

C48

UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT
BORDER REGION
Annual Secretarial Report

Bew 'C48''

Preamble.

The first year of the existence of UDF in this region has seen a lot of developments some of which were positive progressive steps and inevitably some negative. It is however clear that the birth of this massive collection of the various forces opposed to the unsanctioned rule of the present minority regime has been an invaluable blessing to the advancement of the cause of liberation of our oppressed masses throughout the country.

We have witnessed a dramatic change in the course of events and the balance of power between the oppressor and the oppressed throughout South Africa. Through the UDF our people have been able to organise mass campaigns that have resulted in the mobilisation of scores of thousands of our people into active resistance of, not only the measures of this regime but also the continuation of their exercise of power over us without our mandate.

This then places upon the doorsteps of all involved in the Front especially those entrusted with leadership at all the various levels to maintain the high levels reached in the first year as well as build a momentum that will draw nearer the day of our liberation. To accomplish this we need to embark on a serious exercise of examining our past failures and achievements, test our strategies against our gains and losses, revise areas that have created a weakspot in our activities and determine the course for future action.

This then entails:

- * An assesment of the circumstances under which we operate;
- * A review of the methods and tactics we employed to advance our cause;
- * A critical assesment of the results of all our efforts;
- * Set out a course for future action.

Circumstances

The situation within the ranks of the oppressor at the time of the inception of UDF have been adequately outlined in the report of the secretariat to the UDF NGC in Port Elizabeth. All that is of importance here would be to point the various aspects mentioned there in so far as they apply to our region as well as point those particular aspects that are perculiar to our region only.

It is a well known fact that repression in this area has always been excessive. At no given moment do we experience a lull in repressive measures here but there is always an unever ending invention of new assaults on the freedoms of the people. It comes as no surprise then that the launch of this regional structure had to be done under the circumstances which are now history to us all.

We are here exposed to various structures of repression which exert at differing times and to differing degrees, various pressures intended to stifle the voice of dissent. However, this has not stopped the quest of the people the realisation of their vission of a truely democratic society in our country. Indeed there can never be a time or a place where the aspirations of the majority can be suppressed for ever.

To enumarate a few of the obstacles placed in the way of the democratic movement in this area the following are worth noting:

- * Denial of venues for meetings;
- * Detention and questioning of activists;
- * Banning of meetings;
- * Attacks on people involved in campaigns;
- * Waylaying of people coming from meetings and confiscation of materials;
- * Searches in homes of members and their offices.

*The ban on all meetings of more than 20 people in the Ciskei.

To sum it up there is no difference here between a banned and not banned organisation. All activity can be disrupted in whatever manner seen suitable by the maintainers of the status quo.

On the other hand all support, physically and ideologically has been afforded those who stand in the ranks of our opposition. In the course of events it has become very clear who is on whose side. The tendencies of those who claim to be representing the aspirations of Coloured and Indian communities have shown a remarkable resemblance of the tactics of those whom we have always pointed out as their bosses. Their half-hearted denial of collaboration with the system has been shown to be the lie we have always known it to be.

The Democratic Drive.

Despite all the forces against the efforts of the people in their drive towards liberation, there has been a consistent perseverance by the toiling masses of our strife-torn country. This did not escape this region.

We saw our people going through one campaign after the other, hardly stopping to mourn or grieve. We have witnessed their determination at Mgwali, Mooiplaats, Duncan Village and other places steadfastly poised against removals. We have seen them at Duncan Village and Mdantsane fighting commuter struggles. We were witness to the same strength shown at the factories in a fight for workers' rights. We have witnessed the valiant fight in our places of learning for a democratic system of education. We are not blind to the efforts of residents of Fort Beaufort for civic rights. Indeed all aspects of life can and do not escape the attention of the democratic loving masses of our country.

The tide of activity that gripped this area during the period running up to the August tricameral elections bears witness to this. All these efforts are not in vain. The fruits of some of these can be discerned even now but as in all struggles the true fruit is the logical conclusion thereof and not only the ground that the oppressor is compelled to yield from time to time.

Analysis.

A lot has been gained in the time-period covered by this report. We have seen the UDF-Border grow from the six organisations that affiliated at its launch in Grahamstown on the 15th of October 1983 to a staggering 30. This was made possible in the initial stages by the recruitment and mobilisation drive that the region engaged in immediately after its inception. The rest was the result of activities during the course of the Million Signature Campaign and the anti-election campaign.

In an area which, up until the time of our campaigns, has had a very apathetic Coloured and Indian community for some years now, we can safely say the percentage poll that was realised during the Rajibansi-Hendrickse masquerade is favourably comparable with the political trend throughout the country. This result is not out of apathy at all as the attendance by these communities especially the coloured comrades in people's gatherings has increased out of all thinkable proportions. In these communities UDF has roused people who had gone to slumber since the end of the Black-Consciousness era in this region.

In all through our affiliated organisations, we have inter-action and the co-operation of no less than 100 000 people.

This is without including the thousands who find themselves in a situation where they cannot overtly declare their support for the forces of democracy due to the height of repression in their areas.

The winds of democracy and liberation are indeed sweeping the dusty, famine-ravished tracts of land wherever our masses, sweltering in the heat of oppression, are to be found.

One can therefore ask in the light of the above information, what is the level of success in campaigns of the UDF. Indeed this is no difficult question and a justifiable one.

We have, as previously stated, engaged in several campaigns with differing degrees of success. The first of these is the recruitment drive and the mobilisation and organisation of unorganised communities. The recruitment of organisations was a commendable success. We cannot dwell too much on the belaboured actions of certain mischievous, disgruntled individuals, who in their search for power and personal aggrandizement have deliberately sought to set the masses against the course of liberation by posing as the reference section of the liberation library. Infact like the useless encyclopedias they resemble, with old and inaccurate information they have been left to rot in the archives of mischief-making and reactionarism while the people are following the thruths as layed bare by the realities of their situation.

The million signature campaign is one sad fact in the story of our region. Despite all attempts to achieve the opposite the committee charged with this responsibility totally negated all the efforts of the various activists in our area-units. It is a sad fact that there can be no certainty today as to how many people actually put their names to be counted as areigning themselves with UDF against the common enemy. More than this, this can have the negative effect of discouraging people in future from freely entrusting us their confidence as they might not know what eventually became of their names.

With the failure of the million signature campaign was also another failure which would have been the natural by-product of the success of the MSC, the formation of new structures where these did not exist.

Another failure has been in the area of removals. Despite the setting up of a committee to see to this aspect there has been no noticeable movement in this area. This might be due in part to the fact that the two secretaries in the region, who were also part of the committee are full-time employees and as such some distance from the main areas where this evil manifests itself. However this cannot be much of a reason and viable alternatives need to be explored.

The women failed totally to meet the challenge posed to them by the fact that this is their year. Instead of taking up the front ranks they have effectively shrunk into total oblivion. This is due mostly to the petty devissions that have been sown amongst them. Now that there are moves to create more unity amongst them we hope this will mean a unity of purpose and not just unity for the name's sake.

We hope that the wave of disinformation that is going on amongst the youth will not affect their year as the women's has been affected.

Truely the gains experienced by this region have been due mostly to the activities of individuals entrusted with various responsibilities rather than the large committees that have been formed from time-to-time. This then underlies the need to seriously consider the possibility of a full-time organiser in the region.

There is a great lack of the full application of the democratic processes in this region. There are very few if any, activities by the affiliated organisations. This then makes one believe that there is very little feedback done to the masses who cannot get to be present in certain forums like the RGC. This is a sad state of affairs indeed as we need the mass-participation of all rather than the contriving of some geniuses.

The Future.

We shall in future have to concentrate on the active strength of the affiliates and have the greater stress of activity there. This is even more preferable in view of the difficulties experienced in securing venues for big regional activities which have unfortunately been the main source of inspiration in the region. Organisations cannot be allowed to be submerged into the activities of the UDF because of the very nature of the Front. They need to be clearly visible with a definite line of emphasis and action.

Besides we must at all times maintain the base of the struggle which should at all times be the masses of our people. The bulk of our activity should for this reason be borne by them.

In electing our executive we should at all times strive to ensure that the people elected will be in a position to meet the responsibilities that go with the various portfolios into which we elect them. People who are already overburden with work elsewhere, no matter how good they are will find it impossible to perform as we expect them to and this is to the detriment of the Front. They can if necessary be called upon by the executive or RGC to perform certain tasks from time to time.

I hope then that this shall serve as a guide in our deliberations today and as a reference for the future.

All in all, on behalf of the Executive I wish to thank you all for your co-operation during the past year, which has by no means been an easy one. I hope that you shall give the incoming executive the same amount of co-operation, or even more.

The times now call for a very concerted drive and dedication towards our goal. The forces of oppression are in full awareness of the significance of our united action and they will not spare anything possible to crush us.

WE MUST BE FOUND TO BE STRONG AND UNITED!!

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