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REPORT OF NATIONAL SECRETARIAT ON THE LAUNCHING OF UDF BORDER REGION

(By General Secretary)

September 24, 1983.

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1. Introduction.

1.1) The first attempt to launch the UDF in the Border region on 24 September, 1983 met with escalating State repression. A ban was imposed on all UDF, Saawu and Cosas meetings in the East London district by the Chief Magistrate of the said district. The order was effective from 6.00 am Friday 23 September 1983 - 6.00 am Sunday 25 September 1983.

1.2) Effect of Ban

Because the order was unexpected, it left many members of the interim committee confused and demoralised. Most of them did not turn up for the committee meeting scheduled for 5.00 pm on Friday to finalise the strategy and programme for the Saturday launching meeting.

1.3) Response to Ban

I phoned the president to discuss our press comment. The publicity secretary being not available, I asked regional secretaries of the Front to release a common statement to newspapers in their regions.

2. Interim Committee.

2.1) Further plans

A meeting scheduled for Saturday morning could not take place. The police drove away everybody coming near Mosazane Hall. As a result it was difficult to find the interim committee members.

On Saturday night a meeting was held between myself and five members of the interim committee. With the martial law operative in Mdantsane we could not meet until later than 10.00 pm. The hours between 10.30 pm and 4.00 am were declared curfew hours.

2.2) Determination to form UDF (Border) structure

Determined to form the UDF in the Border Region, the interim committee looked into new strategies to beat State action. A list of organisations accepting the UDF Declaration was prepared. Fifteen organisations were found to be committed to forming UDF Border Region. Eight remaining organisations were either not consulted or still undecided.

Organisations committed to forming the UDF Border Regional Structure were identified as the following:

1. South African Allied Workers Union (Saawu)
2. East London Youth Organisation
3. East London Youth Congress
4. African Culture and Community Development Ass.
5. National Women's Association
6. Azanian Students' Organisation (Azaso)
7. Detainee Support Committee (Descom)
8. Congress of South African Students (Cosas)
9. Victoria East Council of Sport
10. African Food and Canning Workers Union (Afcwu)
11. Border Council of Churches (BCC)
12. Catholic Students' Association (Casa)
13. Anglican Students' Association (Asa)
14. Black Students' Movement (BSM)
15. Fort Hare Black Staff Association

We assessed the total number of organisations in the Border Region and found a total of 23 organisations. With fifteen of these organisations supporting the front, we agreed that it was possible to form a region. It was decided that an attempt through consultations be made to draw in the remaining eight organisations. Once consultations were completed, organisations could then hold a meeting of delegates to elect the Executive Committee of the UDF Border Region. With the executive committee elected, the Region could then attempt a mass rally to popularise the UDF.

3. Needs of the Border Region.

3.1) Material

- The region is experiencing serious financial problems;
- it needs assistance from structured regions both in terms of donations and advice on methods of fund-raising;
- it desperately needs UDF sweaters/T shirts;
- needs video cassette of UDF national launching;
- needs documents explaining history and front formation of UDF.

3.2) Other

These are just my observations. It seems like there is a need for discussions on:

- what a front is;
- why the UDF was formed;
- how the UDF operates;
- how organisations affiliated to UDF could be autonomous;
- democracy and/or decision-making within the UDF.

4. Conclusion.

Two meetings have already been banned in the Border Region since September 23, 1983. However, the regional structure was finally formed, and there have been new developments. The region would be expected to report regularly on developments in Border

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