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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

From the outset I want to dispel some silly notions in the heads of leading members of the ruling clique and their henchmen on the nature and role of the United Democratic Front in the struggle for national liberation. With all the fanaticism of a reactionary, they cling to the word "Front", twist its meaning and then attach connotations to prove the lie that the organisation is nothing else other than a display window of some banned organisations. But we know that they are feeding their gullible audience with false information. We are clear in our minds that the position they have taken against the UDF is a position typical of all undemocratic and fascist cliques throughout the world. We have seen it in Hitler's Germany, in Spain and in Portugal. The peoples of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and elsewhere in Africa, Latin America and Asia have gone through similar experiences. Fortunately for the democratic movement in South Africa, there is nothing new in the allegations which are intended to drive us to the V.T.P. stand where we should watch the march past of the forces of reaction, oppression and exploitation without lifting even a finger. In the period preceding its ban in 1960, the ANC was branded a communist organisation - some front of the Communist Party of South Africa. Not that the Nationalist Party intellectuals did not know that long before the coming into being of the CPSA, and five full years before the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Tsarist Russia, the ANC was already hatched by the incubator of racist oppression and exploitation right inside South Africa. The situation has not changed from what it was then. Instead it has become even worse. But they would like everybody else to believe in the myths of an "agitator" behind any genuine resistance against the barbarism of apartheid society. They would not accede to the fundamental truth that the "agitator", in fact, is political deprivation, economic strangulation, the squalor in the ghettos, forced removals and resettlements, the group areas act, the pass laws, unequal and ethnic education, migrant labour, the balkanisation of a fatherland into dust-tracks called homelands, increased rentals, etc., etc. Yes that is the "agitator". The Nationalist Government has arrogated to itself the position of a god, and has elevated the greenery around its residence in Cape Town to some Garden of Eden of some sort. There, and in the tranquility of comfort and plenty, they must sit down, and, in their own image, carve an ideal model the type of man they want. In that arrogant innocence, they parade stark naked before the god of impartial history without even a scrap of morality to cover their nakedness.

2. THE FRONT

We are a front organisation. No apologies. Like any other front anywhere in the world, we are a mouthpiece of a number of organisations whose short and long term aspirations are given expression and authenticated in the unity in action which we alone, at this point in time, can effectively forge. The organisations we represent are all lawful and operate within the four corners of this country. Not a single one of those organisations has descended, ready made, from outer space upon the democratic and peace-loving people of South Africa. On the contrary, these organisations are the direct product of objective reality in a country that has gone strange to democracy. Though we cannot boast of any ideological homogeneity as a front, the organisations at our command are none the less committed to the ideal of a united, free and democratic non-racial South Africa, in which the will of the people, and not the will of a clique, shall bear sway. That is the primary thrust of the UDF.

o must keep a delicate balance on the compromise line.

is not the first time that the apartheid regime has brought together different organisations of diverse political persuasions to take a common stand against itself. In 1936, for instance, the then South African Native Congress extended an invitation to all organisations and individuals of the oppressed to attend a convention in Bloemfontein, and there to adopt a common position against the notorious Hertzog Bills. It was a popular indaba, comprising political, cultural, religious, and sports organisations of the oppressed and exploited masses. It might not have been destined to take on a permanent form, but certainly it did prove one point of particular significance to the UDF: that there is always room for the oppressed and fighting democrats to pool their individual efforts. Points of difference are not overriding. We can always submerge these and project those aspects which bring us together. Over the passage of time, with persuasion and discussion, the edges may become blunted, suspicious dissipated and unity achieved. And the best workshop where such unity can be hammered is the field of action. As long as we agree to resist and work together to attain certain immediate goals, so long will the possibility of ultimate unity be ascertained. My point here is vindicated by the campaigns that were mounted by our people during the second world war. I want to single out the Alexandra bus boycott - one of the longest and bitterest in living memory. Without clogging you with much detail, the outstanding achievement in so far as this campaign was concerned is the fact that, perhaps for the first time in the history of the liberation struggle, we witnessed a spontaneous expression of solidarity, in particular by the Indian community in Johannesburg, with the people of Alexander. We are told that some members of the Indian community would wake up early in the morning, walk the long distance from Fordsburg to Alexander to catch up with the throng of marching commuters. The process would be repeated in the evening. What is of relevance to us in this example is the fact that this expression of solidarity was not as a result of a resolution by the South African Indian Congress. On the contrary, the response must be seen as a product of their objective reality in South Africa at a time when the popular slogans in Afrikaans were: "Kaffir op sy plek" and "Koelie uit die land". In the circumstances "Kaffir" and "Koelie" had enough cause to come together against the common enemy in spite of whatever other difference might have been there between the two. And of importance again is the fact that the unity of the two was not wrenched in a conference room, but that it was forged in the theatre of a practical struggle. When doctors Xuma and Dadoo came together in 1946 as leaders respectively of the ANC and the Indian Congress to inaugurate the Congress Alliance in the name of Dadoo-Xuma Pact, they were merely giving formal endorsement of an idea already clinched at mass level. This Pact was in a very realistic sense a front. It was designed to coordinate and direct campaigns. The two communities could speak with one voice and march forward in one step. Consultation, oh! yes! consultation, discussion, patience and persuasion are some of the outstanding attributes which gave a long span of life to the front. In due course, and again as a result of two fascist bent in South Africa after the seizure of power by the Malan clique, the 1946 front was enlarged immediately after the 1952 Defiance Campaign to comprise such organisations as the Congress of Democrats, and the Coloured Peoples Congress. This formation was called the Congress Alliance. In 1954 the South African Congress of Trade Unions was to be the 5th member. The most significant difference between this front and the UDF is the fact that all affiliate organisations, SACTU excepted, were political organisations with one ideological persuasion.

That is not the case with our UDF. That, of course, does not mean that the Congress front did not have problems. They were there and some of them had an ethnic tinge. But these problems could and were surmounted - and not by confrontation and abuse. Consultation and constant consultation, discussion and persuasion formed the open sesame.

For it is important, comrades, to understand that differences between the people cannot and should not be solved in any other way. Of course we need to distinguish here between healthy and unhealthy differences. The former are genuine and struggle-orientated while the latter are a product of selfcentredness, reaction and mischief-making and carry all the attributes of a clique. As a matter of principle we do not waste our time and sacrifice progress once this reactionary trend has been diagnosed. It is precisely on that score that the Leballo clique had to be dealt with all the contempt they deserved at the Congress of the People in 1955.

One other difference between the UDF and the Congress Alliance consisted in the fact that the latter had a spearhead in the name of the ANC, whereas the UDF cannot boast of such a fact. This is a glaring omission. Should we briefly look at other front organisations elsewhere in the world to follow the argument of a spearhead! Let's take the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. It was a tremendously huge alliance of all political, cultural and religious persuasions. Normally it would be difficult to bring these groupings together for any sustained period of time in the absence of the common enemy - French and later American imperialism. But the Lao Dong party not only brought them together, but also served as spearhead - the pace setter of long term objectives. In that position it understood that the Rhudists, for instance, would not go beyond the expulsion of imperialism and the establishment of a People's Democracy.

Similarly with the Partisan Fronts in eastern Europe during Hitler's occupation of the continent. The various communist parties in these countries served as spearheads of extremely broad fronts, some affiliates of which had no sympathies at all with issues like the dictatorship of the proletariat. And significantly enough for us the marxist parties in all these fronts did not project their own programmes over and above those of affiliates. Whilst the working class position had to be strengthened it was observed that in a compromise position like a front, tact and skill must take precedence. You don't denounce that other wing as bourgeois and retrograde. You don't call that one a lackey of so and so and dub that one as a centre-piece of progress and beauty in the front. You must just understand his weaknesses and shortcomings. Once these have been discovered and once, therefore, the distance he is prepared to travel in the long march to a Peoples Day of South Africa, has been determined it is your responsibility to persuade him to take another short mile with you. It is persuasion all the way. In most instances, depending on the prevailing circumstances, it is possible to win doubtful starters for the entire distance to be travelled. The successes of the Congress Alliance up to the time of the banning in 1960, and those of the great Vietnamese people and the Partisan Fronts in eastern Europe and elsewhere can be attributed to this essential understanding of the compromise nature of a front. As I have pointed out initially, we are a peculiar front in the sense that we do not have a spearhead organisation; and as things are at the moment I do not see ourselves commanding one. What then becomes our strategy? For it is a spearhead organisation that most politically advanced, that most conscious factor in an alliance which is historically endowed with the clearest perception of the next step; which political organisation in the UDF can arrogate to itself that task of leading the Front? For, let us not bluff ourselves, imperialism would like to influence the course of events in South Africa which is their workshop in the continent.

They are heavily invested in this country and since they know from the own bitter experience that apartheid is not here to stay, they would like to so manipulate things that when ultimately apartheid does go they have secured a jockey from within the democratic movement to safeguard their interests. They have tried in the past to win to their side such organisations as the PAC and the black consciousness herd. But all these groupings proved incompetent, and in 'despair, imperialism thought they had got their man in one Bantustan puppet who has also proved a disaster. My worry, comrades, is that imperialism may see the UDF as a hunting ground for its potential chaos which puts me back to my question as to what should be our strategy in the absence of a spearhead. May I therefore suggest the following alternative:

- (a) Sink individual leaders and project a collective leadership as suggested in the preceding NEC;
- (b) Evolve a coherent and more functional executive committee;
- (c) Project the progressive symbols of our struggle and highlight the anti-imperialist nature of the democratic struggle.

For lack of space and time I beg not discuss the three.

### 3. DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE FRONT

So much has been said about this at various levels that I find it superfluous to belabour the point. None the less allow me to make the following comment.

I have designated a front organisation as a compromise position. That implies a give-and-take situation. Don't be over-exerting and over-demanding. Allow a certain measure of flexibility within the broad framework of our policy. As an executive committee we should be able to take decision and formulate policy. At no single point in time should we ever address ourselves to affiliates without a part-bias on any given issue. This is important and allows you the privilege of influencing the course events. It is a privileged position because the perspective of any executive at any level will always be wider than that of affiliates who necessarily must be able to see only as far as their limited affiliate horizons. Once you have communicated your view to your affiliates you must not entertain ideas that is is gospel. The affiliates must discuss your viewpoint, criticise it, reject it or endorse it. In turn their own standpoint is transmitted to the executive which, in turn, after determining the most popular viewpoint go back to the affiliates and acquaint them with the latest detail. No matter how strongly one felt about one's particular point of view once a popular decision has been struck it becomes immediately binding on all affiliates. No dissent will be allowed. Otherwise if one continues to cling to one's standpoint against the majority view and continues to canvas the defeated position then one is operating a cliquish and obstructing action and progress. This tendency must be exposed to all affiliates in a political analysis which must underline the destructive nature of cliques in a people's front, and within the affiliate organisation's themselves.

At the same time no organisation must usurp its popularity and unilaterally decide on a campaign without consultation with the most relevant organisation in relation to that campaign. To illustrate: COSAS cannot unilaterally decide on a stay-away without prior consultation with the sister labour union affiliates, nor can any trade union unilaterally call upon students to boycott classes. Mistakes of this nature are bound to rock the front and cause disunity. We must not undermine the various leaderships of the diverse organisations at our command if we seek to advance revolutionary work. The working class, the spearhead of the struggle in South Africa today, has evolved its own leadership over the years, and in order to promote working class

consciousness we are historically obliged to invest a lot of trust in our union leaders, and by so doing we shall have closed the doors against opportunist agitators and demagogues who might be inspired with the idea of derailing our struggle. Similarly with other affiliate organisations. At the same time no individual member of the UDF - no matter how prominent his profile must be allowed to take upon himself the responsibility of negotiating behind the backs of the workers leaders since that is one surest way of disarming the toiling masses. The key word is always and everywhere CONSULTATION. In this way we shall have ensured democracy within the affiliate organisation and consequently strengthened the UDF.

#### 4. TRANSFORMATION OF THE UDF.

Recently, and possibly currently, ideas have been flung that the UDF in the post-Kuornhof and tricameral situation must be transformed into a political party. My own persuasion in this regard is that the necessity is forced upon us by the dictates of objective conditions then we have no alternative but to do so. But I want to believe that at the moment, such a move could only spell danger for the good work that has been done and the lot that remains to be accomplished in the foreseeable future. The advantage of the present guise is that we are in a position to command vast influence among the broad masses of our people by reason of organisational membership. In this way access to the people is far more enhanced than it would be in a situation where we relied on individual membership. In the current year - thanks to the MSC and the anti-election campaign - we have traversed even those areas where politics was a strange concept. We have been able to temper our people in the urban and platteland areas in a manner that has no parallel in history. Through affiliate organisations the UDF became a household word. In that manner we had taken our struggle to almost every home and thereby projected the mass nature of our cause. It would have been difficult to score these resounding victories had we been constituted otherwise. The task that lies ahead is quite momentous: we have to reach those thousands of our people wherever they are, appeal to them not as individuals but as organisations. In the-Karoo, Northern Transvaal and the O.F.S. effective UDF presence can only be made when the popular organisations that were set up during the anti-election campaign are consolidated and given direction, the rallying point at all material times being the conditions under which the people find themselves on a day to day basis. So that in so far as the future of the Front is concerned my feeling is that we maintain front nature and broaden our scope of activity. The anti-election campaign has enhanced the prestige of the Front. The government and its puppets were on the run, as they always must as long as they remain strange to truth. The clampdown on the UDF leadership and the brutal shooting of our people in the Rand and Vaal Triangle are an expression of frustration and impotence. At the same time it has been amply demonstrated that no force on earth can conquer the combined mass action of the oppressed and fighting people of South Africa. Even on the international plane the UDF position has been tremendously enhanced by the success of the campaign, which the racist government has become more of a skunk. But this does not mean we should be victory drunk. It means more work, more mobilisation and more vigilance against opportunists who may seek to climb on the crest of the present wave of anger.

#### 5. THE UDF AND THE FREEDOM CHARTER.

Comrades I cannot see how any organisation can be in a position to come up with a better set of demands than those enshrined in this ever green document. At the same time any attempt to formulate a watered-down version of those demands is certainly a sell-out position in the

context of the present struggle. The people of South Africa have gone a very long way to reach the Kili-town pinnacle in 1955. For us, 35 years later, to shun these demands would be outright reconciliation with the status quo and imperialism. I agree that Le Grange's linkage cause would be strengthened but, we know and everybody in his right senses knows that the Freedom Charter is and was never an ANC document.

X The ANC had its own documents like the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and African Claims. The FC belongs to the people of South Africa and at this point of our struggle there is no reason why we should not adopt it as an alternative to the racist constitution. Everyone of those 10 points can be used to rally our people anywhere in South Africa. It has been hailed throughout the African continent as a piece of realistic document. The progressive international mankind has applauded it at various forums as an ideal alternative. Nelson Mandela and Anderson remain fascinated with it right up to now. The masses have coined moving songs out of every point in the 10. The masses of our people love it and need to know it deeper. Those of our affiliate who may still entertain aversions against it need to be educated about it in a persuasive and tactical manner.

TO SUM UP:

LONG LIVE UDF

LONG LIVE OUR PRESIDENTS

A THOUSAND YEARS MANDELA!

AMANDLA!

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