

THE PRESENT PHASE OF MASS DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE:Introduction

The present phase of the mass democratic struggle has taken as its reference point the gains that have been made through the anti-tricameral election campaign. This is so, mainly because the whole period building up to the August 'elections' was the period where mass democratic organisations had shelved most of their individual specific programmes which were unrelated to the campaign in favour of the anti-election campaign. Now that this struggle of active rejection of the racial elections has been fought and won, democratic organisations are in a situation where they are to re-embark on their programmes and make a drive to take them to greater heights. This move to forge ahead to even greater heights, of course, has been enriched by the lessons and experience drawn from the campaign itself. The lesson and experience of utmost importance undoubtedly is the formidable strength of unity in action of the struggling people. The level of this co-operation of the population groups was reminiscent of the level of our struggle in the 50's.

The UDF, being the front through which the campaign found its organisational expression, has tremendously raised the expectations of the people in its capacity and ability to organise them for bigger struggles and more decisive victories. This has definitely placed an urgent and bigger challenge in front of the UDF. The question now facing different organisational formations of our struggle; how to make what they have rejected unworkable - how to sustain the current state of mobilization and defiance and transform it into more co-ordinated and organised fighting. This organised fighting once neatly co-ordinated with the strong underground development and military activity of the ANC (as the vanguard of our people's struggle, will put our struggle on the footing truly defined as the people's war)

This phase of struggle is also going to bring up more acutely political and organisational problems of mass democratic struggle which had been shelved prior to the intensification of the campaign against the 'elections'. Some of these problems are going to be inevitable in a heightening mass struggle. Because of its broad character and little experience in dealing with a front organisation, these problems are more pronounced in the UDF.

A) UDF

1. The most positive impact of the UDF has been in the drawing in of a broad spectrum of mass organisations into common programmes and common identification under one organisational umbrella of a front, the orchestration and championing of the anti-election campaign and the creation of a large-scale political climate. Its biggest shortcoming has been its limited success in broadening the definition in practice through anti-PC activities so as to draw a common denominator of struggle for both Coloured/Indian and the African communities. The UDF was formed with the express purpose of fighting against the PC and Koornhof Bills. These two elements provided a very broad premise for mobilisation which the UDF did not adequately explore. The definition of struggle against the PC and Koornhof Bills should have been broadened to actively involve the African oppressed majority. This would have been done by drawing a parallel in practical campaigns between the PC AND THE Bantustans (eg repression in the Ciskei, Inkatha impis etc); between the Koornhof Bills and the denationalisation of the Africans through the removals etc. The UDF did, however, put the regime against the wall and force it to make some retreat on the Koornhof Bills. This skirmish did not, however end there because the regime is trying to smuggle the provision of these bills through some other legislation.

2) Another index of the amount of work still to be done in the UDF is the line-up of affiliates which reflects an imbalance towards community and youth

organisations away from labour organisations. It is only a small number of T.U's which have affiliated with the front eg SAAWU, GAWU. Larger federated unions like FOSATU have taken a 'negative neutrality' against affiliation. Several reasons have been advanced for the position against affiliation, among others, they are:

- The front is a large, loose unprincipled formation which will dilute the shop-floor ~~as~~ structural organisation of unions (example is made with SACTU and the congress alliance and the alliance is blamed for 'weakening' SACTU)
- Affiliation to the UDF will divide these unions because part of the membership supports the NFC.
- T.U's should not get involved in politics of mass organisations. Their struggle is only at the factory floor.

The UDF's attempt to win these unions into the front has been largely in the addressing shop stewards of the different unions and political addresses and articles in progressive community media. What the UDF has not done is to take up issues which the working class will immediately identify with and then draw up a parallel with that the UDF stands for. It shall immediately make such schools of thought irrelevant in the ears of the working people. Such programmes should also involve the grooming of our own people within these unions, people who can articulate correct politics of a front. A good example can be made using the split in MAWU and Cosol Glass in Bellville. There are several of such simmering splits in other FOSATU and CUSA unions.

3) The UDF has also been seen as failing to provide strategic clarity and ideological strategic pace. (vide: 401646E; 401524E) This has been linked to the weakening rather than the strengthening of the affiliates by the UDF (vide: 401525E; 401524E) These two questions will come up more sharply in this post anti-election period; the time when the UDF is called upon to chart out its programme for the future. All the progressive forces should definitely express the desire to see the UDF strengthening its affiliates. This is the way to ensure the strength of the UDF itself.

The question of providing strategic and ideological clarity has got different aspects and approaches to it. For example (vide: 401646E) the leading group in Natal ie Pravin Gordan, Yunus Mohammed, Zac Yacoob is said to argue that each region should have a structure through which it can discuss and caucus questions at both senior and activist levels and the position adopted should be a regional one. This is one way of trying to answer some of the questions experienced by the P.E conference.

What is important to note here is that the UDF is still young and still grappling with many political and organisational questions. So it is a bit unfair to expect the UDF to immediately give ideological and strategic clarity. By its very nature a front rests on a loose minimum basis and this dictates the indirect way in which ideological questions can be taken or at least catered for. The strategic clarity also lies in the UDF co-ordinating the national struggle and pushing it towards a common goal. Another problem which is closely associated with this one is that our people don't have the experience of a front. The least that they can refer to is the Congress Alliance and as a result some people see the UDF as the ANC trying to adapt to the semi-legal condition of struggle.

4) The dimension that the development of the RMC is taking is a worrying one, (vide: 401525, 401527; 401846G) Some key people in the RMC want to transform this issue orientated organisation into a non-racial African organisation. The idea here is the formation of a national African organisation within which the African constituency can be able to caucus as an African component within the UDF. These people feel that because the Indian community through the NIC and TIC and the coloured community through its strong civic organisations are able to caucus and come to the UDF as stronger forces it is necessary for the African community to have their own organisation which will enable them to participate in the UDF on an equal footing. They have accused the Indian community of playing the dominant role which is made possible by their stronger organisations. These accusations have taken the following forms;

- The dominant role played by the Indian community in the UDF has infused an elitist and petty-bourgeoisie tendency in the UDF (vide: 401524E; 401525E)
- This petty-bourgeoisie tendency has gone to the extent where in the UDF meetings people are told not to sing ANC and MK songs. This is seen as stifling growth and militancy and reducing people's confidence in the UDF. An example can be made from conflicting instructions between Cosas and the UDF given to the boycotting students (vide: 401427D; 401846E)
- African comrades who are seen not to be questioning this non-African dominant position in the UDF are said to be viewed with suspicion and are even called names. Some of this suspicions have assumed racial connotations.

Here it must be stated that some of this information is from people who do not necessarily like us and actually sometimes work at variance with our tactical and strategic line eg AvH, Aubrey, Jabu etc. But at the same time there is some truth in the saying that sometimes it is your enemy who will tell you the truth where your friend flatters you. In this particular case some of these allegations have actually been confirmed by people inside the country whom we consider to be on our side.

So if we think that some of these issues are likely to be true, although coming from some quarters where they have been distorted and exaggerated, then they need investigating or at least our own interpretation. For an example it would be an anomaly if the Africans are not seen to be playing a decisive role in a political formation like the UDF. That is an issue dangerous enough to destroy the UDF in the long run. We always say that the liberation of South Africa is primarily the liberation of the African majority and hence that that liberation can be ensured by them playing a central role. So how do we ensure this if it is not happening now. Aubrey, Jabu, Curtis and others think that the solution is transforming the RMC into an African national organisation. This move brings the following questions to mind;

- The RMC has not yet achieved its objective, that role is still there and very much so. To fight for the release of political prisoners is a very important site of struggle and mobilisation. If the RMC is transformed into something that might place confusion in its original *raison d'être*.
- An African national organisation is still in existence and that is the ANC. The formation of any other might create confusion.

The question however still stands. How do we ensure greater African participation and their leading role in the UDF? This question needs a thorough discussion. Part of the solution lies in:

- Streamlining UDF programmes and gearing them towards the aspirations of the African working and rural people.
- Consolidation of African community, civic, T.U's youth Student organisations.
- Employment of many African UDF full-time organisers to concentrate in African areas. It is relevant to mention here that there is an observation which says that coloured and Indian communities have a better understanding of grassroot organisation than the African areas.

A deliberate attempt should be made to have an ANC leadership talk to some RMC people eg Aubrey. It should also be observed that the RMC is not homogeneous. There is bad blood between the Natal RMC and the TVI RMC because the former is being seen to be close to the NIC.

There is also a certain push by some people to have the UDF developing into a United Democratic Movement. This is the feeling of those people who say the UDF can only be more decisive in its actions and decisions if it becomes a movement, (vide: 401846G) this view however, cannot have got no substantial support.

5) There are forces within the UDF who say it is not enough to boycott but the UDF should be able to come with an alternative to the tri-cameral fraud. These people are pushing the idea of a National Convention. At first people were confused as to the origin of the call but later it seemed to be established that the idea came from some caucus in the NIC. Of course this issue has not been well canvassed at home. It is only unfortunate that people like Terror

have already made the call publicly in his article in the RDM. Also the fact that the origin is being seen as the NIC is a problem because people still have the 'referendum experience'. The result of it is that the African comrades are going to be sceptical and there is some militancy to contend with. This militant group is going to see this as a deviation from the RNC line of fighting to overthrow the regime. The possibility of the UDF effectively making the National Convention issue a mobilising factor to the advantage of our struggle is a real one.

6) The UDF leadership has also been put in a bad light by some opportunistic elements within the UDF. They have not failed to amplify whatever minor slip (vide: 401646E; 401524E etc) Part of this problem is the extension of the struggle between the AMH grouping and the UDF. The main target is the Indian community which he accuses of hampering democratic white participation (vide: 401846G) He says the reason of the hostility is that the Indian community feels threatened by the democratic whites because they have the education, skills and resources. The criticism of the UDF leadership has also come from African comrades who are with close to the RMC or the AvH grouping. It is, however, true that some of the things which have been associated with the UDF leadership are regrettable.

#### CRIC AND MARS

Much has been said on the negative role these two resource centres have begun to play as weapons of the AvH grouping against other organisations in the UDF (vide: 401437D; 401644G; 401426D etc) This is AvH's most powerful weapon next to his financial connections with the Social Democrats abroad. These centres enable him to have control over these organisations and individuals because of the much-needed resources there. This control provides him with information of what happens, where, when and who is involved. This control has been made more effective by the attainment of a large building called Freeway House in Braamfontein. Several important organisations have been pulled in to share the offices, Cosas, RMC, SASPU youth organisations. There is an attempt to pull in SAAWU as well. CRIC has employed many African youth from Cosas, Soyco and other organisations.

AvH's attempt to control and the suspicions accruing from these have spread even to the W/Cape and Border. For eg in the W/Cape, SASPU and AvH have come under heavy attack from people like Johnny Issel. There are also strong suspicions between CRIC and ERIC (Education Research Information Centre) mainly arising from areas on control, (vide: 401426D) Even the conflict between the Jonathan and Vries and Issel has also been blamed on the relationship between the Jonathan group and AvH grouping. An example of financial control can be seen in the relationship between CRIC and Veritas - AvH had promised Veritas R5 000 and suggested that Veritas fall under CRIC. When this move was resisted then the R5 000 did not come.

Another very disturbing development is that some of the material which is being produced by the media which is under the control of these centres is now questionable in terms of the policy and ideology pushed (vide: Update July or August) Update is a SASPU affiliate.