultural workers, and the rebuilding of educational and civic structures.

2. Our Natural Allies

Building the Front, as we have already

indicated, must not be just understood as adding new affiliates and regions to the UDF.

Especially in our National United Action Campaign, we have been able to unite with our natural allies - including the National Education Crisis Committee, South African Council of Churches, the South African Catholic Bishop's Conference and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Because of the strategic and leading role of the working class in our struggle, it is our unity with COSATU that is of paramount importance.

Here again, a much more dynamic understanding of this unity must be developed. If we have distinguished between building the UDF as such, and deepening the unity with our natural allies - this distinction must be understood as provisional, fluid, and not rigid and inflexible.

Thus far, the UDF's relationship with COSATU could be described as a close, fighting alliance. At a national level we have engaged in joint consultation. We have been involved in joint campaigns under the framework of the National United Action Campaign. But on the ground, in many centres, developments have gone way beyond this alliance-type relationship. As the UDF's recent Programme of Action notes :

"More and more, the rank and file members of COSATU and the affiliates of the Front have united in action around common issues and ~~campaigns~~ such as rent evictions, living wage, unfair dismissals, detention and the state of emergency. Unity is born of our struggle. Our task now is to consolidate and strengthen

this unity at every level. In particular, we need to work towards a more structured relationship with the trade union movement. The united front needs to be built at a local level. Zonal and area committee structures of the UDF must be transformed into united front structures in which all sectors are represented, especially workers, youth, women, students and civics." (p. 33, Papers from the National Working Committee Conference.)

The programme of action's introduction of the idea of United Front at this level and in this context is a new and highly dynamic approach to our understanding of our mass democratic tasks. In particular, it opens up in concrete conditions the question of the working class playing its proper leading role.

For years intellectuals in our country have been debating the meaning of 'working class leadership'. Now, concretely, this is being realised. But we need political clarity and determination to ensure the most rapid extension of this process that is already underway.

Amongst other things, we need to understand more clearly what we mean by working class leadership. Such leadership does not mean much if it is wholly locked up within the trade unions, although the gains made here are of enormous importance. For the working class to play their full role, their leadership must be fundamentally political leadership. It must be working class leadership of and within the national liberation front. In our concrete situation, and insofar as the legal mass democratic movement is concerned, this can only mean working class leadership of the

UDF itself.

In the past years, we believe that great progress has been made, on the ground, in this respect. From its launch in 1983, UDF's policy and general practice has been the building and consolidation of working class leadership. But it has not always been easy to realise this goal to the maximum. There are several factors behind this difficulty, among them subjective and organisational weaknesses within the UDF. But the most significant factor has been the blocking role played by some elements within the trade union leadership, who held back many organised workers from full political involvement. Militant unity in action on the ground has now generally side-lined these negative factors.

The scene is set, then, for a major leap forward within the UDF. Let us now open the floodgates to the widest worker participation within our structures. Let us pursue with greater energy our goal : every UDF worker a COSATU member, every COSATU member a UDF activist!

The dynamic, active participation, from grassroots level up, of ever increasing numbers of workers in our structures will pose fresh challenges. That is how it must be. We must be prepared for this and work to assist this process.

On the question of localised united front of organisations, one further point should be made. There has sometimes been confusion about the role of the trade union locals. Certain workerists, outside the UDF, have

tried (unsuccessfully) to promote locals as alternative township political structures to those of the UDF. We need not concern ourselves with this tendency in this paper. However, an error in the opposite direction has also been committed sometimes by UDF activists demanding the right to full participation within the local - "in order to bring politics to the workers". Such interventions are incorrect. If youth or others are invited to assist, for instance, with political education within the local that is entirely in order. But it is incorrect to barge in. In any case, apart from general political tasks, the trade union locals have their own specific and important tasks to perform.

Through inter-union contact between shop stewards and other factory based worker-leaders, experiences, tactics, problems on the shop-floor can be shared. In particular, through the forum of the local, strong, worker controlled unions can assist weaker unions. In the UDF we wish to see the trade unions and their structures become even stronger. We must give active support to anything that will assist this process. There are vast numbers of unorganised and disorganised workers. There is a huge amount of shop-floor trade union work to be done. Amongst other things, the recent collapse of TUCSA, has cut adrift large unions from their reformist, bureaucratic umbrella.

We do not say that locals must confine themselves to shop-floor issues alone. Indeed, there are some notable cases where, following repression, it is the locals that took the initiative to rebuild township organisations. The locals have also acted dynamically in

various political campaigns. But, equally, it is incorrect to turn the locals into pure political organs. At the local level, the forums for political co-ordination are the zonal, area and township co-ordinating committees. (We will deal with this issue more below, when we introduce the question of consolidating political centres.)

In concluding this section on our natural allies, a few comments should be made on other important areas. In the first place, it should be noted that the united front unity, on the ground, between UDF affiliates and COSATU, applies equally to NECC structures. Besides these general developments, other significant alliances have been forged over the years with such national formations as the End Conscription Campaign, Black Sash and the South African Council of Sport.

3. Political and Moral Influence

'Building the front' is more than building the UDF itself, and more than working closely, if not merging in some cases, with our natural allies. The UDF must seek to extend its political and moral influence far beyond these limits to include the widest possible range of South Africans. This means developing the capacity to intervene politically on the smallest localised instances of oppression and exploitation, up to the broad national issues. This means being able to link specific issues and struggles to the broader national democratic struggle.

In the first place, this broadening of our influence must be directed to the people's camp - to the ranks of all oppressed South

Africans. We have accomplished a fair amount in terms of influencing a wide range of our people in the four years of our existence. But there are still many gaps we must work to fill.

At the local village and township level, broadening the political and moral influence of the UDF means relating to all sectors, groups, and clubs. The national and international prestige of the UDF creates favourable conditions for this work.

To carry out this task successfully we must ensure that we work much more consistently with groups that are not immediately drawn into our main-line sectors (trade unions, youth, women, civics and students). For example, our relationship with taxi-owners, traders, sports bodies and religious and cultural groups, has often been very unsystematic. We must conduct work on this front in a much more co-ordinated, principled and strategic manner.

To give an example, we tend to approach traders each year early in June. We ask them to observe June 16th and June 26th by closing their businesses. And then we don't speak to them again until just before December 16th! When there is going to be a large political funeral in a distant township, at the last moment, we suddenly ask co-operation from taxi-owners for transport. Our relationship with such groups often becomes more or less opportunistic. We pick them up and forget them when it suits particular and immediate needs.

Of course, we expect co-operation from traders, taxi-owners, etc. Resources are scarce in the townships. It is the patriotic duty, and it

is in the objective interests, of every oppressed South African to ensure that resources are available to strengthen the overall people's struggle. But this co-operation must be deepened into a purposeful, structured, political relationship. In some townships where people's power achieved advanced levels, we have seen such deepened co-operation happening. For instance, in some cases, taxi-owners united into structures under the discipline of the township co-ordinating committee. The taxi-owners have then taken responsibility themselves for drawing up duty rosters for providing transport for political purposes.

Likewise, traders and black business people in some townships have taken the initiative to raise funds from within their ranks, to ensure assistance to UDF affiliates and organs of people's power is provided in a structured and ongoing way.

Of course we do affirm, and we shall continue to affirm the need for working class leadership on all fronts of the struggle. To call for progressive initiative from traders, for instance, is not a call for them to lead our struggle. But nor do we think it healthy if traders, taxi-owners, black business people, sports clubs, etc. are treated in an unstructured, or even opportunistic way. All these groups must be won over politically - otherwise some may even become a recruiting base for the vigilante death squads, or for apartheid's local authority structures.

Each and every hostel, club, organisation and structure in our villages and townships must be identified. Through regular contact,

and through the actual sending of activists to work in them if necessary, we must begin to exert the closest moral and political influence over all ranks of the oppressed.

But broadening our political and moral influence must go beyond the people's camp. We must increase our influence over sectors within the ruling bloc. At the national level, our call before the whites-only election in May was a good example (at least on the propaganda level) of what is meant by seeking to broaden our political and moral influence within the ruling bloc. This call endeavoured to address a wide range of whites - PFP members, Independent new-Nats, professionals, big business, etc. To each we addressed specific demands, calling on these different groupings to take, at least, some positive steps in the correct direction.

But, perhaps even here, we were not comprehensive enough. For instance, during the election campaign, the ultra-right wing parties (the Conservative Party and the HNP) spoke a certain truth, even if it was only 5% of what they had to say. In addressing white worker audiences, ultra-right wing politicians devoted some time to noting the collusion between the Nationalist Party regime and monopoly capital. They raised the whole question of falling living standards, of unemployment, and the inequalities between the taxation of the monopolies compared to the heavy tax burden placed on individuals. All of this was accurate enough. Of course, the ultra-right wing touched on these themes for their own purposes. This accurate 5%, which struck such a sympathetic note with white workers, was mixed in with 95% of rabid

racism of the most disgusting kind.

But we in the UDF failed to address white workers in Afrikaans (the language they mostly speak) around the issues, grudges and grievances that concern them. We failed, therefore to snap the connection between legitimate grievances (to which we alone have the solution) and the ultra-right racism within which the HNP and CP opportunistically embedded these problems.

We are not suggesting this would have been easy or even possible. With limited resources at our command, hard tactical decisions have had to be made about what must take precedence in our work. At least, we hope the example of the Afrikaans-speaking white workers illustrates the main point we are making here. When we say that broadening the front means, also, extending to the maximum the sphere of our political and moral influence, we must be prepared to think very broadly, very imaginatively.

By its very nature, this (the very widest) level of broadening the front will produce uneven results. Many of the sectors to be addressed within the ruling bloc may well join us on one specific issue, and betray us on the next. Such 'allies' are much less trustworthy than those we have enumerated as our natural allies or as those who have still to be won over more thoroughly from within the people's camp. But this does not mean that work on this, the broadest front, is pointless. Our duty is always to isolate to the maximum the main enemy. We must deprive the enemy of every support base, and of every potential ally. To the extent that we render

some of the regime's natural allies wavering and untrustworthy for it, that in itself is a gain for our national liberation struggle.

It should be stressed that our intervention on this broader front must always be principled and guided by clear political considerations which are understood by the masses. Short-term gains at this level must not be made at the price of confusion and division within the UDF itself, and between the UDF and its natural allies. These latter levels must always enjoy our priority attention. Having said this, we must also be prepared to provide political leadership to the masses, to our natural allies and within the Front itself. We cannot, as we sometimes do, invoke the "unpreparedness of the masses" to excuse our own unwillingness to adopt what is a correct line of action.

So far we have considered the many dimensioned character of one major task - the task of DEFENDING our structures, our organisation and our struggle. We have said that the essence of defence is political. The political guideline to this task can be summed up in the words : BUILD THE FRONT ! We must remember two things -

1. From what we have already said it should be clear that building the front is not just defensive, it is also a major form of advance.
2. All of this broadening work is possible only if at the same time we address the second major task - CONSOLIDATION.

CONSOLIDATION

The biggest truck needs an engine to propel it. While building and broadening the front, we cannot neglect the task of consolidating the organisational machinery of the UDF and of the broad national democratic movement. This involves several related tasks :

1. In the first place, we need to build the UDF and affiliate structures that are able to weather the onslaught of the regime's emergency, the death squads, etc. This means deepening our vigilance, discipline and daring. Throughout the country this process is underway. We must consolidate it.

We have mastered many of the techniques of secret, underground work. Under the nose of the enemy we have managed to successfully launch national structures (SAYCO, UDF Women's Congress) and we have held a secret National Working Committee Conference. Many local UDF structures are operating successfully in spite of repression.

While developing these skills, we must not confuse our tactical adoption of some underground methods with the strategic underground methods that organisations like the ANC have chosen. For UDF, tactical use is made of some underground methods in order to continue open, mass level work. The tactical use of these methods does not mean abandoning our legality, or our struggle to preserve it. It is necessary to draw this distinction between tactical and strategic underground work because serious political errors are likely to flow from confusing them.

2. A second important aspect to consolidation is one that has already been dealt with, at length, in the pages of ISIZWE. This is the task of deepening the ideological and organisational unity within the UDF. Amongst other things, this involves a steadfast battle to overcome factionalism, regionalism and individualism. Sound organisational democracy and much more dynamic political education and training are the keys to this battle. We have made fair progress on this front in the past two years. The recent NWC provided a very good indication of this fact. As the introduction to the papers from the NWC Conference puts it :

"The conference represented the depth of leadership in our movement as the majority of delegates were attending a national conference of the UDF for the first time. It also represented the growing unity and cohesiveness at all levels within the Front - there was a marked absence of regionalism, factionalism, individualism and position-seeking." (page 2)

The popularisation of the Freedom Charter by the UDF marks a new and significant step on the road to ideological consolidation. With COSATU having adopted the FC this also has important implications for the process of building and providing ideological content to the united front of organisations at the township level.

3. A third aspect of consolidation has been seen in the development of powerful, sector-based national affiliates. In particular, the launch of SAYCO and the

UDF Women's Congress. In the case of SAYCO, the existence of a national youth structure has dynamised local and regional youth structures, giving new life and a new sense of purpose and unity. This national structure has also provided the youth, the most militant of our sectors, with a much stronger, structured presence within the national and regional organs of the UDF. Although organisational developments are less advanced on the women's front, the same benefits can be anticipated. Similar consolidation is now occurring on the civic front.

We have dealt with three aspects of the task of consolidation, but we have yet to deal with what is, probably, the most significant of all.

4. The fourth aspect to consolidation is the development of political centres at every level from the zone, or small township upwards. Such political centres will gravitate around the UDF, but will not necessarily be exclusively UDF. And here we refer back to our earlier discussion on the localised united front of organisations. At the local level, the political centre is the heart and engine of the united front of organisations.

In a sense, this development has already been underway for some time. But it has been happening in an unsystematic, uncoordinated way. It has been happening as a direct result of the needs, pressures and tasks on the ground.

As a result, comrades have sometimes been

unclear, confused, even uneasy about this development. This is all the more reason for understanding more clearly the process and its necessity.

But what do we mean by 'political centres'? By 'political centres' we are referring to organisational collectives that are capable of providing political leadership, that are able to strategise, to lead. Political centres are collectives that do not simply react to one crisis after another. They are able to plan ahead, carrying the struggle to the enemy on the people's terms. For this reason, this aspect of consolidation is centrally linked also to our third watchword - ADVANCE.

The concept of 'political centre' means that all our co-ordinating structures - the zonal, area and township structures, our REC's and the NEC must be more than the simple sum of their parts. A township co-ordinating committee, for instance, must not simply be a bureaucratic recording of mandates from its affiliates. Without for a moment undermining the importance of internal democracy of affiliates, it must be able to adopt a global (an overall) approach to the township, and to reach beyond the township. At one time it will be encouraging the diverse work of different sectors, at another time it will marshall all forces together to strike a single blow against a weak link. At still another time it will be planning ahead, promoting political education through all affiliates, street committees etc, on key issues of the moment.

This is our understanding of the concept of

'political centre'. The political centre is needed at all levels of our struggle. It is the key component to consolidation, and it is equally important for the tasks of defence and advance.

It is true, however, that some comrades are uncertain about the idea of political centres. Their misgiving is based on a concern that the UDF would be changing its character, moving away from being a strict front of affiliates, the sum of its parts.

In one sense, this misgiving is academic. The process to which we are referring has already been underway for some time. This is not because some mastermind in a national structure of the UDF has thought it out. No - the tidal wave of mass struggle over the last few years, partly as a result of the UDF's national impact, has in turn compelled the UDF to change and adapt itself to the changing conditions. This has happened often without any conscious decision.

In particular, that major landmark in our national liberation struggle, the development (more or less spontaneously) from 1985 onwards, of rudimentary structures of people's power, has had profound effects on the nature of the UDF. At the township level, the street, the block and zonal structures cut across the old sectoral lines of our affiliates. A zone delegate on a township co-ordinating structure is a political delegate with responsibility to the zone. That responsibility is global-political, and not specific to a particular sector, be it youth, civic, labour, women or student.

But to acknowledge that our co-ordinating structures have for some years already begun to crystallise into political centres, is not to answer the misgiving. It might be happening, but is it good? Does such a process undermine the front character of the UDF? In the name of consolidation, are we undermining the crucial and related task of broadening the front? Does the development of political centres at every level, from the zone up, mean narrowing the base of the UDF? We believe that the opposite is true. But it does depend on how the task of consolidating political centres is understood and implemented.

The root of certain comrades' misgivings lies in a confusion over the nature and relationship between democracy and leadership. Active, dynamic political leadership should not be opposed to mass democracy. Such leadership relates to, works with, respects, and is finally responsible to the democratic processes of the UDF, its affiliates and to general organs of people's power. But, at the same time, it thinks ahead, it suggests strategic tasks that are more significant or more likely to produce results than others. Active leadership adopts a global, overview approach. It might note, for instance, the under-representation or absence of a key sector (for example, organised workers) within the area committee. It will take responsibility for rectifying this. An active political centre with a strong mass base will also think beyond its immediate area of operation. It takes responsibility, for example, for other weakly organised townships in the vicinity, or for exerting at least some moral and political influence over the

local white community. It might concern itself not just with its township, but also with the nearby industrial zone, or an outlying rural area. A strong political centre dispatches cadres to other areas, it assists with resources and with education and training. Needless to say, it relates to these other areas with the same respect for existing democratic structures and networks, as it does to its own base.

These are just some examples of the way in which leadership exercised through the forum of the political centres rises above the mere bureaucratic assembling of mandates, while not undermining organisational democracy. In fact without such leadership, organisations themselves will wither away.

The consolidation of political centres in the united front and the broadening of the front are not in contradiction with each other. Without the broad front, the political centre has too few links with the masses, its leadership is up in the air. It becomes an easy target for repression. On the other hand, without consolidating strong political leadership centres at every level, the broad front will lose direction, weaken and break up. The political centre and broad front, the tasks of consolidating and of defence, link up and together they enable us to fulfill the third of our watchwords - ADVANCE !





EDUCATING OURSELVES

A sub-regional structure of SAYCO has been running education and training programmes. Isizwe discussed the programmes with two SAYCO comrades involved in this work.

ISIZWE : Welcome comrades. We know that all over South Africa, in branches of UDF affiliates, comrades are battling with the question of political education and training. But this ET is often not very systematically planned and carried out. Could you please share with our readers how you have approached this question?

Cde. Vusi : Well the first point to be made is the question of organisational approach. We have 20 branches and 9 regions plus our central structure - I am talking just within our particular sub-region of SAYCO. At each level (branch, region and centre) there are

elected ET officers. So far our programme has targetted these ET officers themselves. We hold weekly ET sessions, bringing nearly 30 ET officers together.

ISIZWE : Do you expect these officers to be feeding what is read and discussed back into their regions and branches?

Cde. Vusi : Ja, that is correct.

Cde. Sally : In fact, at each week's session we start with reports from regions to see how the programme is being carried over to a branch and regional level. And what problems are encountered.

Cde. Vusi : So you see that for us ET is centrally linked to developing organisation, and to deepening the ideological unity of our organisation. ET is not just for self-advancement. Every participant is a delegate from his or her branch, with responsibilities to their base.

ISIZWE : Could we move on to discuss the actual content of your programme?

Cde. Sally : We have six basic sessions and they cover the following topics :

1. The nature of society.
2. The history of our struggle in S. A.
3. The strategy of National Democratic Struggle.
4. The Freedom Charter.
5. Other tendencies - we consider black consciousness and workerism.
6. Women and the struggle.
7. Capitalism and Socialism.

Cde. Vusi : With each three hour session we try to include, also, about half an hour on a more directly organisational topic - like Discipline, Democracy, the problems of Factionalism, Leadership, and so on. Again, even in the material covered we believe that theory and practice must always be linked.

ISIZWE : Could we return to some of the general topics and hear how you handle them? In particular, the history of our struggle. That is a huge area. How do you manage to cover it?

Cde Vusi : You are right. Our first attempts at this did not work out too well because we were trying to do everything, and it was just a mass of details. We now approach this topic by setting definite goals that we want to achieve by studying our history. This is what we try to achieve :

1. We want our youth to understand the continuity of struggle from the very early days of armed resistance against colonial settlement. We also put special stress in this part on early resistance in our own region here. You can't do everything, but select some good examples.

2. Moving up to the twentieth century, we trace the development, step by step, of what we call the three main strands of the national liberation movement : the national strand, the socialist strand and the labour strand.

But maybe Comrade Sally can say more on this, because this has been an area she has presented.

Cde. Sally : Okay. With the three main

strands, our main purpose is to show that when they come together, as they did in the middle 1920's, in the 1950's, and again in the 1980's, then each of the three strands, and our overall national liberation struggle are greatly strengthened. At other times, like in the period around 1928 to the early 1930's, they came apart ...

ISIZWE : Sorry, can you just explain that to our readers?

Cde. Sally : Well, very briefly, in the late 1920's the ANC fell for a time into conservative leadership and progressive nationalists like Josia Gumede lost their leadership position. At the same time the ICU, the main labour movement of the time, expelled communist leaders from its ranks. It came under the influence of a mixture of populism and a more reformist workerism. For its part, the CPSA in the early 1930's also went into a decline for a few years. It adopted an ultra-left sectarian direction, and failed to seriously understand the crucial need to work in and through the national democratic movement. So each of the three strands went their own way, and each was weakened. As you can see, there are many lessons for the present.

Cde. Vusi : We would have to write a whole paper to illustrate everything about the content of this section! But perhaps we must say something about teaching style. What we have said so far might sound like it is a question of giving a long, long lecture. But we believe it is very important to get participation and discussion. For the nature of society section, for instance, you can ask everyone to say briefly what they know about

their grandparents, how and where they lived, their work etc.

You can usually illustrate a lot about the nature of society, its history and the different forms of economic production, from just hearing about different backgrounds- peasants, tribespeople, migrants, tenant bywoner, and so on. You can use different grandparents as examples right through the session.

ISIZWE : Could you mention any particular problems that you have experienced?

Cde. Sally : One difficulty is a tendency for ET to be separated from our actual daily organisational work. We have seen a tendency to present issues in a way that is abstract and removed from our concrete experiences. For instance, NDS (National Democratic Struggle) is presented as something timeless. We don't see immediately how it relates to the other tasks we must perform that same day or week.

ISIZWE : How can this tendency be corrected?

Cde. Vusi : Well, NDS must be related to the actual problems we as youth in a particular township are facing. Not just youth, but also our parents, the workers. So, before beginning the session on NDS maybe it is best to get members to say what are the problems facing them and their families - unemployment, the distance to the local hospital, transport costs, gangsterism, or whatever. In the course of the session, the challenge is to show how these problems are connected together. And how they are best solved by mobilising and organising around a strategy

of NDS.

Cde. Sally : With more organisational topics, relating the theory to our concrete experiences should be easier. But even there it doesn't happen automatically. For instance, in the first part of a session, a comrade presented a paper on Discipline. He was more or less repeating an article from ISIZWE on this topic. That was fine, but the comrade failed to show how the article helped us to understand and correct the actual concrete examples of bad discipline in our own branches. As a result, we listened to the paper, everyone agreed, and that was all. No discussion. We failed, in that session, to see how to correct the lack of discipline or to see how this lack was holding our work back.

ISIZWE : Any other problems come out of your ET sessions?

Cde. Sally : Well, what I've just said brings me to the question Vusi was raising just now - participation in the discussion. At first there was a tendency for one or two "leading theorists" in our organisation to dominate all the discussions. They did not mean to do this, but they had read more than the rest of us and had more confidence. So the rest of us just agreed with whatever they said.

ISIZWE : Has this been corrected?

Cde. Vusi : As a matter of fact this correction happened in an unfortunate but interesting way. Two of our leading comrades got detained under the emergency. We thought that we could never continue with the ET. But, after hesitations, we continued. And

a funny thing happened. Suddenly everyone was talking in the discussion! Before the input might be 40 minutes long, and then only 10 minutes of discussion with only a few talking. Now, things went the other way, with much more discussion. We were even going deeper into the questions raised because we could not take short cuts by using long words and ideas we did not really understand. We asked ourselves why this happened. It was because it was now less developed members giving the input. Everyone thinks, if he can do it, then I can also have something to say on it. We now make very sure that everyone, especially the less developed members, take a turn to present an input. You always remember best those parts you have presented, or where you have been fully part of the discussion.

Cde. Sally : It is also good to get comrades who have not thought much about a problem to do the presentation. Maybe it's a good idea for a male comrade to do the presentation on Women in the Struggle! That way comrades don't hear me, Sally, doing the input on women, and think to themselves : "Ja, ja, that's all very well" but just seeing this topic as one for women only to take seriously.

ISIZWE : Earlier you mentioned reading material. What material do you use?

Cde. Sally : If we tell you that the next thing the boere will ban the lot!

Cde. Vusi : It's true we have a lot of problems tracing useful stuff.

Cde. Sally : WE can mention some things that

people may find useful. We find that Volume 2 of The Struggle for South Africa (Zed Press) by Rob Davies, Dan O'Meara and Sipho Dlamini has useful, short reliable information on the major organisations. Another article we have used is one called 'Strategy and Tactics of Talks' which was published in Work in Progress.

ISIZWE : Ummm, ...and ISIZWE?

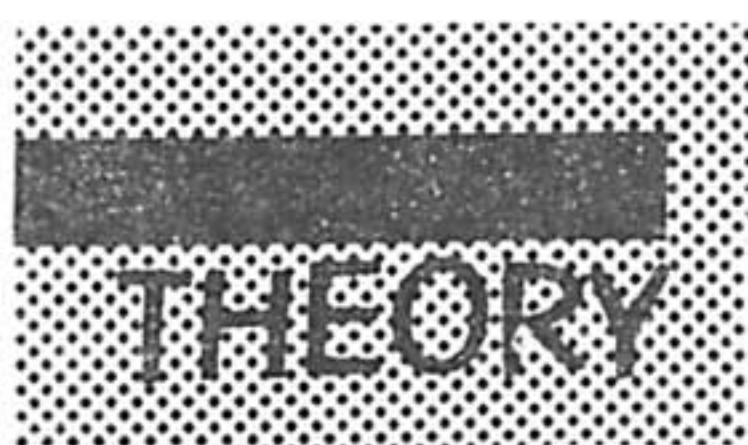
Cde. Vusi : (laughs) Sorry com, ja, we were forgetting!

Cde. Sally : Yes, we in fact have used most of the articles from ISIZWE, especially those on NDS, organisational topics, the short pieces on economics, those on other tendencies.

ISIZWE : Any criticisms of ISIZWE?

Cde. Sally : It doesn't come out often enough.





THE CHARTER AND MONOPOLIES

The Freedom Charter was adopted over 30 years ago, in 1955 at Kliptown. One of the best known and most discussed clauses of the Freedom Charter says :

"The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people; the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole..."

The Freedom Charter was drawn up at a time when national liberation was a distant goal. This demand regarding the national wealth,

* This article is based on a paper by Dr. Rob Davies of the Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo. It was originally presented to an academic conference.

showed that already the people of South Africa were aware that liberation from oppression would depend also on big changes to the capitalist economic system. In particular, the Freedom Charter links national liberation with removing the strangle-hold of the big monopoly companies over our country.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the significance of this section of the Freedom Charter for a future, post-apartheid society. To understand fully the demand to transfer monopoly industry to the ownership of the people, it will be useful, in the first place, to look at the extent to which monopolies dominate present-day South African capitalism. In particular, we will highlight monopoly developments since the adoption of the Freedom Charter back in 1955.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONOPOLY CAPITALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

South African capitalism has long been dominated by monopoly capitalism. In the early part of the 20th century, big monopolies in the mining industry, organised in the Chamber of Mines, dominated the South African economy. The mining monopolies were closely associated with big banks. It was only after 1945, that monopoly capitalism spread beyond mining and banking into other sectors of the economy. In the years after 1945, we can speak of 3 major periods in the development of monopoly capitalism in South Africa.

a. 1945 to the early 1960's

This is the period that runs from the end of the 2nd World War up till the crisis in the South African economy that followed Sharpeville. In this period, multi-nationals (that is, foreign companies with headquarters in places like New York, London, Paris and Frankfurt) built many subsidiary companies in South Africa. They brought advanced technology and new production methods. This development happened mainly in the manufacturing sector - in areas like cars, chemicals, and textiles. Through this development, monopolisation within South African capitalism was extended to the manufacturing sector.

b. 1963 to 1973

This is the period of the post-Sharpeville boom (a period of rapid economic growth in South Africa). Besides the consolidation of monopoly capitalism in manufacturing, this period sees the beginnings of concentration and centralisation in agriculture. By the 1980's as much as 40% of white-owned farming land was held by just 5% of farmers! So you can see, monopolisation was beginning to reach deeply into agriculture as well.

During this same period, the different monopoly companies began a process of 'inter-penetration'. For example, a mining monopoly like Anglo American also began investing money in banking, manufacturing, insurance, property and agriculture. It established its own subsidiary (or junior) companies to control its interests in these sectors.

A monopoly company like Barlow Rand, which began in the manufacturing sector, acquired mining subsidiaries. Financial groups (that is, banking and insurance companies) like S.A. Mutual, and the Afrikaner-owned Sanlam and Volkskas acquired manufacturing, commercial and agricultural companies. Sanlam also acquired a mining company - Gencor.

This inter-penetration of monopoly companies also began to reduce the importance of the different 'national origins' of the monopoly companies. Non-Afrikaner monopolies (like Anglo American), Afrikaner monopolies (like Sanlam), and foreign multi-nationals all began buying into one another.

In this second period, the conglomerate (i.e. the big monopoly company with subsidiary companies in many sectors and big investments in other conglomerates) emerged as the dominant force in South African capitalism.

c. 1973 to the present

This is the period of deep political crisis in the apartheid system. Apart from a few years, this is also a time of deep economic crisis as well. As with all capitalist crises, this period has seen the disappearance of a large number of small capitalist firms. These small firms have been unable to cope with the crisis situation, Many have been swallowed up by the big monopolies. So we have seen even more centralising of control over production in the hands of monopoly conglomerates.

This process has now been greatly speeded up

by the withdrawal of foreign multinationals in the last period, They have withdrawn because the mass struggles of the last few years have greatly reduced the profits of these foreign companies. They have been feeling the pressure of the international anti-apartheid disinvestment campaign. The withdrawal of some of these foreign companies has further strengthened local monopoly companies within the South African economy. For example with Ford's withdrawal, the Ford operation was incorporated into the Anglo American controlled Sigma Motor Company. Such deals greatly increase the wealth and power of local monopoly companies.

MONOPOLY INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

In a recent phone-in programme on Radio 702, the acting UDF national publicity secretary, Cde. Murphy Morobe was asked by a white caller : "Doesn't your support for the Freedom Charter mean an end to free enterprise in South Africa?" Clearly the caller was very poorly informed. As a result of the massive monopolisation of the economy by big private and state owned corporations, 'free enterprise' is a myth.

To give just one example - 80% of shares on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange are now controlled by 4 monopoly groups : Anglo American, Sanlam, S.A. Mutual and Rembrandt! Besides these giant privately owned monopolies, one quarter of the wealth of the 130 biggest corporations is owned by state corporations. State corporations control central banking, communications (Post and Telegraphs), most of the transport sector (SATS), electricity

(Escom), iron and steel (Isacor), fuel from coal (Sasol), etc. All these are extremely strategic sectors.

It is clear that the South African economy today is dominated by a few giant corporations. At the time of the Congress of the People in 1955, monopoly capital controlled mining and banking, and it was only just beginning to move into manufacturing. Today, monopolies dominate all the main sectors of the economy - mining, manufacturing, agriculture, banking, wholesale and the retail trade and even service sectors like hotels, entertainment and tourism. The big monopoly conglomerates control vast empires, with hundreds of subsidiaries and associated companies.

It is against this background that any discussion on the significance of the Freedom Charter's economic demands must be understood. In today's conditions, the demand for transferring the monopolies to the ownership of the people can mean nothing less than establishing popular control over the major part of every sector of the entire South African economy.

NATIONALISATION AND SOCIALISATION

Transferring ownership of the monopolies to the people is sometimes regarded as simply nationalisation. But this is incorrect. There are many forms of nationalisation. Basically, all involve some kind of state ownership or control over a particular company. But state ownership or control over a company does not necessarily mean that there is popular control. Let us look at this more

closely.

Nationalisation may take place under very different kinds of government. In advanced capitalist countries, for instance, the government may decide to nationalise an unprofitable industry because its continued operation is seen as necessary by the capitalist class as a whole. Let us say that it is a railway freight company that is privately owned. No individual capitalist is prepared any longer to run this company because it has stopped being profitable. But the whole capitalist class needs the railway freight company to export its goods. So the capitalist state decides to take over ownership and control. This form of nationalisation means basically that all citizens of this country are now forced (through the taxes they pay) to carry the cost of maintaining this unprofitable railway company, in the interests of the capitalist class.

Obviously this example of nationalisation has nothing to do with ownership by the people, and for the people. The decision to nationalise is made on behalf of the ruling class and its interests. In apartheid South Africa there is a large nationalised sector (including SATS, Escom, Sasol, Iscor, etc.). These nationalised industries were created by racist minority regimes. Again, these nationalised industries are not under popular ownership and control. They are used to secure the economic and political survival of the ruling white bloc.

What is the difference between the Freedom Charter's demand for popular control of the monopolies, and these examples of nationalis-

ation? There are two important differences.

In the first place, the government of a liberated South Africa, as seen by the Freedom Charter, will be different from the state of advanced capitalist countries. It will also be different from the apartheid state. The first clause of the Charter calls for a government of people's power. In South African conditions, such a government must, of necessity, be dominated by the working class, if it is to be truly democratic and representative. The economic clauses of the Freedom Charter can only be understood if they are related to its major political demand - The People Shall Govern! The future government of people's power will play a major role in implementing the economic clause of the Charter.

Nationalisation of the monopolies by a people's state will in South Africa, as elsewhere, be an essential element of deepening democratic control of the economy. But it is not enough. This brings us to the second important difference between simple nationalisation, and the real meaning of the Freedom Charter's demand regarding monopolies.

Here it is useful to introduce another concept - socialisation. By socialisation of the economy we refer to a broad process of collective control over the economy by the working people themselves. Socialisation of the economy cannot be limited to nationalisation. Nationalisation by a democratic, people's state is a necessary part in a process of socialisation. But only in combination with other changes.

Let us be more specific. If nationalisation is to contribute to a deepening process of socialisation, it needs to be accompanied

i) by the introduction of national economic planning in which the needs of the people, rather than profits for bosses, increasingly become the basis for decisions about where to put resources of money, machines and labour,

and ii) by changes in the organisation of management and the labour process. These changes must permit the workers to take increasing control over decisions at the level of the factory, mine, farm, shop etc.

The combination of these two levels is of great importance in any transition to a non-exploitative economy. The one level relates to central economic planning by a state of people's power. The other level relates to the decentralising move to greater workers' control at plant level. What is important is the correct combination of both the centralising and decentralising activities. A one-sided reliance on the actions of the central state can result in bureaucratic, undemocratic practices. On the other hand, a one-sided reliance on shop-floor power can give rise to workerist practices. In this latter case, there is an inability to distinguish between the short-term interests of particular groups of workers, and the longer term interests of the working class as a whole.

We have said that the Freedom Charter demand regarding monopoly industries calls for more than simple nationalisation. It calls for

the transfer of the ownership of the monopolies to the people as a whole. We have argued that this is part and parcel of a process of socialisation of the main means of production in South Africa.

One final point must be made in this section. Nationalisation by a democratic people's state is certainly linked directly to the wider socialisation of the economy. But it is necessary to break with a mechanical understanding which thinks that nationalisation has to be completed before other economic changes can begin. In fact, significant advances towards socialised planning and workers' control at factory level may be made before the achievement of further nationalisation. Indeed, these may lay a firmer basis than nationalisations that are carried out too soon by a state lacking enough cadres to take over the running of many large enterprises.

This last point, as well as the general relationship of nationalisation to socialisation can be understood more clearly if we turn to a concrete example.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MOZAMBIKAN EXPERIENCE

In looking at Mozambique's struggle for a socialist transition, we are not holding it up either as a good or a bad model. Mozambique has its own conditions, which fix the limits and possibilities for change. It has its own history and traditions of struggle. All of these are different from those in South Africa. Nevertheless, Mozambique offers some useful points for

reflection when discussing possible paths of change in South Africa.

After coming to power in 1975, Frelimo nationalised, as a deliberate measure, only the health service, legal practices, education, funeral services and rented property. Later, during the war with the Rhodesian Smith regime, the oil refinery and fuel distribution were nationalised. Apart from these areas, no deliberate, planned decision was taken to nationalise productive enterprises. Nevertheless, by 1982 only about one quarter of industry remained in private ownership.

The process by which the state in Mozambique came to control the vast bulk of productive enterprises, the banking sector, shopping outlets and the service sector was essentially one of defensive nationalisations. Large numbers of Portuguese colonial capitalists abandoned their enterprises after liberation. Often they did this after smuggling as much of their business property out of the country as they could. They even sabotaged that which they had to leave behind. In this situation, the Frelimo government was forced to move in and nationalise many of these enterprises.

At first, many people thought these take-overs were a positive move. They felt these would create a strong base for socialism. But, in fact, these steps were very disruptive to production. They greatly overstretched the existing number of Frelimo cadres. They made the introduction of a central planning process very difficult. State intervention became, in many cases, merely a response to emergencies caused by the actions of fleeing settler

capitalists. State appointed managers sometimes had no previous experience of the sector to which they were sent. Often they could do little more than adopt day-to-day ad hoc measures to restore production.

These events were largely unavoidable. They had everything to do with the backward, underdeveloped situation that hundreds of years of colonialism had created in Mozambique. With all these problems, it is a great tribute to Frelimo and the working people of Mozambique that by 1977 they had stopped the fall in national production. In fact, between 1977 and 1981 production actually increased by 15%!

But the point we are trying to illustrate remains. The Frelimo government was unable to effectively manage and control all the nationalised enterprises. At the same time, the working class was not sufficiently organised to take collective control over the means of production at the enterprise level. In short, the process of nationalisation in Mozambique was far in advance of socialisation. Nationalisation reached a point where it was blocking the process of establishing an effective planning process and transforming production relations in the factories.

What we have so far considered was the general situation in Mozambique. But there were a number of cases where a different pattern was happening. One such example is the case of TEXLOM, a textile factory in Maputo.

The factory only started operating in 1973 - that is, shortly before Mozambique won

independence in 1975. Because of this, the management were less attracted than many other managements to leaving immediately after independence. They still had to make profits on their investment! In the first year of TEXTLON's operation, there was little worker organisation or activity. After the progressive army coup in Portugal on 25 April 1974, a workers' committee was formed at TEXTLON. Changes were in the air, and the workers felt more confidence.

The committee demanded an end to racial discrimination in the factory, a revision of the wage scale, and opening of the canteen and company buses to all. The canteen and the buses were restricted to Portuguese workers and a few assimilados (educated blacks). When management refused to consider the demands, a strike broke out in July 1984. Management called the police, But in the new conditions the police refused to break the strike. Instead, they persuaded management to make concessions. The victorious workers returned home that night in the previously segregated buses!

As a result of this victory, management was forced to recognise the workers' committee. The committee was consulted on a number of key issues, and it negotiated several wage increases. This situation continued for some time after independence. Then in 1976 another conflict happened. Following the exodus of Portuguese foremen and technicians, management attempted to strengthen its position by promoting to supervisory positions a number of workers who were black impimpis. This move was opposed by the workers. They considered the new appointees unqualified.

The workers also saw the promotions as a move to strengthen management control. They refused to accept the new appointees, or to take orders from them.

There was a deadlock. The Frelimo state structures refused to back the position of management. The senior managers resigned, and so TEXLOM became a nationalised factory.

The point about the TEXLOM example is that the firm became nationalised as a result of workers' struggles at the plant itself. These struggles challenged the control of the bourgeois management on key questions. TEXLOM was nationalised as a result of worker action from below, and not in the first place as a result of defensive state intervention from above.

In 1980 when the factory was visited, it was clear that the experience of workers' shop-floor organisation and struggle in the factory had created a much firmer base for progressive state management than in many other nationalised enterprises. Workers had already begun to take part in decision-making. By 1980, a workers' production council was working together with the Frelimo appointed state management in running the factory.

Unfortunately, in recent years, progress at TEXLOM has been affected by the crisis created by destabilisation and the bandit war. But the first years of the TEXLOM experience are a very useful concrete, historical example.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the South African case. It is clear that the level of shopfloor power of the working class is much greater in South Africa than it was in Mozambique before liberation. Over 1 million South African workers are organised into progressive trade unions, which have a history of militant struggle. Already, questions of workers control have been raised in the course of struggles.

The South African working class has also developed a tradition of democratic, collective organisation. This applies not only in unions, but also in community and political organisations, as well as in the rudimentary organs of people's power. These are all points of strength in the broad South African liberation movement. They will have to be built on and developed in a struggle for economic transformation.

On coming to power, a people's government in South Africa will, of course, inherit the existing, already large state sector. At the same time, it will be obliged to make a number of immediate moves in the existing 'private sector'. For example, it will be necessary to establish effective control over the banking system at a fairly early stage. There is already a big and increasing outflow of money from the country. For some years all the major monopolies have been sending money out of the country. This is because they are scared of their future in South Africa. If a process of socialist transition begins, we can expect a rapid increase in the outflow of money, unless proper controls are immediately

imposed.

State intervention will also be needed from the start in the struggle to realise the Freedom Charter's demands for jobs for all, decent housing and full social services. After liberation, we can expect a great increase in the number of people coming to the cities. But the trend in capitalist production is towards replacing jobs with more machines. In such circumstances, 'market forces' will not provide employment for a growing urban population. As an urgent priority, the state will have to establish new enterprises to satisfy both the needs of the people, and to provide jobs.

It will also be necessary at an early stage, to supervise and control the existing 'private sector' - with a view to transferring monopolies to popular control. The present structure of monopolies in South Africa may be turned to advantage. As we have seen, a small number of monopoly conglomerates control the vast bulk of the South African capitalist economy. Gaining control of the parent boards of Anglo American, Sanlam, S.A. Mutual, Rembrandt/Volkscas, Liberty Life and Anglo-vaal should provide a basis for a substantial measure of real control over the major, strategic decisions affecting most of capitalist production. This could be done without having immediately to take over the management of each of the hundreds of component subsidiary enterprises.

But none of these steps, or any other immediate priorities, would be helpful if all available cadres were absorbed in the taking over of day to day management in the large number of

existing enterprises. This absorbing and over-extension could well happen if nationalisation went ahead too fast. It is precisely here that the question of shopfloor, workers' organisation will be of great importance. Workers organised at the point of production will be a key element in controlling the actions of the existing bourgeois managements. Many of these managements will have to remain at their posts for some time, if severe disruptions of production are to be avoided.

We have seen in the TEXLOM example that, at a certain point, the defensive struggle of workers against bourgeois management is likely to pass over into a struggle over control of the enterprise itself. This is one possible route through which part of the process of transferring ownership of monopolies to the people might be accomplished.

This paper has raised many issues. There are two basic points that are of great importance :

- i) In transferring the monopolies to popular control, all will not be possible on "one glorious day". It will be a process, a process that will involve overall strategies, and the setting of different immediate priorities, specific goals in different, specific situations. The transformation of the economy cannot be accomplished all at once.
- ii) Action by a state of people's power and actions of workers organised at the point of production will have to be combined together. Only in this way will it be possible to realise the goal of transferring control of the monopolies

to the people of South Africa.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the differences and the connections between nationalisation and socialisation of monopoly industries.
2. Discuss the writer's argument that a combination of state control from the centre, and workers' control from the base will be required for a liberated South African economy. Do you agree that a one-sided stress on state action, or on workers' shopfloor action can lead to mistakes?
3. What does the example of the struggles at the TEXLOM company in Maputo show?





Dear Isizwe,

We are writing from one of the newer UDF regions. We found the article on Democracy very useful for our work. There is one organisational topic that is part of organisational democracy which we feel was not covered and should have been. This is the question of Delegating. We find that too often our work is blocked by a weakness on this point. We have analysed this question, and this is how we see things.

Let me give an example. We call a regional meeting and we find that some comrades in the leadership in some areas fail consistently to attend these regional meetings. Or if they come, they always have a reason for hurrying back to their areas before we have completed our agenda.

Why does this happen? It is not that the comrades in question are lazy, or unserious about political work. The problem is that in their approach to work these comrades have built too much around themselves personally. This is why they feel they cannot be away from their village or township or area for more than a few hours. Otherwise they seem to think everything is going to fall in.

We think there are three main weaknesses with this style of work.

- a. Number one - this is a short-sighted approach. If you always take on all the work yourself, then obviously, there will never be anyone who can stand in. This is where delegating is important. To delegate does not mean that you give up your own overall responsibility that the work must be completed. In doing so you are building leadership skills in others, and you are spreading the work load and more can be done.

Also, where an individual does it all, it happens that the strong points of the individual and the weak points affect the whole area. For instance, maybe the individual is very militant but a poor organiser, or good at theory but not very militant and active. Then, if the individual has not been delegating and thus also benefitting from the skills of others, then the whole area will have his strong and weak points.

- b. Number two - especially in our situation with an emergency and death squads it is very important to be building other

comrades. We must share skills and leadership knowledge. Anyone of us can be detained or worse, but the work must continue. A person who makes everything depend on himself or herself personally is not responsible.

- c. Number three - building up personal power and making oneself irreplaceable encourages factionalism. If you treat a particular area as if it belongs to you personally, then sooner or later you will get other individuals in the area building their own personal factions against you. This way nobody approaches the struggle correctly, with a political and organisational approach. Everything becomes personal.

To come back to our example we gave at the beginning. This number three argument against the personalised approach tells you why often comrades claim that there are pressing matters at home, and they cannot stay for the full agenda. The reason for this is that they are scared to leave their home base, because in their absence some other strong individual or faction will take over. So they refuse to leave, or they rush back after just a few hours. This does not solve the problem, it keeps it going. Instead of rushing back each time, these comrades must learn to change their style of work. Above all they must learn to delegate, to build up teamship.

This is one problem we are having in our work and these are some explanations of how we analyse the difficulty. We wonder if other regions have had similar problems and how they solved them?

EACH ONE TEACH ONE ! EVERY MEMBER AN ORGANISER!

Yours in the struggle
O.N.



TRADE UNIONS IN ANGOLA

(In this article we continue our series on mass democratic organisations in Angola.)

The National Union of Angolan Workers (UNTA) was formed in exile in Kinshasa in 1960 under the guidance of MPLA. The main mover behind starting UNTA was Pascoal Luvuala, who is still the general secretary of the Union, and a member of the MPLA Workers' Party political bureau.

In 1961 MPLA launched its armed struggle to liberate Angola from Portuguese colonialism. During the liberation struggle, UNTA could play only a limited role in organising workers within Angola. Portuguese colonialism left Angola's development very backward. Compared with South Africa, the working class was very small and scattered. These objective factors,

in addition to heavy repression, made organising workers difficult at this time.

But still UNTA built up an underground network of contacts. At the same time, many working class militants from UNTA were directly involved in the armed struggle. In fact, the Union's first deputy general secretary, Ndongola M'Bindi was killed in action during the liberation war.

After liberation, UNTA took overall responsibility for organising the national trade union movement. It set up new organisational bases, and took over existing structures. In colonial times trade unions were largely craft unions for skilled workers only, under the control of colonial settlers. After liberation, in the changed political situation, these organisations either collapsed, or came under progressive control.

INDUSTRIALISATION OF UNIONS

In the first period after liberation, the major task of UNTA was to build and restructure. Amongst other things, this involved turning the Union structures into industrial unions. The previous, colonial unions had been based on crafts and professions (lorry drivers, clerks, etc.). Now the task was to organise according to economic sectors. Today UNTA has 655 000 members in 10 trade unions, organising in the following sectors: agriculture, coffee products, construction, health services, administration and public offices, heavy industry, light industry, food production, fishing, educational and cultural sector and

other social services. Included in UNTA's 655 000 members are 134 000 women workers.

THE BATTLE FOR PRODUCTION

After liberation large numbers of the colonial bourgeoisie abandoned their businesses and fled from Angola. In some cases they sabotaged machinery before leaving. The already underdeveloped economy was further weakened.

In order to ensure that these abandoned factories continued to work, the new revolutionary government nationalised large numbers of them. It also introduced legislation to ensure effective worker participation in every sector of the economy. In the newly nationalised enterprises workers participate in decision making through joint worker-management committees.

For the Angolan working people the two major tasks are :

- i) the defence of the revolution;
- ii) the struggle for improved living conditions, which means building the economy and advancing productivity.

In fact, the two revolutionary tasks are closely linked. In the words of the deputy general secretary, Guimaraes Pascoal Tavares: "UNTA believes that one cannot ignore the fact that Angola is an underdeveloped country with a very dependent economy. Our goals can only be achieved by an increase in production and productivity. This process has been delayed by the wars waged against us by the racist regime in Pretoria. South Africa

particularly wants to undermine the rails, harbours, bridges and industry of this country. Ten years after independence, acts of destruction and sabotage have caused damage worth billions of dollars. The Angolan government therefore has to give priority to defence. But at the same time major progress has been made in labour legislation and in the training of union officials."

In a capitalist country, (including many neo-colonial countries in Africa like Kenya and Senegal for instance) progressive trade unions often fight attempts by management to increase productivity. This is because in a capitalist system, increased productivity often means just bigger profits for the bosses, harder work for the workers for the same pay. It also often means retrenchments and more unemployment with fewer workers expected to do the same work as before.

But in a socialist country, or in one that is trying to build socialism, the approach of progressive trade unions to productivity is very different to that in a capitalist country. In a country like Angola, trying to build socialism, the main wealth of the mines, factories and banks belongs to the working people. Improving productivity means increasing the social wealth available to the working people of Angola. It means more money for schools, hospitals and for more factories and therefore more jobs. It also means more money for the defence of the people's revolution.

This is the key difference between productivity in socialist and capitalist societies. Only if we understand this difference, can we understand why progressive trade unions in a

country like Angola work to improve productivity. UNTA calls on its members to see themselves as the leading class in a nation struggling against the enemy of underdevelopment. Only development will mean there can be jobs, houses, health services, clothing, education and food for everyone. This means constant political and technical training to keep members active and involved.

In this task, UNTA works closely with the MPLA Workers Party, and with the people's state. But the trade unions in Angola also have their own independent role.

TRADE UNIONS, PARTY AND STATE

During the liberation struggle, MPLA was a broad liberation movement. Since liberation MPLA has changed into a vanguard party, the MPLA Workers' Party. As a vanguard party, it draws its membership mainly from the most advanced militants of the working masses. The MPLA Workers' Party is guided by scientific socialism. It sees its special task as safeguarding the political direction of the revolution, making sure that the medium and long-term interests of the working people are won. The party has its cadres present in every level and sector of society - in the army, on the production line in the factory, in the state institutions, in the civics and schools. While the party provides overall political and ideological leadership, the state structures have the responsibility for carrying out and administering social, economic, cultural and military tasks. These tasks are carried out within the broad political framework set out by the party.

The trade unions, for their part, are mass organisations. They organise workers at the point of production. Unlike the vanguard party, unions recruit all workers, irrespective of their political and religious outlook. Many party members are, of course, active in the trade unions. But it is seen as important not to collapse party and union structures. Each has its own special responsibility.

In the words of the late President, Agostinho Neto : "Trade union bodies should not simply echo the desires and viewpoints of MPLA members. Workers can and must freely discuss decisions by the party. This will prevent the party from having too much of a theoretical approach remote from the practical problems at the grassroots level."

The trade unions and the party co-operate closely, then, but they also have their independent functions and character.

The same can be said for the relationship between the trade unions and the people's state. In the nationalised sector of the economy, it is the state that supplies management. To ensure that workers are able to voice their own outlook, it is important that unions do not act like simple branches of the state in these industries.

To guarantee its own economic independence from the state, UNTA collects subs from all members equal to one percent of their wages. This money is used by UNTA to fund all its activities, especially the education and training of union officials. There are also no government members on its national council, which is largely made up of workers and only

a minority of paid union officials.

By understanding the different roles of the party, the state and the trade unions, co-operation between them is deepened, not weakened. As mass organisations, the trade unions play a very important role in developing the basic organisational and political skills of workers. In turn, such development helps increasing numbers of militant workers to advance into leading positions within the state and party. It is in this way that the working people of Angola are beginning to achieve, in concrete organisational practice, their leading role in the struggle to build a new life for all the people of Angola through socialism.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you believe it is politically correct for UNTA trade unions to campaign for higher productivity? Why? Would it be politically correct to make this call in countries like South Africa or Kenya?
2. Discuss the different roles played by the trade unions, the MPLA Workers' Party, and the state in Angola. Do you think these differences are useful and necessary?
3. Does the last question have any relevance to the debate about the political role of trade unions in S.A. at the moment? How?





COMRADE DOS SANTOS SPEAKS ON UNIONISM

(The first congress of the National Union of Angolan Workers - UNTA - in April 1984, was addressed by President José Eduardo dos Santos. The following is an extract from his speech.)

"At the current stage in the democratic and popular revolution, where we have to lay the material, technical and spiritual foundations for the building of socialism, the unions constitute a vast organisation representing the workers, independent of their political or religious convictions. (...) As the leading force in the state and in society, the party is linked to the trade unions both by its membership and by the general policy goals it has established.

Through the unions, the party can be made aware of the problems and views of the workers and, in turn, inform them of its own aims, in order to adopt measures that can better safeguard the interests of society and the labour force. However, the trade unions should not confuse their own activities with those of the state.

The state directs and executes a policy of economic, social and cultural development in accordance with the party's intentions. The trade unions provide a framework for the workers, help seek answers to their problems and mobilise them in the tasks necessary for the construction of socialism. At the same time, they provide workers with the training and preparation required to take on the responsibilities of directing and administering the affairs of state.

Through the unions, the workers, who are the main force in our revolution, have a chance to take part in the discussion of plans and other questions within enterprises or in their workplace. In this way, they can participate in the management of production and of the national economy. This is an important point since, as everyone knows, it is the economic base that determines the nature of political power."

