

**THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF):
A CASE STUDY OF DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATION, 1983-1987**

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I declare that this thesis is my own work

Signed.....

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contributed to the struggle for
freedom and democracy
in South Africa.**

ABSTRACT

This study, using the theoretical basis of the writings of Lenin and Gramsci on revolutionary theory and praxis, traces the formation, policy and aims, membership and structure, and practices of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and selected affiliate organisations during the period 1983-1987. The central problem investigated is the relation between revolutionary theory and praxis and the aims, policies and practices of the UDF and its affiliates. More particularly, in what respects does the formation of the UDF and revolutionary developments thereafter meet the strategic and tactical requirements of Lenin and Gramsci's theories of revolutionary strategy?

It is argued that the formation of the UDF, and revolutionary developments during the period of review, conformed to the strategic and tactical requirements of a Leninist-Gramscian model of revolutionary praxis in the following way: the general drive to establish mass-based community organisations (increasing the complexity of civil society by establishing mass organisations); the formation of the UDF in August 1983 (creating a historical bloc in opposition to the ruling bloc during the phase of democratic struggle); and the development and spread of a common national political culture based on resistance to apartheid (expanding the revolutionary consciousness of the masses).

During the period under review, the UDF-led opposition to apartheid resulted in the organisational and ideological penetration of the Front into almost every major sector of black civil society. The major forces behind the increasing political and ideological leadership of the UDF were the affiliated civic associations, trade unions, student/youth and women's organisations. These organisations played a central role in mass mobilisation and organisation and the spread of revolutionary consciousness throughout black civil society.

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

AAC	Alexandra Action Committee
ACA	Alexandra Civic Association
ARA	Alexandra Residents' Association
ANC	African National Congress
AYCO	Alexandra Youth Congress
AZACTU	Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
AZASM	Azanian Students' Movement
AZASO	Azanian Students Organisation
BAWU	Black Allied Workers' Union
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BLA	Black Local Authorities
BPC	Black People's Convention
CAHAC	Cape Areas Housing Action Committee
CAYCO	Cape Youth Congress
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CRADORA	Cradock Residents' Association
CUSA	Council of Unions of South Africa
DET	Department of Education and Training
DVRA	Duncan Village Residents' Association
ECAB	Eastern Cape Administration Board
ELCC	East London City Council
FEDSAW	Federation of South African Women
FEDTRAW	Federation of Transvaal Women
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
GAWU	General and Allied Workers' Union
GWU	General Workers' Union
JCC	Joint Commuter Committee
JMC	Joint Management Committee
JODAC	Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee
JORAC	Joint Rent Action Committee
KTC	KwaNobuhle Town Council
MACWUSA	Motor Assembly and Components Workers' Union
MCA	Mamelodi Civic Association
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
NAAWU	National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union
NACTU	National Confederation of Trade Unions
NF	National Forum
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NSMS	National Security Management System
NOTPECO	Northern Transvaal People's Congress
NOTYCO	Northern Transvaal Youth Congress
NOW	Natal Organisation of Women
NP	National Party
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PEBCO	Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation
PEYCO	Port Elizabeth Youth Congress
PTSA	Parent/Teacher/Student Associations
PWW	Pretoria/Witwatersrand/Vaal Region

SAAWU	South African Allied Workers' Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SANSCO	South African National Students Congress
SAP	South African Police
SARHWU	South African Railways and Harbours Workers' Union
SASM	South African Students' Movement
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
SCA	Soweto Civic Association
SOYCO	Soweto Youth Congress
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSRC	Soweto Student's Representative Council
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa
UDF	United Democratic Front
UWCO	United Women's Congress
UWO	United Women's Organisation
UYCO	Uitenhage Youth Congress
WRAB	West Rand Administration Board

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The banning of the South African black opposition - the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) - in 1960 and the repression of African trade unions thereafter discouraged most forms of African organisation during the 1960s. After they were banned, the ANC and the PAC adopted revolutionary strategies aiming at the radical transformation of South African society through, among other things, armed struggle. The subsequent clampdown on political organisations led to the arrest and imprisonment of some of their leaders, such as Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe. The ANC and the PAC then established missions-in-exile, leaving an organisational vacuum in the country which was partly filled by the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) during the 1970s.

However, the 1976 Soweto revolt and state repression - arrests, detention, torture, trials, and deaths in detention - ultimately led to the destruction of the organisational base of the BCM. At the same time, from the late 1960s, there was a slow revival of African trade unions and the emergence of new unions. However, most of these unions confined themselves to economic struggles at the place of production and avoided political issues. The late 1970s introduced a revival of black opposition as the popular class struggles evolved from the co-ordinated national mass struggles of the 1950s and early 1960s to one of combined trade union struggles, student struggles and community struggles against apartheid.¹

¹ Popular class struggles are defined as all those struggles which challenge the structure of racial and capitalist exploitation and domination. National mass struggles are defined as all those struggles which involve the masses on a national scale and which challenge the structure of apartheid and economic exploitation and political domination.

Popular struggles in the form of strikes and community-based protest developed into a combined assault on the system of domination and exploitation in South Africa. The formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in August 1983 introduced a new challenge to white minority rule. This organisation provided a national "political form" to popular struggles and filled the institutional vacuum created by the banning of the ANC and the PAC.

1.1. The Research Problem

Mervyn Frost draws attention to the relationship between the practices of black opposition organisations, the UDF in particular, and the type of society which will emerge from these practices.² According to Frost, there were two major approaches to politics competing for dominance within the UDF. The first approach, a Leninist one, called for popular pressure to force the state to introduce democratic reforms or the seizure of state power by black opposition organisations in order to push through major political, economic and social reforms. This approach, according to Frost, leads to an authoritarian political culture and would result in replacing one autocratic state with another. The second approach, a Weberian one, called for the erosion of state power from below by a popular democratic movement and encouraged the development of a democratic political culture.

Frost argues that the UDF initially used "only those methods of opposition" which encouraged a democratic political culture "and which resisted the democracy-killing centralization of a Leninist approach". This approach involved drawing together numerous community organisations in a front organisation which did not seek to overthrow the state directly. Instead, the UDF used "conventional lobbying, boycott strategies, civil disobedience, and passive resistance", while encouraging "meaningful democratic participation" in its

² Frost, M. (1988); "Opposing apartheid: Democrats against the Leninists", in *Theoria*, (Vol.LXXI, May), pp.15-22.

affiliate organisations. However, in later years the UDF tended "to understand itself and its role in South Africa in a Leninist way". The UDF began to see its task as the smashing of the state, identified its aim as the achievement of hegemony, and met any form of opposition with violence.

In a rejoinder to Frost's paper, Louw³ questions the validity of the "binary opposition" of "democrats versus Leninists". In Louw's view, the adoption of the two-stage theory of revolution by Leninists in the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the SACP's participation in the broad anti-apartheid alliance contradicts Frost's argument that Leninists automatically oppose democracy.

Louw draws attention to the distinction between "popular" and "populist" politics. Popular politics (represented by the UDF and its affiliates) "attempts to generate a grass-roots and decentralized approach towards mobilising popular resentments". By contrast, populist politics (represented by Inkatha and the BCM) represents a "top-down" manipulation "of popular resentments which are then welded into a political force for change". According to Louw, organisations affiliated to the UDF had the right to "try and 'push' their own particular strategy, approach and/or policy within the alliance as long as it" was "not destructive to the broader goals of the alliance". These features of the UDF's political practices are seen as the very basis of democracy as understood by Weberians.

In this view, any "Leninist" tendencies which emerged were the result of the search for the best measures to use "when confronting a state characterised by a far-rightist government". Frost's failure to take into account the authoritarian practices of the South African government leads to a misunder-

³ Louw, P.E. (1988); 'Rejoinder to "Opposing Apartheid": Building a South African Democracy through a popular alliance which includes Leninists', in *Theoria*, (Vol.LXXII, October), pp.49-60.

standing of the forces which led to the adoption of Leninist tactics. In Louw's view, either approach (Leninist or Weberian) is applicable under certain conditions which make them a useful and/or workable strategy for opposing the ruling hegemony. Furthermore, one cannot simply equate political practices in the pre-revolutionary situation with the post-revolutionary society: a Leninist (vanguard-clandestine) approach may have as its long-term goal the creation of a democratic society.

Finally, according to Louw, the works of Gramsci⁴ and Poulantzas⁵ provide the theoretical texts which influenced the Marxists and/or Leninists within the broad anti-apartheid alliance during the 1980s.

Without adopting the latter view held by Louw, Von Holdt⁶ argues that the period of the 1980s was a "concrete elaboration in practice, of Gramsci's schematic concept of war of position". This strategy, according to Von Holdt, is a struggle "to establish ideological and organisational leadership in institutions of civil society" by "building a broader and broader alliance in opposition to the ruling class, and seeking to establish the leadership of the working class party over this alliance".

Von Holdt argues that in South Africa this strategy involved: the creation of powerful, militant mass organisations in the townships, factories and schools, with the aim of constantly challenging oppression and exploitation, and building people's power; establishing a multi-class, non-racial united front under the hegemony of the ANC; extending the influence of the front into

⁴ Gramsci, A. (1978); Prison Notebooks, (London, Lawrence and Wishart).

⁵ Poulantzas, N. (1979); Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, (London, Verso) and Political Power and Social Classes, (London, Verso).

⁶ Von Holdt, K. (1990); "Insurrection, negotiations and 'war of position'", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.15, No.3, September).

many spheres, such as sports, culture, education, etc.; building an even broader anti-apartheid alliance in order to isolate and weaken the regime; and encouraging division in the ruling bloc.

Similarly, Orkin points out that the UDF strategy conformed to three of Gramsci's central requirements for a revolutionary movement in its struggle for hegemony.⁷ These are the need "to begin with the concrete particulars of people's everyday lives" (which was done by focusing on rent and education issues), the need to be "prepared to seek durable alliances that transcend a class base" (which the UDF did by gathering organisations "under the broad Charterist rubric of non-racial democracy"), and the need to "transform the particular, often economic, demands of interest groups into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system" (which the UDF did in its popular campaigns which "systematically sought to unite participants in the expression of national political demands").

Orkin points out, however, that the UDF fell short of the Gramscian model in its declining phase. In this view, under state repression, the UDF failed to conform to Gramsci's model of mass politics when it was forced to change in its operations from a mass movement to a party.

None of these authors set out to prove their arguments through a detailed analysis of black opposition politics in the 1980s. This study traces the formation, policies and aims, membership and structure, and practices of the UDF during the period 1983-1987. The central problem investigated is the relation between revolutionary theory and praxis and the aims, policies and practices of the UDF. More particularly, in what respects does the formation of the UDF and revolutionary developments thereafter meet the strategic and

⁷ Orkin, M. (1995), "Building democracy in the new South Africa: Civil society, citizenship and political ideology", in *Review of African Political Economy*, No.66, pp.533-4.

tactical requirements of Lenin and Gramsci's theories of revolutionary strategy? This poses serious questions about the theoretical basis and main elements of the United Front strategy, the relationship between Lenin and Gramsci's theories of revolutionary strategy and tactics and the strategy and tactics of the ANC-led alliance, and the relationship between revolutionary strategy and tactics and opposition politics in the country during the 1980s.

It is argued here that the main foundations of the United Front strategy within Marxism-Leninism are to be found in Lenin's two-stage theory of revolution, and his recognition of the importance of revolutionary alliances and of political struggle during the first stage. It is further argued that Gramsci's theory of the "war of position" expanded the Leninist concept of alliances and their role in advancing the revolutionary struggle, particularly in countries where civil society is highly developed.

The essential requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy are as follows:

- (1) the necessity of mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc;
- (2) the necessity of creating a broad alliance of social forces under a minimum programme during that stage of struggle which leads to a democratic revolution; and
- (3) the necessity for political and ideological struggle in which revolutionary consciousness is promoted and expanded.

The main intention of this study is to prove that the formation of the UDF and revolutionary developments during the period of review accorded with the

Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy.⁸ This is done, firstly, by locating certain features of the ANC-led alliance's revolutionary strategy within the Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy.

The ANC's strategy and tactics placed emphasis on political mobilisation and the formation of a mass-based national front, which would increasingly be drawn to political positions aligned to the ANC.

This reflects a conscious effort on the part of ANC activists to achieve these objectives.⁹ This is also indicated by a number of other factors. These include the ANC's earlier efforts to influence certain legal and semi-legal organisations inside the country; the proven existence of clandestine ANC members as leaders in some of the UDF affiliate organisations, and the leadership role in these organisations played by convicted ANC members after their release from prison.

However, this does not imply that the UDF leadership consciously enacted the ANC's strategic objectives. There were too many leaders at local, regional and national levels who came from diverse backgrounds and operated under diverse conditions and in a wide variety of organisations for this to be true. Above all else, the reform package introduced by the apartheid government in the early 1980s was a major factor behind the formation of the UDF. Many organisations and individuals joined the UDF in response to the reforms rather than a conscious effort to put into practice the ANC's strategic objectives.

⁸ This does not imply that the formation of the UDF and the events thereafter were consciously based on Leninist and Gramscian revolutionary theory and praxis. Rather, it is argued here that revolutionary developments within the country which related to the UDF and its affiliates met the strategic requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian model.

⁹ However, it is not the intention of this study to examine the extent of the ANC's influence and/or participation in the formation of the UDF and popular mobilisation and struggle thereafter.

What does become evident, however, is that some of these strategic objectives became central in the UDF's strategy and tactics. These include: the creation of the broadest possible national front around a minimum programme to unite all classes and strata in the struggle against apartheid; the creation of community organisations; the mobilisation of the masses to actively resist apartheid; and the establishment of people's power in black areas.

The ANC-led revolutionary alliance's strategy was directed at the insurrectionary seizure of power. Although revolutionary developments in the 1980s did include mass mobilisation and organisation, the formation of a united front, and widespread insurrection punctuated by guerrilla warfare, it did not lead to a general uprising and the seizure of state power.

Instead, the formation of the UDF and revolutionary developments thereafter are best explained by the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy - increasing the complexity of civil society by establishing mass organisations, creating a historical bloc in opposition to the ruling bloc, and expanding the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. These do, however, have their parallels in the ANC's emphasis on political mobilisation and the formation of a mass-based national front, which would increasingly be drawn to political positions aligned to the ANC.

This is followed by an analysis of the conditions underlying the emergence and proliferation of community organisations, and the formation, principles and objectives, strategies and tactics, and structure and membership of the UDF to demonstrate this point. It is argued here that the strategic and tactical requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy were met by the emergence and proliferation of community organisations during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the formation of the UDF and revolutionary

developments during the period of review. These included, among others, the creation of township organisations, the formation of a historical bloc with united objectives and strategies, the development of a common national political culture based on opposition to apartheid, and its spread throughout black civil society through the increasing political and ideological leadership of the UDF.

The "civil-society debate" between Steven Friedman and Mark Swilling raises another set of important questions.¹⁰ In broad terms, these writers adopted different views of the relationship between an "independent civil society" and the nature of post-apartheid society. The central issue here is the possibility of creating an independent civil society in an ANC-led South Africa. This is not the place to deal with this debate in great detail. However, it is necessary to mention some of the points of disagreement which are relevant to this study.

Friedman points to a number of limitations in the popular perceptions of "civil society" put forward by writers like Swilling. Friedman rejects the notion that civil society can be identified with the numerous mass-based community organisations which were affiliated to the UDF. In the first place, Friedman argues that Swilling incorrectly identifies civil society with civic associations which are defined by their "independence from big capital", their ability to "govern their members" and to negotiate, and "their allegiance to the ANC camp".¹¹ In his view civil society is more than these organisations and includes organised business and other non-aligned or unorganised sectors of

¹⁰ Friedman,S. (1991); "An unlikely utopia: State and civil society in South Africa", in *Politikon*, Vol.19, No.1, December; Swilling,M. (1992); "Socialism, democracy and civil society", in *Theoria*, May; Friedman,S. (1992); "Bonaparte at the barricades: The colonisation of civil society", in *Theoria*, May; and Swilling,M. (1992); "Quixote at the windmills: Another conspiracy theory from Steven Friedman", *Theoria*, May.

¹¹ Friedman,S. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.87.

society.

In addition, Friedman questions the representativeness of, and absence of "diversity of opinion or interest" in some of these organisations, in particular, civic associations. In his view, civic associations do not "represent all of 'township opinion'" because of the existence of other organisations in the townships with a different membership and interests. The absence of diversity is seen to be a consequence of the struggle for hegemony in which a common set of objectives and interests drew people into community organisations. This has led to a situation in which diversity of opinion and interests are sacrificed in order to achieve the primary objective: the destruction of the apartheid system.

By contrast, Swilling argues that Friedman disregards the existence of the large number of civic associations in the country and the role they have played in civil society. In his view, these associations have played a central role in transforming civil society by participating in the national liberation struggle without losing their autonomy, and therefore their recognition as one of the most important components of organised civil society with objectives and roles that differ from those of major political organisations. Friedman thus ignores the "independent" origin of civic associations and other community organisations.

In addition, Swilling points out that civic associations provided an important means of achieving certain objectives for their members. Here he identifies their "capacity to organise, get resources, achieve goals, mobilise pressure, negotiate and express policy positions".¹² The role played by these organisations in local government negotiations also demonstrated the

¹² Swilling, M. (1992); "Quixote at the windmills", *op.cit.*, p.101.

importance accorded to civic associations by the authorities as well as a recognition of their representativeness.

The UDF was an alliance of a broad range of autonomous organisations of differing class origins and with differing political and ideological agendas which came together having identified a common cause - opposition to the apartheid system of domination and exploitation. The investigation of the relation between revolutionary theory and praxis, and the emergence and proliferation of community organisations poses another set of questions. More particularly, what was the role played by community organisations in the struggle against apartheid? This raises questions about the factors underlying the emergence and proliferation of community organisations, their principles and objectives, and the nature and role of these organisations - their support base, their structure and their activities during the period of review.

The Leninist/Gramscian model's emphasis on the importance of the political and ideological struggle to promote and expand revolutionary consciousness sets it apart from other models of a United Front strategy and reflects one of the most fundamental achievements of popular resistance during the 1980s. Here the stress is on: mobilising and organising people around the concrete particulars of their everyday lives (rent increases, bus-fare increases, education issues, women's issues, etc.); uniting the separate currents of protest into a single stream; and, most importantly, transforming the "particular, often economic, demands of interest groups into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system" which aims at national liberation. This results in the spread of a revolutionary consciousness.

The people's war strategy of the ANC-led revolutionary alliance also focused attention on the mobilisation and organisation of the working class, women, the rural masses, and the youth and students, and the formation of civic

organisations.¹³ The objective was to mobilise various forces in the country to participate in the liberation struggle. This strategic objective has its parallel in the Leninist/Gramscian emphasis on mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc.

This study focuses on the emergence and proliferation of student and youth organisations, trade unions, civic associations, and women's organisations in many parts of the country during the late 1970s and the 1980s. These organisations emerged in response to a wide variety of factors, largely related to political, social or material grievances and, in certain cases, as a result of the conscious organisational efforts of activists.

More important, however, is the role that these community organisations played in the struggle for national liberation. Here special attention is placed on Gramsci's strategy of the "war of position". The war of position, according to Gramsci, is a struggle to achieve ideological and political leadership (hegemony) by a shift in the balance of social and cultural forces to the working class. This has its parallel in the ANC's strategic goal of winning members of the front's affiliates and the front itself politically to the ANC's positions. It also has its parallel in the Leninist/Gramscian emphasis on the political and ideological struggle in which revolutionary consciousness is promoted and expanded.

It is argued in this study that the period of the 1980s represents a distinct shift in the balance of social and cultural forces towards the UDF. It becomes important, then, to examine how this shift occurred. One way of

¹³ The focus here is not on the question of whether or not these organisations had a conscious intent upon following ANC strategy, nor the extent of ANC influence over and/or participation in the formation, nature and activities of these organisations. Rather, it is on the extent to which they acquired a revolutionary consciousness.

approaching this is to look at the history of affiliates of the UDF by focusing on their formation and structures, principles and objectives, and membership and activities, and changes in these in order to demonstrate the shift towards the UDF. This is also demonstrated by the revival of various community organisations and the proliferation of new community organisations after the formation of the UDF.

Another aspect of this approach is to look at the role they played in achieving both mass mobilisation and organisation, and the spread of revolutionary consciousness (including the mobilisation of people to actively resist apartheid). It is here that the analysis of the history of these organisations demonstrates the manner in which the masses were mobilised and organised to actively resist apartheid, resulting in a universalistic political challenge of the apartheid system and which was directed at the national-democratic revolution.

It is argued, firstly, that some community organisations experienced significant changes in their structures, leadership and membership, aims and objectives, and in their strategies and activities. These changes demonstrated a marked shift towards, and led to their affiliation to, the UDF. They subsequently adopted the strategies and tactics of the UDF political tradition, leading to the transformation of their activities into a universalistic political challenge of the apartheid system. The shift towards the UDF was also apparent in the mobilisation and organisation of people in many parts of the country through newly-formed organisations.

Secondly, these organisations played a hegemony-building role by promoting mass mobilisation and organisation, and developing and facilitating the spread of a national political culture based, among others, on the rejection of, and opposition to, apartheid structures and the development of alternative

structures and practices by the mass-based organisations to govern their own daily living; the adoption of a strategy based on "unity-in-action" and the mobilisation of grass-roots organisations formed around local issues; an ideological system expressed in such documents as the Freedom Charter; and the articulation of a set of common demands such as the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of organisations and the establishment of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and unitary South Africa. Thus, it is through these organisations that the particular demands of interest groups were transformed into a universalistic political challenge of the apartheid system.

Within the ANC-led revolutionary alliance, revolutionary consciousness can be identified at two levels: the ANC's emphasis on the national-democratic liberation struggle; and the SACP's emphasis on socialism. However, the ANC-led revolutionary alliance emphasized not the inculcation of socialist consciousness among the masses, but the consciousness of political domination and economic exploitation under apartheid and the goal of national liberation.

Revolutionary consciousness developed unevenly within the various civic associations, trade unions, etc., as well as between the different types of organisations, for example, between student organisations and civic organisations. Politicisation lay emphasis either on the goal of national liberation, without including a socialist content, or included a socialist content. Thus, the two main elements of revolutionary consciousness, the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for socialism, are to be found in the various organisations investigated below.

Finally, the analysis of student and youth organisations, trade unions, civic associations, and women's organisations reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the 1980.

Although the UDF only formally disbanded in 1991, the period 1983-1987 was chosen because it represents a period of the most heightened activity of the UDF at local, regional and national levels. By the end of 1987 many UDF affiliates had been weakened by repression during the state of emergency and large numbers of UDF leaders remained in detention throughout 1988. The momentum of local resistance diminished once local organisations were crushed. Thus, the period from 1988 provides relatively little insight into the activities of local affiliates of the Front.

In addition, on February 22, 1988 the government imposed restrictions on 18 organisations, including the UDF and 14 of its affiliates. These organisations were prohibited from engaging in a wide range of political activities such as encouraging boycott campaigns or stirring up public opinion against the Black Local Authorities. The restricted organisations could only act to preserve their assets, perform certain administrative duties or take legal advice or judicial advice or judicial steps. The UDF underwent a revival in 1989 when it joined with COSATU (in the Mass Democratic Movement) in a civil disobedience campaign against government-controlled hospitals and schools. Thus, during 1989 the emphasis was on national campaigns of the Mass Democratic Movement (with the main organisational base provided by trade unions) rather than on actions which involved local UDF affiliates.

More important, however, was the effect of state repression on the structure and activities of the UDF. Firstly, it resulted in the transformation of the Front from a mass organisation to a political party. The detention of leaders, mass arrests, the banning of meetings, etc. resulted in the centralisation of decision-making and the transformation of the UDF into a vanguard party. Secondly, state repression and counter-mobilisation resulted in the virtual destruction of local affiliates and forced many UDF activities underground. These changes brought to an end the period of resistance which corre-

sponded to the Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy and tactics. Instead, the UDF became a Leninist vanguard party, with its affiliate membership operating largely underground.

1.2. The major hypothesis

The united front strategy, introduced by Lenin, and extended by Gramsci, found expression in South Africa with the formation of the UDF in 1983. The formation of the Front and revolutionary developments during the period of review conformed to the Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary praxis in the following ways: the general drive to establish mass-based community organisations (increasing the complexity of civil society by establishing mass organisations); the formation of the UDF in August 1983 (creating a historical bloc in opposition to the ruling bloc during the phase of democratic struggle); and the spread of a common national political culture (the promotion and expansion of revolutionary consciousness).

During the period under review, the UDF-led opposition to apartheid domination and exploitation resulted in the organisational and ideological penetration of the Front into almost every major sector of black civil society. The major forces behind the increasing political and ideological leadership of the UDF were the affiliated civic associations, trade unions, and student, youth and women's organisations.

1.3. Organisation and central concerns of the Thesis

Chapter 2: THE UNITED FRONT STRATEGY AND REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter focuses on the theoretical foundations of the United Front strategy; the revolutionary strategy of the SACP/ANC alliance; the relationship between Leninist and Gramscian revolutionary strategies and tactics and revolutionary developments in South Africa during the period under review; and

the economic and political conditions of social transformation in South Africa during the 1980s.

The central argument is that the United Front strategy within Marxism-Leninism has its basis in Lenin's theory of alliances. It is further argued that Gramsci extended Lenin's theories by emphasising the importance of ideology and class alliances in revolutionary praxis. This is followed by an analysis of the revolutionary strategy of the SACP-ANC alliance. Finally, it is argued that revolutionary developments in South Africa during the period of review conformed to the Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy.

Chapter 3: POPULAR STRUGGLES AND THE GROWTH OF DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATIONS, 1960-1987.

This chapter focuses on the anti-apartheid struggle during the period 1960-1987 with an emphasis on the activities of black political organisations, community organisations and trade unions. The central argument of the first section of this chapter is that the absence of a mass-based national political organisation within the country between 1960 and 1983 placed limitations on the ability of the dominated classes to effectively challenge the apartheid state.

During the late 1970s and 1980s, however, a number of conditions and forces gave rise to the emergence and proliferation of political, student/youth, trade union, women's and community organisations. The focus in the second section is on five interacting variables which were largely responsible for the growth of democratic organisations. It is argued here that the emergence and proliferation of community organisations during the late 1970s and the 1980s led to a highly complex civil society. Such a highly complex civil society met one of the requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy, which set the basis for the formation of a United Front and for the

subsequent upsurge in mass mobilisation and politicisation.

Chapter 4: FORMATION, POLICIES AND AIMS OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

This chapter focuses on the events leading to the formation of the UDF and the policies and aims of the Front. Here the emphasis is on the formal processes leading to the formation of the UDF, the evolution of its policies and aims under conditions of struggle, and transformations in resistance strategies and tactics during the period under review.

It is argued here that the formation of the UDF, the elaboration of certain united aims and objectives, and the adoption of specific strategies and tactics conformed to certain strategic requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy: the creation of a historical bloc of all classes and strata opposed to the ruling bloc, united with common political, intellectual and moral objectives, and engaged in a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system which was directed at a democratic revolution. It is argued that by 1987 the UDF had drawn close to ideological positions held by the banned ANC, thus bringing together a large variety of social forces under a minimum programme, with common political, intellectual and moral objectives. It is further argued that the popular struggles of the 1980s eventually evolved into a universalistic challenge of the apartheid system.

Chapter 5: MEMBERSHIP OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Here an analysis is made of the membership of the Front in order to describe the support base and nature of class and race forces making up the UDF. In this chapter an attempt is made to demonstrate the extent of the UDF's influence in South African society, the extent to which it was able to draw under its political leadership a wide variety of organisations, consisting of leaders and with membership drawn from every race and

virtually every class group in most parts of the country. The purpose is to determine the extent of organisational and political leadership achieved by the UDF during the period under review.

Chapter 6: STUDENT/YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Young black people were among the leading forces in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa during the 1980s. In this chapter an analysis is made of the formation, structure, membership and policies of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), the Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO)/South African National Students Congress (SANSCO), and the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO).

The focus of this chapter is the role of student and youth organisations in the political and ideological struggle to promote and expand revolutionary consciousness within the country. These organisations focused on particular sectors of civil society, drawing them into the struggle for national liberation and developed (or incorporated) certain features of a revolutionary consciousness leading to its spread inside South Africa. The emphasis here is on their role in mass mobilisation and organisation around the immediate issues affecting students and their principles and objectives in order to illustrate the extent of their penetration of civil society and the main features of the revolutionary consciousness developed or incorporated by the student and youth organisations. Underlying this was the central role the student and youth organisations played in expanding the hegemony of the UDF in civil society. Finally, the analysis of student/youth organisations reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the 1980s: their structures, practices and membership.

Chapter 7: DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

The democratic trade unions which expanded rapidly during the late 1970s

and the early 1980s were an important element of the internal forces opposing the apartheid system. In this chapter an analysis is made of the formation, structure, membership and policies of selected trade unions which were affiliated to the UDF. In addition, an investigation is made of the democratic trade union movement, in particular the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). A particular focus is placed on the role of trade unions in the national political struggle against apartheid.

The emphasis in this chapter is on the role of trade unions in promoting mass mobilisation and organisation as well as the spread of revolutionary consciousness within South Africa. These organisations also played a role in expanding the hegemony of the UDF. Finally, the analysis of trade unions reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the 1980s.

Chapter 8: CIVIC ORGANISATIONS

The numerous civic organisations which emerged prior to the formation of the UDF made up one of the most important forces behind the genesis of the Front. Civic organisations were also key affiliates of the UDF. It is important, therefore, to focus on these organisations in order to come to a better understanding of the UDF. This chapter focuses on the nature and role of civic associations, and the formation, structure, membership, policies and strategies and activities of selected civic associations.

Here the emphasis is on the role the civic associations played in mobilising and organising people around the concrete particulars of their everyday lives (rent increases, bus-fare increases, etc.) and transforming their particular interests into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system (raising the revolutionary consciousness of the masses). In addition, an

analysis is made of changes in ideology, structure, and practices of certain civics in order to demonstrate a shift towards the UDF. Underlying all these processes was the central role played by civic associations in establishing the UDF's hegemony in civil society. Finally, the analysis of civic associations reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the 1980s.

Chapter 9: WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Organisations consisting exclusively of women became important constituents of the UDF after its formation in 1983. This chapter focuses on the nature and role of women's organisations, and analyses selected women's organisations which were affiliated to the UDF in terms of their formation, structure, membership and policies, and activities.

The focus is on the role of women's organisations in the political and ideological struggle to raise the revolutionary consciousness of women in South Africa. This is done, firstly, by examining the issues which confront women as a specific group and their responses to this, and, secondly, by examining the formation, membership and structure, and policies and aims of selected women's organisations which were affiliated to the UDF. The former analysis leads to an understanding of the general factors underlying the formation of women's organisations, the general role of women and of women's organisations in the national liberation struggle, and the general nature and aims and objectives of these organisations. The latter analysis leads to an understanding of the strategies used to draw women into the national liberation struggle, and the nature of the revolutionary idea within the UDF women's organisations and its spread through these organisations. Finally, the analysis of women's organisations reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the 1980s.

Chapter 10: CONCLUSION

This chapter draws together the various conclusions of the study.

POSTSCRIPT

A brief look at the disbanding of the UDF.

1.4. The importance of the study

The UDF was a major force in the South African liberation struggle, introducing a new era of struggle by co-ordinating numerous democratic organisations and struggles and providing an impetus for the formation of new organisations. The UDF pursued an alternative to the apartheid system in South Africa, encouraged the formation of grass-roots organisations, and co-ordinated mass-based opposition to minority rule. However, no detailed attempt has been made to investigate the nature of this organisation and its relation to revolutionary theory and praxis. Important factors which determine the nature of a liberated society include the aims and policies of the national liberation movements, their institutional practices, and strategies. This study is an attempt to partially fill this void by investigating the relation between the nature and practices of the UDF and selected affiliates on the one hand, and revolutionary theory and praxis on the other.

1.5. The constraints on the study

This study has its origins in research begun in the late 1980s at a time when the UDF bore the brunt of state repression in the form of vigilantes, detention, treason trials, and other harassment. For this reason many of the affiliates and members of the organisation, operating clandestinely, were suspicious of those who asked questions about the organisation. It was therefore difficult to obtain information directly from members of these organisations without arousing suspicion. The end of the UDF was directly related to the shift towards "negotiation politics" in which the state prohibitions

on organisation and individuals were largely done away with.

The vast majority of leaders of the UDF at local, regional and national levels became involved with the time-consuming and difficult task of building ANC structures and, more recently, participating within the national negotiation process. Many UDF activists became visibly absorbed into and, in the opinion of some observers, form a distinct bloc within the ranks of the ANC. As a result, this study has not been able to avail itself of the very rich sources of oral evidence that do exist. Hence, it relies largely on documentary material.

1.6. The limitations of the study

The UDF was a very loosely organised and diffuse Front organisation with more than 700 affiliated organisations. In addition to the problems of covert operation by some of its affiliates and members and suspicion, it is impossible within the parameters of this study to analyze all the affiliated organisations. Thus, research is restricted to the trade unions, student/youth organisations, women and community organisations. In addition, it is also necessary to make case studies of only a few of these organisations. The problem is that these organisations may not be characteristic representations of the affiliates of the UDF as a whole. To overcome this problem this study investigates a number of similar organisations (i.e. a number of trade unions, a number of youth organisations, and so on) in order to determine their similarities and differences.

1.7. Research Method

The method of study is historico-empirical involving the use of primary and secondary sources. The main primary sources - documents, pamphlets, newspapers and magazines of the ANC, UDF and affiliate organisations under study - provided a valuable insight into the organisational structure and

membership, policies and objectives, and practices of these organisations. In addition, various newspapers and magazines (in particular, SASPU NATIONAL) provided a number of useful statements made by UDF leaders, as well as interviews with UDF leaders and members. Political trials also provided another valuable source of documents of the UDF and its affiliates as well as information on their activities. In large part the secondary sources consist of political-historical studies of the period under review.

Most of the chapters (or sections thereof) in the main body of the study (chapters 3 to 9) are dealt with in terms of a chronological progression. This approach was adopted in order to emphasize the significant factors underlying the formation of the UDF and selected affiliate organisations, and significant changes in the structure, aims, policies and activities of these organisations.

1.8. A Note on Historiography

Numerous articles and books have been published on township politics and community organisations during the 1980s. Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson, Anthony Marx, Martin Murray and Robert Price provide the only book-length reviews of this period of any value.¹⁴ However, the majority of existing literature on popular resistance and organisation consists largely of journal articles and book chapters. This study attempts to partially fill this gap by focusing exclusively on the most significant extra-parliamentary organisation of this period.

Studies of the UDF have tended to focus on the formation, structure, strategies and policies, leadership and membership, and activities of the Front

¹⁴ Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.) (1991); All, Here, and Now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s, South Africa Update Series, (Cape Town, David Philip); Marx, A. (1992); Lessons of the struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press); Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of agony, time of destiny, (London, Verso); and Price, R.M. (1991); The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa, 1975-1990, (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press).

without relating these to the development of revolutionary strategy in South Africa or to theories of revolutionary strategy and tactics.¹⁵ Mention is made of the close personal and ideological linkages between the ANC and the UDF. However, no attention is given to the revolutionary strategy and tactics of the exiled movement and related developments within the country.

Most of these studies view the UDF as a protest movement which arose purely in response to internal material and political grievances. The focus is on the emergence and development of community organisations, and the material and political grievances which gave rise to mass mobilisation and protest. They ignore the relationship between the intentions and activities of the ANC/SACP alliance, and mass protest and organisation. In other words, this approach underplays the role of revolutionary strategy and tactics in the formation, nature, and role of the UDF and its affiliates.

Mike Hough¹⁶, in an analysis of township revolt between 1984 and 1988, identifies the factors underlying unrest as political and socio-economic factors as well as the attempts by the ANC/SACP alliance to "integrate unrest as part of the revolutionary process". For Hough, "it would be futile to diagnose the present unrest in South Africa only as a well co-ordinated attempt to create ungovernability and chaos in the townships". Instead, "it is important to analyze township conditions within the wider structure of South African society". Hough proceeds to list a number of political and socio-economic

¹⁵ De la Harpe, J. and Manson, A. (1983); "The UDF and the development of resistance in South Africa", in Africa Perspective, (No.23); Barrell, H. (1984); "The United Democratic Front and National Forum: Their emergence, composition and trends", in South African Research Service (eds.); South African Review 2, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press); Collinge, J. (1986); "The United Democratic Front", in South African Research Service (eds.); South African Review 3, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press); Lodge, T. (1991); "Rebellion: The turning of the tide", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); *op.cit.*; Murray, M. (1987); *op.cit.*

¹⁶ Hough, M. (1989); "Revolt in the Townships", in Venter, A.J. (ed.); Challenge: Southern Africa within the African Revolutionary Context, (Gibraltar, Ashanti Publishing Ltd.), pp.389-410.

conditions including unemployment, the educational system, economic recession and inflation, mobilisation by activists in political organisations, feelings of relative deprivation, overcrowding in townships, opposition to local authorities, inadequate policing, urban reforms, rapid urbanisation, etc.

On the other hand, the government and its partners tended to view the UDF as a front for the banned ANC. In this view, the two organisations had the same revolutionary objective. Such accusations were made by the government, senior security force officers, leaders of Indian and coloured political parties participating in the tri-cameral parliament and Inkatha's Chief Buthelezi.¹⁷ This approach reduces internal political protest to an externally-led conspiracy without taking into account the material and political grievances which gave rise to mass organisation and protest.

The focus here is on the link between ANC and SACP publications in which they called for mass protest, the formation of township organisations, ungovernability, and the establishment of "people's power"¹⁸, and the activities of community organisations within the country. Popular protest and organisation are reduced to the intentions of the ANC/SACP alliance. They ignore the role of structural factors (material and political grievances) behind the formation of community organisations and their activities.

Douglas McClure¹⁹ argued that the township revolt of the mid-1980s can be

¹⁷ See, for example, South African Institute of Race Relations (1984); Survey of Race Relations, (SAIRR), p.20. (Hereafter Survey of Race Relations); State vs Ramgobin and others; State vs Mayekiso and others; "Buthelezi hits out at UDF for 'Media Politics'", Rand Daily Mail, (22.10.1984).

¹⁸ Seekings, J. (1991); "Township resistance in the 1980s", in Swilling, M., Humphries, R. and Shubane, K. (eds.); Apartheid city in transition, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), pp.296-7.

¹⁹ McClure, D. (1989); "Through the looking glass: The South African view", in Venter, A.J. (ed.); *op.cit.*, pp.411-35.

traced to the attempts of the ANC/SACP alliance to reconstitute itself within the country. According to McClure, this was done by targeting, penetrating and manipulating "a well-developed series of front groups and individuals". McClure gives the impression that community organisations were manipulated by the revolutionary alliance and that township revolt became highly organised and co-ordinated from mid-1985. According to McClure, the UDF was "invented" to give coordination to the various "front groups". He draws attention to the close ties in leadership, symbols and political slogans of the internal and external groupings.

Finally, Howard Barrell²⁰ investigates the relationship between changes in the strategy and tactics of the ANC-led revolutionary alliance during the late 1970s and the formation of the UDF. In this view, the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary alliance were among the most important factors underlying the formation of the UDF and the events of the 1980s.²¹

This study combines these approaches by looking at the role of revolutionary strategy and tactics as well as material and political grievances in generating popular protest and organisation. In order to explain the emergence, nature, role and activities of the UDF and its affiliates, then, it is necessary to examine both the intentions and activities of the ANC and the structural factors which shaped popular protest and organisation.

In addition, there are a very limited number of studies of affiliates of the UDF. Two broad approaches dominate the study of the UDF's civic associations, trade unions, student/youth and women's organisations. The first describes the general characteristics of these organisations without taking into

²⁰ Barrell, H. (1990); "The turn to the masses: The African National Congress' Strategic Review of 1978-79", Southern African Seminar, in Work in Progress, (October).

²¹ *Loc.cit.*

account their differences.²² The second approach consists of case studies of particular organisations and tend to focus on the local structural conditions which gave rise to community organisations.²³

In the former approach, there is a tendency to overlook the vast differences between analogous organisations such as civics, and differences between the regional and local levels of organisations with a national structure, (e.g. COSAS). Firstly, the emphasis on general characteristics overlooks the different motives for mobilisation, and the differences in structure, membership and activities of these organisations. Secondly, no account is taken of the "regional specificity" of national organisations. There were immense differences in the membership, support and activities of regional and local structures of national affiliates of the UDF.

This study focuses on a number of case studies of different organisations, namely, civics, trade union and women's organisations. In addition, organisations such as COSAS, AZASO and SAYCO are analyzed to take into account the regional specificity of national organisations. The focus is on general characteristics as well as differences between analogous organisations and differences within the same organisation.

Secondly, case studies of UDF affiliates have focused largely on the

²² Joffe, A. (1986); "Aspects of the struggle: Community organisations", in Monthly Review, (Vol.37, No.11, April); Hindson, D. (1984); "Union Unity", in South African Research Service (eds.); *op.cit.*; Lewis, J. (1986); "Aspects of the struggle: Trade Unions", in Monthly Review, (Vol.37, No.11, April); Dube, T. (1985); "The fighting youth of South Africa: Vital role in the liberation struggle", in The African Communist, (No.102, Third Quarter); Patel, L. (1988); "South African Women's struggles in the 1980s", in Agenda, (No.2).

²³ Jochelson, K. (1990); "Reform, Repression and Resistance in South Africa: A case study of Alexandra township, 1979-1989", in Journal of Southern African Studies, (Vol.16, No.1, March); Maree, J. (1982); "SAAWU in the East London area, 1979-1981", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.7, No.8, July); Niddrie, D. (1987); "Emergency forces new forms of organisation", in Work in Progress, (Vol.47, April); Dawber, A. (1984); "Transvaal Women Organise", in Work in Progress, (No.34, October).

dynamics of political mobilisation, structure, and activities of specific organisations. These studies have tended to ignore the impact of the UDF on local mobilisation and struggles, and the relationship between local organisations and the regional and national structures of the Front. The case studies also ignore the impact of local organisations on the regional and national structures of the UDF and on affiliates of the Front in other areas. The tendency has been to focus on structural conditions and the struggles these gave rise to.

Studies of the various community organisations have focused largely on the dynamics of popular struggles and on the role of these organisations in such struggles. Most of these studies, as Seekings²⁴ points out, focus on the specific forms in which conflict has been manifested, such as stayaways²⁵, school boycotts²⁶, transport boycotts²⁷, rent boycotts²⁸, and consumer

²⁴ Seekings, J. (1989); "Political Mobilisation in Tumahole", in Africa Perspective, (Vol.1, Nos.7/8), p.198.

²⁵ Webster, E. (1981); "Stayaways and the black working class: evaluating a strategy", in Labour, Capital and Society, (Vol.14, No.1, April); Labour Monitoring Group (1985); "The November stayaway", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.10, No.6); Labour Monitoring Group (1985); "Report: The March stayaways in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, May); Pillay, Y. (1985); "The Port Elizabeth Stayaway: Community organisations and unions in conflict", in Work in Progress, (No.37, June); Swilling, M. (1986); "Stayaways, urban protest and the state", in South African Research Services (eds.); *op.cit.*

²⁶ Bot, M. (1985); "School boycotts 1984: The crisis in African education", Centre for Applied Social Studies, University of Natal, Durban; Bundy, C. (1987); "Street sociology and pavement politics: Aspects of youth and student resistance in Cape Town", in Journal of Modern African Studies, (Vol.13, No.3, April); Wolpe, H. (1988); "Educational Resistance", in Lonsdale, J. (ed.); South Africa in Question, (Cambridge, University of Cambridge African Studies Centre).

²⁷ McCarthy, J. and Swilling, M. (1984); "Transport and political resistance", in South African Research Services (eds.); *op.cit.*; McCarthy, J. and Swilling, M. (1985); "South Africa's emerging politics of bus transportation", in Political Geography Quarterly, (July).

²⁸ McCarthy, J. (1985); "Progressive politics and crises of urban reproduction in South Africa: The case of rents and transport", paper presented to the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, September; Chaskalson, M., Jochelson, K. and Seekings, J. (1987); "Rent boycotts and the urban political economy", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 4, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press).

boycotts²⁹, and centre around a number of key events, such as the Vaal Uprising in September 1984, the November 1984 Transvaal Regional Stayaway, the 1985 Black Weekend in the Eastern Cape, the 1985 school boycott in the Western Cape, and the declaration of Emergencies in July 1985 and June 1986. It is necessary to investigate the impact of national political organisation and issues upon local organisations and struggles, as well as the impact of local struggles on national political struggles. In this study, we look at a number of national, regional and local community organisations in an attempt to explain the relationship between the UDF and its affiliates, and their local struggles and national political struggles.

Liberal studies of popular politics during the 1980s have focused on popular struggles without "locating this in either a thorough analysis of township politics or any analysis of the South African political economy".³⁰ Their primary emphasis, together with government publications and liberal newspapers, was to highlight the use of violence, or what they termed "unrest".³¹ The point of departure here are incidents of unrest without locating these in the material and other political factors underlying township protest. As

²⁹ Obery, I. and Jochelson, K. (1985); "Two sides of the same bloody coin", in Work in Progress, (No.39, October); White, R. (1986); "A tide has risen, a breach has occurred: Towards an assessment of the strategic value of the consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.5, April-May); Seekings, J. (1986); "Workers and the politics of consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, July); Helliker, K. et.al. (1987); "'Asithengi!' Recent Consumer boycotts", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); *op.cit.*

³⁰ Seekings, J. (1988A); "Political mobilisation in the Black Townships of the Transvaal", in Frankel, P., Pines, N. and Swilling, M. (eds.); State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, (Kent, Croom Helm), p.197.

³¹ Laurence, P. (1985); "Resistance to African town councils: The collapse of indirect rule", in Indicator SA, (Vol.2, No.4, January); Howe, G. (1985); "The stayaway strikes of 1984", in Indicator SA, (Vol.2, No.4, January); Schlemmer, L. (1985); "Township unrest as seen by township residents", in Indicator SA, (Vol.2, No.4, January); Howe, G. (1985); "Cycles of civil unrest, 1987/84", in Indicator SA, (Vol.3, No.1, Winter); Schlemmer, L. (1986); "Unrest: The emerging significance", in Indicator SA, (Summer); Bureau of Information (1987); "The unrest situation in South Africa, September 1984 - May 1987", in Institute of Strategic Studies of the University of Pretoria Strategic Review (ISSUP), (August).

Seekings points out, this tends to suggest a homogeneity which fails to take into account the diversity in township politics.

Community organisations were formed in response to a wide variety of factors. Most township and village residents have similar material and political grievances. However, the reasons for the formation of specific organisations, their nature, and their activities were influenced by local conditions, as well as the general struggle against apartheid. This study also focuses on the material and political factors underlying the mobilisation, organisation and activities of various organisations in order to demonstrate the diversity in township politics.

Chapter 2

THE UNITED FRONT AND REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first focuses on the united front strategy: its origin, history and main elements. Secondly, an analysis is made of the revolutionary strategy of the liberation movement. In addition, we look briefly at the relationship between Lenin and Gramsci's theories of revolutionary strategy and tactics and revolutionary developments in South Africa during the period under review. The third section focuses on the political and economic conditions of social transformation in South Africa. An analysis is made of the structural forces which influenced the revolutionary situation in the country. It is argued here that revolutionary developments in South Africa during the period of review conformed to a Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy.

2.2. The United Front Strategy

United fronts have emerged in a wide range of popular struggles around the world, initially in Europe in the 1930s and in Africa, Asia and Latin America thereafter. The numerous anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggles, and national liberation struggles combined with social revolutions, and adopted the form of "fronts", "united fronts", "united national fronts", "national liberation fronts", "national liberation movements", etc.

Broadly speaking, this strategy can be defined as follows: "The united front is a policy of class alliances that seeks to bring together and unify all

potential social forces in the struggle against a common enemy".¹ According to Greene, many popular struggles around the world did not succeed where only the workers were mobilized, or only the peasants, or only the middle class. They succeeded only where a critical mass of most or all of the major classes in the society were mobilized in the revolutionary process. In order to mobilize the broadest front of forces to achieve the aims of the majority of the population a civil war, class against class strategy cannot be adopted. It is necessary, therefore, to create a marriage of convenience of all the major subordinated social forces.²

The theoretical origins and initial implementation of the united front strategy are open to debate. Horace Campbell identifies the first practical implementation of this strategy in the development of popular alliances against fascism in the inter-war years. These took two basic forms:

(1) the proletarian united front where the advanced sections of the working class carried out the task of education, mobilisation and organisation of the other sections of the working class to build a united front and (2) the anti-fascist popular alliance which was more broad-based in class terms and included all the democratic forces, workers, poor peasants, professionals, urban petty bourgeoisie and sections of the liberal bourgeoisie.³

In this view, then, the united front strategy has its origin in the theories of the proletarian united front and the anti-fascist popular alliance developed by Dimitrov.⁴ In a speech delivered to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935 he stated that the first task of the working class movement was to establish a united front, to establish unity of action of the

¹ Booyse,W. (1989); "The United Front Strategy: The Liberal Dilemma", in Southern African Freedom Review, (Vol.2, No.4, Autumn), p.33.

² Greene,T.H. (1984); Comparative Revolutionary Movements, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall), p.39.

³ Campbell,H. (1986); "Popular alliance in South Africa", in Afahamu, (Vol.15, Nos.1-2), p.59.

⁴ Dimitrov,G.; The United Front Against Fascism, Speeches at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, 1935.

workers on a national and international scale. Dimitrov argued that the establishment of unity of action of all sectors of the working class is a precondition of the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and fascism. A powerful united front of the proletariat would be able to influence other wavering strata of the population: the peasantry, the urban bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia.

According to Dimitrov, the only condition the working masses and their organisations must meet in order to become part of the proletarian united front is that unity of action must be directed against the class enemy. The working masses could be drawn into the united front by appealing to those slogans and forms of struggle which arise out of their vital needs, and not only by appealing for the proletarian dictatorship. While Communists must not abandon the work of Communist education, organisation and mobilisation of the masses, the road to creating the widest united front of workers is to strive for short-term and long-term goals with non-Communist worker parties, trade unions and other organisations of the working class.

In this view, the anti-fascist People's Front must be developed by establishing an alliance between the proletariat on the one hand, and the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie on the other. This could be accomplished by defending the demands of these social groups, combining these demands with the demands of the proletariat in the process of struggle. Most importantly, Communists must avoid the mistake of ignoring the various organisations and parties of the peasants, artisans and the urban petty bourgeoisie. All efforts must be made to draw other social forces into the anti-fascist front.

Willem Booyse gives credit to Mao Tse Tung for the idea of a united front and the formulation of the strategy to create such a front. According to Booyse, Mao's intention and his eventual success was based on an idea to

unite the broadest possible spectrum of opposition groups in China against the nationalist government of Chiang Kai-Shek. The process of mobilising opposition groups was manifested in the creation of "organisations (alliances) throughout the country (China), developing mass movements of the workers, peasants, youth, children, winning over the intellectuals in all parts of the country, and spreading the movement as a struggle for democracy".⁵ The objective of this process was to ensure that the masses became aware of the necessity for joint action by all the social forces that oppose the ruling government.

The Vietnamese Communist Party drew upon the Chinese experience and decided in 1941 to use the united front as the guiding strategy of the party in its struggle for power. At the heart of this strategy was the assertion that the demands of ideology and class war must be subordinated to those of the anti-imperialist struggle for national independence. To provide the vehicle for this new strategy, a new front organisation was established, the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Vietminh). All patriotic elements in Vietnam, regardless of class, were welcomed into the front against the common enemy. The decision to appeal for the support of patriotic but socially conservative elements was based on the belief that the petty bourgeoisie, rich peasants, and officials were suffering under dual French and Japanese oppression.

An additional aspect of the new political strategy was the decision to establish a series of mass associations (called "national salvation associations") representing the various interest groups in society - workers, peasants, students, women, artists and writers. Such associations would be used to enlist popular support for the revolutionary cause and to funnel Party

⁵ Booyse, W. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.33.

and front directives down to the mass of the population. Alliances would also be created in respect of specific issues, for example, rent increases, price increases, and living conditions, as a step towards unity.⁶

The most comprehensive account of the Vietnamese revolutionary strategy was provided by Vo Nguyen Giap, faithful disciple of Ho Chi Minh and major strategist of the Vietnamese Communist Party. One central feature of Giap's theory of revolutionary strategy and tactics is the combination of military struggle and political struggle. This lies at the centre of his concept of "people's war". The people's war revolutionary strategy involved military action by forces of the revolutionary movement to destroy the enemy as well as the people's mass uprisings to regain administrative power.

According to Giap, a people's war can only be conducted by mobilising the entire people to participate in a protracted revolutionary war against the enemy.

Our political force is a force of all the people that participate in uprisings and wars in an organised manner under the Party's vanguard leadership. It includes revolutionary classes, patriotic elements, and nationalities in our country who have assembled in a broad, united national front, under working class leadership, with the worker-peasant alliance as a foundation.⁷

In the people's war strategy emphasis is placed on the use of propaganda to motivate the organisation and development of revolutionary forces with the purpose of mobilising the entire population to participate in the struggle. The goal is the creation of a "mass political force", which

is a firm, steady foundation on which to build and develop comprehensive forces for the revolutionary war, to protect the material and moral forces on the political, economic, and cultural fronts, on the front line and in the rear base areas and to form and develop the people's armed revolutionary forces.⁸

⁶ Duiker, W.J. (1981); The Communist road to power in Vietnam, (Westview Press, Boulder), p.71.

⁷ Giap, V.N. (1970); Banner of People's War, the Party's Military Line, (London, Pall Mall Press), p.28.

⁸ *Loc.cit.*

Two important lessons can be drawn from the Chinese and Vietnamese experiences: firstly, the necessity of creating a broad united front which includes all patriotic elements of the population and is directed primarily at the goal of national liberation and; secondly, recognition of the dual importance of political and military struggle. The Vietnamese revolution proved that a strategy placing sole reliance on either political or military struggle would have been insufficient, and probably disastrous. The emerging revolutionary practices stressed the importance of a combination of the political mobilisation of the broadest possible range of forces against the enemy and a military struggle involving protracted guerrilla war in preparation for the final stage of general uprising.⁹

In more recent times, the Sandanista revolution which saw the overthrow of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua in 1979 demonstrated the practical application of the united front strategy. The Sandanista triumph also influenced Central American revolutionary strategy in the 1980s. The two central features of this strategy were the two phase theory of revolution and the idea of revolutionary class alliances.¹⁰

Revolutionary movements in the region recognised that the revolution is won in two phases: firstly, through the mobilisation of the masses under the banners of democracy and anti-imperialism; and, secondly, demonstrating to the masses that the democratic and anti-imperialist objectives of the revolution can only be secured and defended through the construction of socialism.¹¹ Thus, the first stage of the revolution, the national democratic stage, involves

⁹ Duiker, W.J. (1981); *op.cit.*, p.71.

¹⁰ Bollinger, W. (1985); "'Learn from others, Think for ourselves': Central American Revolutionary Strategy in the 1980s", in Review of African Political Economy, (No.33, August), pp.58-62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.61.

a popular revolution against the alliance of imperialism with the ruling class or oligarchy. The popular revolution required the establishment of a revolutionary class alliance comprising all social classes opposed to the imperialist alliance and encompassing all popular struggles.¹²

The emergence of Eurocommunist Parties in Western Europe gave rise to a renewed interest in the writings of Antonio Gramsci on revolutionary organisation and strategy. These parties claimed that their political programme was based on the theoretical programme posed by Gramsci's works. According to Gibbon¹³, Eurocommunism dates 'historically from the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, and perhaps even from the "fourth period" inaugurated in 1935, when the notion of the appropriateness of independent national roads to socialism was first broached'. During the 1940s and 1950s the growth of western parties and the splits between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and certain European countries in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia accelerated the growth of this phenomenon.

The Eurocommunist political position has been summarized by Gibbon as follows. Firstly, the predominant feature of bourgeois rule "is not coercion but establishing consent, both politically (through alliances) and ideologically (through control and influence)". Secondly, this consensus can be overturned by acting together with other class forces in a broad alliance against the consensus. Thirdly, the nature of bourgeois rule (consensual) and the political content of the broad alliance (democratic) indicates that the road to socialism must pass through the extension of democracy (which includes the right to strike, universal franchise, contesting parliamentary elections, etc.).

¹² *Ibid.*, p.58.

¹³ Gibbon,P. (1983); "Gramsci, Eurocommunism and the Comintern", in Economy and Society, (Vol.12, No.3), pp.329-330.

Finally, the role of the communist party in these objectives is to provide leadership and unity. In this context, it is argued, the sole organisational task of the communist parties and the permanent strategic horizon of the twentieth century was a programme of "counter-hegemonization", i.e., to counter the ideological and political domination of society by the bourgeoisie.¹⁴ In this view, the sole task of the communist parties in the twentieth century is to seek "consent" in order to secure the conditions for a democratic path for the achievement of socialism. This position justified the parliamentary route to power and, by implication, rejected the insurrectionary path to power put forward by Lenin.

The Eurocommunists' criticism of Soviet foreign policy in the 1950s and 1960s and their revisionist political programme - claimed to be inspired by Gramsci's theories and changing realities in Western Europe - brought into doubt the relationship between Marxist-Leninist and Gramscian theories. In particular, the way in which Gramsci related politics to consent and ideology has been counterposed to a Lenin who is seen as reducing political reality to dictatorship.¹⁵ The following analysis sets out to disprove this point and to develop a theory of a Leninist/Gramscian united front strategy.

2.2.1. Lenin on Revolutionary Strategy and Tactics

Lenin was particularly concerned with the ways that the proletariat had to be organised and with the question of tactics and the kind of alliances the working class had to enter into in order to become the ruling class.¹⁶ Lenin's theory of strategy and tactics develops from an analysis of the

¹⁴ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁵ Mouffe,C. and Sassoon,A. (1977); "Gramsci in France and Italy - A review of the literature", in Economy and Society, (Vol.6, No.1), p.31.

¹⁶ Lane,D. (1981); Leninism: A Sociological Interpretation, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p.43.

possibilities of revolution in backward countries, that is, in societies where the level of development of the productive forces is relatively low and the working class is both numerically and politically insignificant.

Lenin's Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution (1905) called for the revolutionary party to enter into a "democratic alliance of the proletariat and peasantry" whose task would be that of the bourgeois revolution. Lenin argued that Russia was on the verge of revolution but the bourgeoisie was incapable of carrying out its own revolution. By gaining control of the bourgeois revolution the proletarian and peasant alliance could achieve political power and prepare the ground for the proletarian revolution.¹⁷ Lenin writes that:

...the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has a past and a future. Its past is autocracy, serfdom, monarchy and privilege. In the struggle against this past, in the struggle against the counter-revolution, a "single will" of the proletariat and the peasantry is possible, for here there is unity of interests.

Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle for the wage-worker against the employer, the struggle for socialism. Here singleness of will is impossible. Here the path before us lies not from autocracy to a republic, but from a petty bourgeois democratic republic to socialism.¹⁸

Lenin perceived the huge revolutionary potential that lay in the peasants' unfulfilled demands, and he urged the Communist Party to exploit this. He thus accepted the notion of an alliance with the peasants. The social democrats would therefore share power with the peasantry, which was interested in overthrowing the autocracy, but not on the immediate transition to socialism.¹⁹ Thus, the process of revolution was a two-stage process, involving, firstly, a democratic revolution led by the "democratic alliance of the

¹⁷ Conquest, R. (1972); Lenin, (Fontana/Collins), pp.50-1.

¹⁸ Lenin, V.I. (1961); "Two tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution", in Lenin, V.I.; Collected Works, Vol.9, (London, Lawrence and Wishart), pp.84-5.

¹⁹ In Lenin's view it is only in a democratic system that the interests of the peasantry can be achieved. Refer to Lenin, V.I.; "Two Tactics", *op.cit.*, pp.98-9.

proletariat and peasantry" and, secondly, the proletarian revolution.²⁰

Lenin developed his two-stage theory of revolution from an analysis of capitalist development in Russia. Two points are important here. Firstly, despite the existence of a sizable and concentrated proletariat, Russian capitalism was relatively undeveloped. The small Russian bourgeoisie, unlike the bourgeoisie of the more advanced capitalist countries of the West, was incapable of carrying out a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Lenin cites a number of reasons for this, including their class position ("they are too heavily fettered by private property, by capital and land to enter into a decisive struggle") and their dependence on the autocracy "with its bureaucracy, police and military forces for use against the proletariat and the peasantry".²¹

Secondly, Lenin held the orthodox view that socialism could only be developed in countries with an advanced capitalist base. It was necessary, therefore, for the proletariat and the peasants to secure political power and establish the conditions for the rapid development of capitalism. In this view:

In countries like Russia the working class suffers not so much from capitalism but from the insufficient development of capitalism. The working class is therefore *most certainly interested* in the broadest, freest, and most rapid development of capitalism.

That is why a *bourgeois* revolution is *in the highest degree advantageous to the proletariat*. A bourgeois revolution is *absolutely* necessary in the interests of the proletariat. The more complete, determined, and consistent the bourgeois revolution, the more assured will the proletariat's struggle be against the bourgeoisie and for socialism.²²

Autocracy in Russia also accounted for the two stages in revolutionary strategy. In Lenin's view the aim of the working class movement was "the

²⁰ Kolakowski, L. (1978); Main Currents of Marxism Vol. II, (Oxford, Clarendon Press), pp.405-412.

²¹ Lenin, V.I. (1961); "Two tactics", *op.cit.*, p.56.

²² *Ibid.*, pp.49-50.

complete liberation of the toiling masses from every form of oppression and exploitation". This required both a "high development of the productive forces of capitalism and a high degree of organisation of the working class". These could only be achieved in a society where political freedom prevails. Thus:

The full development of the productive forces in modern bourgeois society, a broad, free, and open class struggle, and the political education, training and rallying of the masses of the proletariat are inconceivable without political freedom. Therefore it has always been the aim of the class-conscious proletariat to wage a determined struggle for complete political freedom and the democratic revolution.²³

In the first stage the revolutionary Party must not only gain the confidence of the working class. It must make itself the centre of all forms of protest against social oppression, concentrating all the energies directed against the ruling class regardless of their origin or what class interests they represent. Lenin states that the true revolutionary is

a tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum of people it affects; he must be able to generalize all these manifestations to produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation....²⁴

Thus, the fact that the Party is the vanguard of the proletariat does not mean that it should be indifferent to the oppression and exploitation of other groups.

Since the democratic revolution, although bourgeois in content, is to be led by the proletariat, it is the latter's duty to rally all the forces that aim to overthrow the autocracy. The Party must support bourgeois demands for political freedom, combat the persecution of religious sects, denounce the brutal treatment of students and intellectuals, support peasant claims, make itself felt in every sphere of public life, and unite the separate currents of

²³ Lenin, V.I. (1962); "The Democratic tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat", in Lenin, V.I.; Collected Works, Vol.8, January - July 1905, (London, Lawrence and Wishart), p.511. .

²⁴ Lenin, V.I. (1978); What is to be done? Burning questions of our movement, (Peking, Foreign Languages Press), p.100.

protest into a single stream.²⁵ In this role the Party must assume leadership of all exploited classes in the democratic revolution. In Lenin's words:

We must take upon ourselves the task of organising an all-round political struggle under the leadership of *our* Party in such a manner as to obtain all the support possible of all opposition strata for the struggle and for our Party.²⁶

Lenin's concept of alliances was reinforced by the Theses adopted at the 3rd Congress of the Communist International in 1921, which broadened the basis of communist action by introducing the so-called "united front" tactics. Communists were to establish contact with the masses either by collaborating with the leaders of non-communist organisations, or by appealing to rank-and-file members of such organisations over the heads of their leaders. Communist Parties were also urged to encourage their members to join trade unions with a view to obtaining control over them. In addition, "united front" tactics included various organisations which were created either to promote some particular object, or to unite a professional group such as writers, lawyers, or scientists, or to mobilise a particular section of the community such as women, youth, or students.²⁷

Finally, in What is to be Done? Lenin stressed the importance of political struggle, and of the role of the revolutionary Party in spreading socialist consciousness throughout the working class. Lenin was particularly conscious of the difference between trade union struggles ("economism") and spontaneity, and the development of a socialist consciousness. In the first place, Lenin opposed the view that the primary struggle was the working class's economic struggle through trade union organisations as opposed to a political struggle. While arguing that trade unionism had some positive aspects in

²⁵ Kolakowski, L. (1978); *op.cit.*, p.388. Refer to Lenin, V.I. (1978); *op.cit.*, pp.97-117.

²⁶ Lenin, V.I. (1978); *op.cit.*, pp.106-7.

²⁷ Hunt, R. (1950); The Theory and Practice of Communism, (Pelican), pp.192-202.

helping to unite the working class, Lenin argued that it could divert the working class from revolutionary activity. The trade unions struggle, in his view, is essentially an economistic struggle, encouraging workers to concentrate their attention on narrow, short-term goals.

In the second place, Lenin draws a distinction between spontaneous "outbursts of desperation and vengeance" evident in certain outbreaks of resistance of the oppressed, and socialist consciousness which is the consciousness of the "irreconcilable antagonisms" of the interests of the working class "to the whole of the modern political and social system".²⁸ Thus, because of economism and spontaneity, Lenin argued, revolutionary consciousness can only be brought to the workers "from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers". It is thus the task of a revolutionary Party to channel the activity of the working class towards revolution and thereby to socialism.

To sum up: Lenin held the view that the undeveloped state of capitalism in Russia, the inability of the bourgeoisie to lead a bourgeois-democratic revolution, and the lack of political freedom in autocratic Russia made it necessary for the proletariat, in alliance with the peasants, to wage a bourgeois-democratic revolution as a prelude to the struggle for socialism. In the first stage, the proletariat must lead all struggles directed against the ruling class. Under the leadership of the Party, the proletariat must rally all forces opposed to autocracy and provide political leadership. This was reinforced by the "united front" tactics adopted by the 3rd Comintern Congress which called for communists to join other organisations with a view to obtaining control over them. The communists could use these organisations to infuse socialist consciousness into the masses, which Lenin viewed as a

²⁸ Lenin, V.I. (1978); *op.cit.* p.37.

major role of the revolutionary Party.

2.2.2. Gramsci on Revolutionary Strategy and Tactics

Gramsci introduces two strategies in the process of revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism. In the first strategy, the "war of position", the aim of the working class is to undermine the hegemony of the bourgeoisie by increasingly assuming leadership in numerous social movements such as schools, churches, trade unions, political parties, etc. In the second strategy, the "war of manoeuvre/movement", the working class conducts a direct military assault on the bourgeois state and seizes state power.

The distinction is based on a distinction between the "organic" and "conjunctural" dimensions of revolutionary change. The war of position corresponds to a gradual shift in the balance of social and cultural forces and is therefore related to the organic dimension of revolutionary change. The war of manoeuvre corresponds to a period of crisis in which political forces use political combat and force to seize state power and therefore relates to the conjunctural dimension of revolutionary change.²⁹

This argument rests on a distinction between civil society, the "sphere of consent", and the state, the "sphere of coercion". In societies where civil society is very complex and where bourgeois ideology is highly institutionalized and widely internalized, a direct assault on the state can result only in disappointment and defeat.³⁰ However, where coercion is the major form of political domination, and where there is a lack of social movements in civil society, a frontal attack on the state for political power is more viable.

²⁹ Femia, J. (1981); Gramsci's Political Thought, (Oxford, Clarendon Press), p.53.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.51.

The war of position, according to Gramsci, is applicable in situations where civil society is well developed and where the hegemony of the working class can be expanded by a shift in the balance of social and cultural forces to the working class. In this view, civil society is a central sphere of class and popular-democratic struggles, and of the contest for hegemony between the two fundamental classes.³¹ In Gramsci's view, class struggle is not the only aspect of struggle in bourgeois societies. There are numerous social movements engaging in popular democratic struggles that do not have a class character. These include the variety of movements for democratic rights; for freedom of speech and the right to vote; those which express the demands of women, students, young people and the unemployed; community movements of many kinds concerned with aspects of health, housing, and other issues.

In order to establish its hegemony, the working class must go beyond the struggle for its own narrow class interests: it must establish itself as the guarantor of the interests of society as a whole.³² Before an attempt is made on state power, the proletariat must gradually assume leadership of all movements engaged in popular democratic struggles. It must assume leadership of all the social organisations of civil society in order to erode bourgeois ideological dominance. In Gramsci's words:

A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well.³³

In this respect, the working class must become the leading political and

³¹ *Loc.cit.*

³² Simon,R. (1982); Gramsci's Political Thought, (Lawrence and Wishart), p.187.

³³ Gramsci,A. (1971); Selections from Prison Notebooks, (London, Edited by Hoare,Q. and Smith,A.N.), p.57f. Quoted in McLellan,D. (1979); Marxism after Marx, (Macmillan), p.187.

cultural force in a system of alliances with other classes and social forces. For the working class to win over other classes and social forces to the revolutionary movement it is necessary for it to make compromises and to strive for intermediate objectives. In other words, the working class must present itself as the leading movement in the struggle for the demands and objectives of other social forces and movements.

This does not mean that the proletariat must "put off its class interests in the name of the immediacy of the moment".³⁴ In the process, proletarian ideology will be infused in the consciousness of other class groups and social forces providing the basis for a transformation of class and political relations. The war of position, therefore, is an ideological struggle at the level of civil society in which proletarian consciousness is promoted and expanded, and in which the hegemony of the working class is achieved.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is derived from the Leninist principle of political direction. For Lenin, hegemony or political direction is achieved by the working class under the leadership of its revolutionary Party. In other words, the revolutionary Party assumes political leadership of all struggles in society, providing political direction to all social forces opposed to Tsarist rule. Gramsci extends Lenin's concept of hegemony in two respects: firstly its extension to the bourgeoisie and then the addition of a new and fundamental dimension (since it is through this that unity at the political level will be achieved), that of intellectual and moral direction. In this sense, a hegemonic class is one which is able to articulate the interests of other social groups to its own by means of an ideological struggle.³⁵

³⁴ Greaves, D.B. (1988); The Politics of Revolution: Some problems in the strategy of socialist transformation, unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, p.206.

³⁵ Mouffe, C. (1979); "Hegemony and ideology in Gramsci", in Mouffe, C. (ed.); Gramsci and Marxist Theory, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul), p.181.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony starts from the point that a class exercises power over its subordinate classes by means of a combination of coercion (political domination) and consent (intellectual and moral leadership). Hegemony, for Gramsci, is achieved when a fundamental class (bourgeoisie or proletariat) has achieved its predominance through consent. A hegemonic class is one which, through political and ideological struggle, has gained the consent of other classes and social groups by fusing its economic, political, intellectual and moral objectives with those of other classes or social forces allied to it. The medium through which consent is achieved is ideology, and hegemony is achieved when the ideology has "spread throughout the whole of society determining not only united economic and political objectives but also intellectual and moral unity".³⁶

Gramsci's concept of hegemony goes beyond the idea of a simple class alliance. Hegemony for Gramsci is the indissoluble union of political leadership and intellectual and moral leadership.³⁷ It refers to the process by which the working class establishes its leadership over all the forces opposed to capitalism, thereby creating "a new, homogeneous politico-economic historical bloc", united to achieve common economic, political, and intellectual objectives.³⁸

Furthermore, the war of position, according to Gramsci, is only a stage in the struggle, the one in which the new hegemonic bloc cements itself. Once the proletariat has established hegemony (providing political direction and intellectual and moral direction), it is time for the war of movement. In other

³⁶ Gramsci, A. (1975); Prison Notebooks, (Turin), pp.180-5. Cited in Mouffe, C. (1979); *op.cit.*, p.181.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.179.

³⁸ Gramsci, A. (1971); Selections from Prison Notebooks, (London, Edited by Hoare, Q. and Smith, A.N.), p.168. Cited in McLellan, D. (1979); *op.cit.*, p.185.

words, Gramsci is arguing that in Western societies the war of movement must be delayed until the war of position has borne fruit. Yet the war of movement remains the supreme goal.

To sum up: Gramsci does not relegate the Leninist concept of direct military assault on the state to an insignificant position. Rather, his emphasis on ideology and class alliance in the war of position involves an extension of Lenin's concept of hegemony to include conditions in societies where civil society is complex and highly developed.³⁹ This is not a departure from Lenin, but an important contribution to Marxist theory and practice under conditions where consent (ideological and moral control) is the major form of domination by the ruling class. In addition, Gramsci identified the war of position with "the formula of the United Front".⁴⁰

A few points need to be emphasized here. Firstly, Lenin placed emphasis on the formation of a revolutionary alliance in the first stage - the democratic revolution - of his two-stage theory of revolution. This would also bring the working class together with all forces interested in overthrowing the ruling bloc but not in the immediate transition to socialism. Thus, the demands of class war must be subordinated to those of the national-democratic struggle. During this stage, the revolutionary Party must lead all forms of protest against the ruling bloc, uniting the separate currents of protest into a single stream, regardless of their origin or what class interests they represent. Lenin also stressed the importance of political struggle, and of the role of the revolutionary Party in spreading socialist consciousness throughout the working class.

³⁹ See Greaves, D.B. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.206.

⁴⁰ Gramsci, A. (1975); *op.cit.*, p.237.

Secondly, Gramsci placed emphasis on the formation of a historical bloc, united to achieve common economic, political, and intellectual objectives. Here the working class establishes its political, intellectual and moral leadership by fusing its economic, political, intellectual and moral objectives with those of other classes or social forces allied to it. Gramsci also stressed the role of political and ideological struggle through which the working class achieves its leadership (hegemony) over other classes or social forces allied to it. Here Gramsci is expanding both Lenin's concept of alliances and his theory of political direction through his strategy of the war of position and his theory of hegemony. Furthermore, both theories of revolutionary strategy give rise to United Front tactics. Since this is the case, it becomes possible to apply Gramsci's strategy of the war of position to Lenin's first stage - the democratic revolution - under very specific conditions.

This would involve a revolutionary alliance striving for a national-democratic revolution in a highly complex civil society in which revolutionary consciousness is promoted and expanded through the formation of a united front organisation. Thus, a Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy would have the following essential requirements:

- (1) the necessity of mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc;
- (2) the necessity of creating a broad alliance of social forces under a minimum programme during that stage of struggle which leads to a democratic revolution; and
- (3) the necessity for political and ideological struggle in which revolutionary consciousness is promoted and expanded.

The first requirement would lead to a highly complex civil society which makes the application of Gramsci's war of position possible during the democratic revolution. The second would be the realization of Gramsci's

historical bloc through the formation of a united front during this stage. The third would be a political and ideological struggle to transform all popular struggles into a universal challenge of the dominant system, and which is aimed at a national-democratic revolution.

2.3. Strategy and Tactics of the Liberation Movement

The national question in South Africa came under discussion at the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1928. South Africa was seen as an outpost of the imperialist-capitalist world with an indigenous form of capitalism in the making. The majority of the working population, the "native races", were suffering under a combined system of economic exploitation and racial discrimination. It was necessary, therefore, to campaign initially for a democratic revolution to remove racial discrimination and, thereafter, a social revolution which would bring the major means of production under the control of the proletariat. The leading political force in the struggle for an "independent native republic, as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic" was to be the "native races". The Communist Party of South Africa should therefore strive to develop the awareness of the black population in collaboration with other organisations, in particular, the ANC.⁴¹

The 1962 programme of the Communist Party defined socialism as the goal of a future South Africa; called for alliances with all those struggling to overthrow the system of racist capitalism; accepted the goals of the ANC's Freedom Charter as the "immediate" aims of the liberation struggle; justified the use of specific forms of violence as a means to overthrow the government; and, finally, identified the Communist Party as the vanguard of

⁴¹ Prior, A. (1983/4); "South African exile politics: A case study of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party", in Journal of Contemporary African Studies, (Vol.3, Nos.1/2, October 1983/April 1984), pp.185-6. Refer also to Van Diepen, M. (ed.) (1988); The National Question in South Africa, (London and New Jersey, Zed Books).

the working class.⁴² South Africa was seen as a class-divided society and characterised by "colonialism of a special type" (CST), in which one group of people dominated another within the same geographical area.

This has two significant consequences. Firstly, the colonial subjection of blacks by whites prevents the emergence within the black working class of a class consciousness because they identify themselves not in class but in racial terms. This is not a false consciousness, however, but a reflection of the most "immediate contradiction within South African society - between the oppressed people and their rulers".⁴³ Secondly, national consciousness (as opposed to class consciousness) is promoted because of the common experience of subjection to racial domination and exploitation among all black people.⁴⁴ As such, Lenin's strategic guidelines for national liberation were applicable to the South African situation.

These guidelines called for a strategic alliance with all forces fighting for national independence. Thus, there is no immediate transition to socialism, but a phase of national-democratic struggle leading to a national-democratic revolution. The revolutionary struggle was divided into a number of phases. The first phase was the liberation struggle of the SACP/ANC alliance through the military wing of the ANC; the second was the national democratic era of the implementation of the principles of the Charter as a result of the successful overthrow of the South African state; the third phase was the setting up of a people's democracy; and finally, a developed socialism on the

⁴² Roux, E. (1972): Time longer than rope: A history of the Black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press), pp.186-7.

⁴³ Hudson, P. (1989); "Images of the future and strategies in the present: The Freedom Charter and the South African Left", in Frankel, P. et.al. (eds.); State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Southern Book Publishers), p.268.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.268-9.

lines of Marxism-Leninism in a pure socialist state.⁴⁵

The SACP has consistently held to the "two-stage theory" of revolution advocated by Lenin. The first stage, the national-democratic revolution, creates the conditions for, and is the transitional stage to, the socialist revolution.⁴⁶ The 1984 constitution of the SACP declared that its aim is to lead the working class towards the strategic goal of establishing a socialist republic "and the more immediate aim of winning the objectives of the national-democratic revolution which is inseparably linked to it". The main contents of the national-democratic revolution are

...the national liberation of the African people in particular, and the black people in general, the destruction of the economic and political power of the racist ruling class, and the establishment of one united state of people's power in which the working class will *move uninterruptedly towards the social emancipation and the total abolition of the exploitation of man by man.* (Author's emphasis).⁴⁷

The ANC also argued that the path to socialism was through the national-democratic revolution, with an emphasis on the latter. The ANC held that

the chief content of the present stage of the revolution is the national liberation of the Black people. It is actually impossible for South Africa to make even that advance to socialism before the national liberation of the black oppressed nation.⁴⁸

Despite the similar positions held by the SACP and ANC with regard to the two stages in the revolution, it would be incorrect to view this as simply a reflection of dominance by the SACP. Both the ANC and the SACP viewed the struggle for "the national liberation of the Black people" as a unified

⁴⁵ Roux, E. (1972); *op.cit.*, p.191.

⁴⁶ See "The two stages of our revolution", in *The African Communist*, (No.110, Third Quarter, 1987). Cited in Styles, D. (1989); *Understanding the Freedom Charter*, (Cape Town), p.9.

⁴⁷ Slovo, J. (1988); "The South African working class and the National Democratic Revolution", in *Umsebenzi Discussion Paper*, p.4. Quoted in Styles, D. (1989); *op.cit.*, pp.8-9.

⁴⁸ "The Freedom Charter is our Lodestar, Part 3", in *Sechaba*, (September 1985), p.29. Quoted in Styles, D. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.10.

struggle to achieve the economic and political aspirations of the ANC's Freedom Charter.⁴⁹ The essential difference is the emphasis placed on the first stage by the ANC and on the second stage by the SACP.

Within the ANC-led revolutionary alliance, revolutionary consciousness can be identified at two levels: the ANC's emphasis on the national-democratic liberation struggle; and the SACP's emphasis on the struggle for socialism. For the ANC, the revolutionary idea was based on opposition to all forms of apartheid exploitation and domination and was aimed at the destruction of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and unitary South Africa.

For the SACP, however, revolutionary consciousness meant going beyond the phase of the national-democratic revolution, leading ultimately to the establishment of a developed socialist state. However, it is only after a successful struggle for national democracy and the realisation of the aims of the Freedom Charter that the transition to socialism can be put on the immediate political agenda. Thus, there is no immediate transition to socialism, but a phase of national-democratic struggle leading to a national-democratic revolution. Consequently, the ANC-led revolutionary alliance emphasized not the promotion and expansion of socialist consciousness among the masses, but the consciousness of political domination and economic exploitation under apartheid and the objective of national liberation.

An extensive amount of literature has been written on the relationship

⁴⁹ Leonard, R. (1994); South Africa at war, (Craighall, AD Donker Publishers), p.45. Refer to pp.42-45 of South Africa at War for a discussion of disputes within the ANC on the relationship with the SACP and other criticisms of this relationship.

between the Freedom Charter and socialism.⁵⁰ Four views dominate the debate. The first rejects the Freedom Charter as a blueprint for socialism. The second view is that the aims of the Charter can only be realised in a socialist society. The third view sees the Freedom Charter as favouring neither socialism or capitalism at the explicit expense of the other. The final view sees the Charter as an expression of the will of the people.

The SACP, however, did not see the Freedom Charter as a socialist document⁵¹ but included in the stage of the national-democratic revolution a phase which is the "national democratic era of the implementation of the principles of the Charter as a result of the successful overthrow of the South African state". This is to be followed by the establishment of a people's democracy and thereafter a pure socialist state. Thus, for the SACP, the Freedom Charter is the minimum programme around which the national democratic revolution can be organised and which sets out the economic and political basis for the transition to socialism. The ANC also argued that the path to socialism was through the national democratic revolution with an emphasis on the latter. In this respect, the goal of the national democratic revolution was the destruction of apartheid and the formation of a democracy on the lines of the Freedom Charter.

The birth of Umkonto we Sizwe (MK), the ANC's military wing, in December 1961 marked a departure from the organisation's prior strategy of negotiation and passive disobedience. This departure in strategy occurred in an

⁵⁰ See Innes,D. (1985); "The Freedom Charter and Workers' Control", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.2, October-December); Fine,B. (1986); "The Freedom Charter: A critical appreciation", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.3); Hudson,P. (1986); "The Freedom Charter and socialist strategy in South Africa", in Politikon, (Vol.13, No.1, June); Swilling,M. (1987); "Living in the interregnum: Crisis, reform and the socialist alternative in South Africa", in Third World Quarterly, (Vol.9, No.2, April).; and Lingle,C. (1989); "Populism and rent-seeking in post-apartheid South Africa", in Politikon, (Vol.16, No.2, December).

⁵¹ Hudson,P. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.261.

environment which eroded the possibility of a peaceful transition to a non-racial society. Given the intransigence of successive apartheid regimes, and the constant harassment of organisations and their supporters, the armed struggle became one crucial element of the ANC's revolutionary strategy (which included other forms of opposition and protest).⁵²

The ANC's 1969 strategic document, Strategy and Tactics of the South African Revolution, stipulated that economic exploitation and political domination in South Africa were maintained by the use of force. It went on to add that the "enemy" could draw on numerous internal and external resources to defend apartheid rule. Under conditions where there "is a vast imbalance of material and military resources between the opposing sides", guerrilla warfare was the most viable form of struggle.⁵³ A sabotage campaign (directed at government installations) had three main purposes. It was intended to draw in suitable recruits for the guerrilla movement, to demonstrate an open break with previous methods of resistance and, finally, to indicate the ANC's intention to overthrow "white supremacy through armed struggle rather than spontaneous activity".⁵⁴

The document acknowledged the importance of political struggle, stressing that "the continued support of the mass of the people has to be won in all-round political mobilisation which must accompany the military activities". Political mobilisation would be conducted by establishing organisational structures for educational and agitational work within the country. The need for mass

⁵² Phillips, I. (1988); "Negotiation and armed struggle in contemporary South Africa", in Transformation, (No.6), pp.42-3.

⁵³ African National Congress (1980); "Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress", in Turok, B. (ed.); Revolutionary thought in the 20th century, (London, Zed Books), pp.146 and 150.

⁵⁴ Lodge, T. (1983/4); "The African National Congress in South Africa, 1976-1983: Guerrilla war and armed propaganda", in Journal of Contemporary African Studies, (Vol.3, Nos.1/2, October 1983/April 1984), pp.162-3.

involvement was vital if the movement was going to present an effective challenge to the authorities: popular participation in the struggle and the "primacy of political leadership" over it would correct any tendencies towards militarism.⁵⁵

During the early 1970s the ANC's internal political work involved the creation of a permanent network of ANC cells to undertake political duties. After the Soweto revolt, the focus of these cells was directed towards influencing potentially sympathetic legal organisations. The ANC focused on four organisations: the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO), the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU), and Inkatha. From the beginning of 1978 the "Internal Reconstruction and Development Department" in Lusaka co-ordinated the formation of groups in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland to supervise the creation of an internal network of ANC cells.⁵⁶

In the late seventies, the upsurge of internal popular struggles and general acceptance within ANC circles that the armed struggle on its own was insufficient led to a transformation of revolutionary strategy.⁵⁷ In 1978 a high profile ANC delegation visited Vietnam and conducted a study of the revolutionary strategy the Vietcong used against France and the United States. According to Barrell, the delegation identified a number of general propositions that were applicable to the ANC's situation. These were:

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.163 and Mafeje,A. (1978); "Soweto and its aftermath", in Review of African Political Economy, (11), p.29.

⁵⁶ Lodge,T. (1983/84); *op.cit.*, pp.171-4.

⁵⁷ See Mzala (1981); "Has the time come for the arming of the masses?", in The African Communist, (No.86, Third Quarter); Migwe,K. (1982); "Further contribution to the arming of the masses", in The African Communist, (No.89, Second Quarter); and Barrell,H. (1990); "The turn to the masses: The African National Congress' Strategic Review of 1978-79", Southern African Seminar, in Work in Progress, (October).

...that political struggle was primary in all phases of revolution; that revolution could succeed only through the united strength of the "masses" of people expressing itself in organised political activity; that it was necessary to build the broadest possible national front around a minimum programme to unite all classes and strata in revolutionary struggle; that it was necessary at all times to try to create legal and semi-legal organisations, and for the revolutionary vanguard to try to lead these forces on the basis of what it considered the correct policies; that the revolutionary vanguard should maintain its own independence while working with other broader forces; that revolutionary armed struggle could succeed only if it grew out of a mass political base, and; that revolutionary violence was necessary for revolutionary victory, but that this violence had to be constantly assessed and controlled to maintain a correct relationship with the political struggle.⁵⁸

In January 1979, the ANC appointed a commission to review its strategy, tactics and operational structures. The commission's recommendations were formally adopted by the ANC in August 1979.⁵⁹ According to Barrell, this strategic review "was among the more important factors in the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 and, indeed, in the commencement of many of the popular political campaigns which characterised anti-apartheid activity in the 1980s".⁶⁰

The new strategy, adopted in August 1979, the four-pillar people's revolutionary war strategy, involved: the international isolation of the apartheid regime; a sabotage campaign against state institutions to encourage people to actively support the armed struggle; the mobilisation of the masses to actively resist apartheid; and the establishment of people's power in black areas.⁶¹

By the beginning of the 1980s there was general agreement among members of the ANC's underground machinery and External Mission, as well as the wide range of independent anti-apartheid activists working legally inside the

⁵⁸ Barrell, H. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.58.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁶⁰ *Loc.cit.*

⁶¹ Booyse, W. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.34.

country on the need to transform resistance tactics. This followed from the recognition that the struggle would only be successful if the masses were actively involved.⁶² According to Barrell:

...a new stress was laid on the ability of black working people to paralyse the South African economy; on the capacity of the youth and other militant popular forces to inflict heavy damage on the organs of state administration and coercion; and on the ability of 'progressive' artists and intellectuals to undermine the ideological underpinnings of apartheid and promote alternatives. It provided a reasonably coherent model, under South African conditions, for what was described as 'people's war' - the full and protracted engagement of the widest possible spread of resistance and revolutionary forces in all political, economic, military and ideological modes of struggle for national liberation.⁶³

This position was reflected in a statement adopted by the Central Committee of the SACP in 1983.

The road to people's power requires not only regional responses to unpopular measures but also a united national offensive, involving the mass of the people in town and countryside, uniting all the black oppressed and mobilising the support of all classes and strata who reject the rule of racist autocracy. The regime's attempt to perpetuate white minority rule by fragmenting our people and our country must be vigorously challenged by the masses and counterposed by the vision of one South Africa - united, democratic and non-racial.⁶⁴

The ANC dropped the notion that it would wage a guerrilla war similar to those conducted in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Instead, the key to progress lay in what was termed "the development of insurrectionary forces and tactics", by expanding its internal political networks and the construction of a united political front to oppose apartheid.⁶⁵

The ANC now saw its main task as the establishment of an internal

⁶² Barrell, H. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.57 and Barrell, H. (1989); "The outlawed South African Liberation movements", in Johnson, S. (ed.); South Africa: No turning back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press).

⁶³ Barrell, H. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.59.

⁶⁴ "A United People will defeat the Enemy", Statement adopted by the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party, September 1983, in The African Communist, (No.96, First Quarter, 1984), p.36.

⁶⁵ Barrell, H. (1989); *op.cit.*, pp.57-9.

revolutionary base by carving open and occupying legal and semi-legal political space inside South Africa. This involved five objectives: to build a united front of anti-apartheid community organisations operating legally and semi-legally inside South Africa; to win members of the front's affiliates and the affiliates themselves politically to positions aligned to the ANC; to recruit from among promising members of the front's affiliates new cadres for the ANC underground; to deploy armed activity in the interim as a secondary means of stimulating political consciousness, combativity and organisation, and; to build a revolutionary political base inside South Africa enabling engagement in a protracted people's war punctuated by insurrectionary activity.⁶⁶

For the SACP, a "socialist content" would be established in the national democratic struggle by popularising socialism and promoting the acceptance and understanding of Marxist-Leninist ideology within the "national liberation movement"; consolidating underground Party structures and the establishment of an organised Party presence in all sectors and structures of the "national liberation movement"; and creating socialist forms of political and social organisation as represented by "organs of people's power".⁶⁷

The implementation of the people's war revolutionary strategy was preceded by a four-year organisational and propaganda campaign. The ANC declared 1980 the "Year of the Freedom Charter", 1981 the "Year of the Youth", 1982 the "Year of Unity in Action", and 1983 the "Year of United Action".⁶⁸

During the early 1980s the ANC embarked on campaigns "in alliance with a variety of groupings and constituencies which constituted a vital weaving

⁶⁶ Barrell, H. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.70.

⁶⁷ Styles, D. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.22.

⁶⁸ Booyse, W. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.35. Refer to Chapter 3, pp.115-117.

of diverse interests into the overall tapestry of struggle".⁶⁹ According to Fitzgerald, the ANC stimulated the development of a close working relationship between the churches and the broad liberation alliance; took the lead in the formation of a variety of cultural organisations, community art projects and discipline-based working groups; stimulated the formation of national and non-sectarian professional organisations; participated in the formation of women's organisations; gave critical all-round support to all initiatives of white democrats, including the organisational efforts of white war resisters; and opened up channels of communication with such groups as Jews For Justice and black businessmen.⁷⁰

In June 1985, the ANC presented the people's revolutionary war strategy at its consultative conference at Kabwe, Zambia. Without totally abandoning its strategy of armed propaganda (the use of guerrilla activity to popularise the armed struggle as part of a general strategy⁷¹), the organisation placed greater emphasis on the mobilisation of various forces in the country to participate in the liberation struggle. In its strategic document, Our Strategy and Tactics, the ANC focused on the mobilisation of the working class and organised labour, women, the rural masses, and the youth and students, and the formation of civic organisations.⁷² The aim here was to increase participation in the liberation struggle.

⁶⁹ Fitzgerald, P. (1990); "Democracy and Civil Society in South Africa: A response to Daryl Glaser", in Review of African Political Economy, (No.49, Winter), p.102.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.102-4.

⁷¹ Phillips, I. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.45. Indeed, Lodge notes that between January 1985 and June 1986, 254 guerrilla attacks were conducted by ANC guerrillas compared to 256 between January 1978 and December 1984. See Lodge, T. (1988); "State of exile: The African National Congress, 1976-86", in Frankel, P., Pines, N. and Swilling, M. (eds.); State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Southern Book Publishers), p.230.

⁷² ANC Document (1985); Our Strategy and Tactics, (Kabwe), pp.7-11.

To sum up: firstly, the SACP adopted Lenin's "two-stage" theory of revolution based on the "colonialism of a special type" thesis. This gave rise to the strategic alliance between the SACP and the ANC and the focus on the national-democratic revolution under the ANC's Freedom Charter. Secondly, the alliance elaborated a "people's war revolutionary strategy" based, among other things, on the mobilisation of the widest possible coalition of forces in a broad national front of organisations to oppose the apartheid regime. Thus, the period of the national liberation struggle was to involve a programme of popular mobilisation and the formation of a united front, which would be punctuated by an intensified sabotage campaign and other forms of struggle. The ANC's four-year organisational and propaganda campaign culminated in the formation of the UDF in 1983.⁷³

The strategic and tactical aims of the revolutionary alliance were heavily influenced by the writings of Lenin and the practical experiences of Vietnamese revolutionaries. However, a complex relationship existed between revolutionary intentions and concrete developments in the country. The people's war strategy was "directed at the accomplishment of a particular political objective: an insurrectionary seizure of power".⁷⁴ Although revolutionary developments in the 1980s did include mass mobilisation and organisation, the formation of a united front, and widespread insurrection punctuated by guerrilla warfare, it did not lead to a general uprising and the seizure of state power.

Instead, it is argued here that the formation of the UDF and revolutionary developments during the period of review accorded with the

⁷³ See Barrell, H. (1990); *op.cit.*

⁷⁴ Lodge, T. (1989b); "People's War or Negotiation? African National Congress Strategies in the 1980s", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 5, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.45.

Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy - increasing the complexity of civil society by establishing mass organisations, creating a historical bloc in opposition to the ruling bloc, and expanding the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. These strategic and tactical objectives have their parallels in some aspects of the ANC's new revolutionary strategy and tactics: mass organisation and resistance; the creation of a united front to challenge white minority rule; and winning members of the front's affiliates and the affiliates themselves politically to the ANC's positions.

It is the Leninist/Gramscian emphasis on the importance of the political and ideological struggle during the stage of struggle leading to a democratic revolution that sets it apart from other models of a United Front strategy. In addition, it is this factor which makes it the most appropriate model for an explanation of revolutionary developments during the period of review: the promotion and expansion of the revolutionary idea and its spread throughout civil society during the struggle for a democratic society.

In Gramsci's war of position, revolutionary consciousness results from a gradual shift in the balance of social and cultural forces towards the working class. This is a political and ideological struggle in which the working class strives to achieve its political, ideological, intellectual and moral leadership over all classes and social forces allied to it. However, it is Lenin's two-stage theory of revolution and the importance of the struggle for political freedom - the democratic revolution - that assumes significance here. Thus, the Leninist/Gramscian model is the application of the war of position to that stage of struggle leading to a democratic revolution. In this sense, revolutionary consciousness arises from the transformation of the particular demands of various social classes and forces into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system, and which is directed at a democratic revolution. This does not mean, however, that the promotion and expansion of socialist

consciousness is ignored. Rather, the demands of class ideology and class war are subordinated to those of the national democratic struggle.

What were the main characteristics of the revolutionary situation during the 1980s?⁷⁵ Firstly, there was a general drive to create disciplined and highly structured township organisations with a strong commitment to mass participation, democratic practices and accountability. Civic associations, student, youth and women's organisations took root in scores of townships and villages throughout the country. These organisations emerged in response to a wide range of socio-economic and political issues, including unemployment, rent and bus-fare increases, working conditions, political reforms, etc. Community organisations were also formed as a result of the conscious organisational efforts of political activists.⁷⁶

Second was the formation of the UDF⁷⁷ and a subsequent upsurge in popular resistance reaching almost insurrectionary levels by the mid-eighties.⁷⁸ Thirdly, the organisational developments and popular resistance gave rise to a common national political culture that had its roots in a long tradition of resistance to white minority rule. The main components of this political culture were: the rejection of, and opposition to, apartheid structures and modes of domination and the development of alternative structures and practices by the mass-based organisations to govern their own daily living (organs of dual power, people's courts, people's education, etc.); the adoption of a strategy based on "unity-in-action" and the mobilisation of grass-roots organisations

⁷⁵ See Swilling, M. (1988); "Introduction: The Politics of stalemate", in Frankel, P., Pines, N. and Swilling, M. (eds.); *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.

⁷⁶ Refer to Chapter 3, pp.91-119, Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 and Appendix B.

⁷⁷ Refer to Chapter 4, pp.122-130.

⁷⁸ Refer to Chapter 4, pp.141-162.

formed around local issues; the consolidation of a political language with its own slogans, freedom songs and symbols; an ideological system expressed in such documents as the Freedom Charter; and the articulation of a set of common demands such as the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of organisations and the establishment of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and unitary South Africa.⁷⁹

What were the factors underlying these organisational and ideological developments? What were the forces which gave rise to the emergence and proliferation of community organisations? What accounted for the emergence of this national political culture? These questions are partially answered by looking at the structural conditions of social transformation which existed during the late 1970s and the 1980s.

2.4. Conditions of social transformation

It is necessary to examine the way in which the form, content and organisation of political struggle are structured by the specific form of the political terrain and state. The structural conditions which mark the character of a particular historical period provide the specific context against which the content and direction of political struggles can be understood.⁸⁰ The main political and economic conditions of social transformation include the transformation of structural forces in the political terrain, along with changes in the form and functioning of the state and state reforms.

2.4.1. Structural forces in the political terrain: Structural forces in the political terrain play an important role in determining the responses of social actors to state reforms. Among these structural forces were the transformation

⁷⁹ Refer to Chapter 4, pp.131-141.

⁸⁰ Wolpe, H. (1988); Race, class and the apartheid state, (Paris, Unesco Press), p.3.

of the economy and within it, the transformation of the African working class.

During the 1970s, the increasing development of monopoly capitalist relations in South Africa resulted in "the progressive deskilling and increasing subordination of manual labour" as well as "the creation of a minority of specialized supervisory and mental wage-earning places" for African workers.⁸¹ This process of deskilling and the mechanization of skilled production tasks resulted in a highly complex and diverse African working class. This was a radical transformation of the African working class from the "homogeneous, largely migrant, and unskilled proletariat with little formal training or education" of the 1960s.⁸² According to Wolpe:

The black working class of the 1970s was first of all better educated than previously....Secondly, it contained a considerable proportion of semi-skilled and...stable urbanised workers. Therefore, it became less easily replaceable, particularly under conditions of labour shortages. Above all, its political formation took place in the relatively sheltered environment of the schools in which an oppositional ideological movement, particularly in the form of Black Consciousness, was growing in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁸³

African workers soon became aware of their power as a class. The late 1970s and early 1980s was characterised by an unprecedented organisational drive and a wave of industrial action which epitomized this power. In addition, this period was marked by the increasing politicisation of African workers.⁸⁴ This was evident in the emergence of unions involved in mobilising around community and broader political issues, the formation of shop steward councils which mobilised around "nonproduction" issues, the mobilisation of consumer boycotts in support of strike-action, and the

⁸¹ Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of agony, Time of destiny - The upsurge of popular protest, (London, Verso), p.134.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.133-4.

⁸³ Wolpe, H. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.82.

⁸⁴ See Price, R.M. (1991); The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political transformation in South Africa, 1975-1990, (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp.164-5.

prominent role played by trade unionists in the formation and leadership of community organisations.

Another important structural force was the transformation of the economy and the manner in which it affected the economic and other conditions of the black population. These transformations were reflected in the growing contradictory relationship between racial domination and capitalist exploitation, short-term economic crises, and the effects of a general crisis of capitalism.

During the 1970s the South African economy underwent a restructuring towards a new phase of monopoly. Towards the end of the decade the significance of these structural changes became apparent as massive structural unemployment and sharply declining living standards were added to the other problems faced by the African population.⁸⁵ Another effect was an increasing contradiction between the needs of the monopoly economic sector and racial domination as monopoly capitalists stepped up their call for the abolition of certain racist practices. Under these conditions the state was unable to stifle political opposition in the way and to the extent it had been able to do in the 1960s, thus providing space for the emergence and growth of community organisations.⁸⁶ Furthermore, unfavourable economic conditions place constraints on the state's ability to make concessions to the black population, increase unemployment and make it more difficult for workers to successfully strike for higher wages. In addition, living conditions are subjected to rising costs in transport, rent, food, etc. The impact on the black population of the worsening economic conditions during the early to mid-1980s encouraged participation in the existing organisations. It also resulted in the emergence of new organisations where none existed.

⁸⁵ Wolpe, H. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.82.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.83 and Price, R.M. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.160.

The economy moved into recession at the beginning of 1982 with GDP falling by almost 3 percent between 1981 and 1983. This was accompanied by a dramatic drop in the price of gold. Food prices rose sharply while a cash-strapped government, with reduced revenues from taxation, cut expenditure in all areas. This pressure on living costs was exacerbated by the government's attempt to raise revenue by increasing General Sales Tax in 1984. The state also reduced expenditure on black education and reduced contributions to township councils.⁸⁷ This recession resulted in massive black unemployment, which reached three million in 1985.⁸⁸ The resultant drop in the living standards of the black population gave rise to numerous struggles throughout the country.

In addition, the country's dependence on the world economy - as exporter of minerals, secondary manufactures and agricultural products, as importer of oil and a wide range of technology and machinery - exposed it to the negative effects of global recession. This was exacerbated by a falling gold price and in the share of South African exports entering other African countries once the former Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe restructured their economies away from South Africa.⁸⁹ The structural limitations of the South African economy, characterised as well by a limited internal market, resulted in an economic crisis which fed black resistance. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of numerous community organisations waging struggles around rent, food and transport increases, and against apartheid policies such as forced removals, the homeland policy, etc.

⁸⁷ Marx,A. (1992); Lessons of the struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), p.149 and Adelman (1985); "Recent events in South Africa", in Capital and Class, (No.26, Summer), p.2.

⁸⁸ Murray,M. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.354, 361; Financial Mail, (12.05.85); Nyameko,R.S. (1986); "A giant is born", in The African Communist, (No.105), p.28.

⁸⁹ Magubane,B. (1986); "South Africa: On the verge of revolution?", in Ufahamu, (Vol.15, Nos.1-2), p.44.

2.4.2. Changes in the form and functioning of the state: During the late 1970s and early 1980s changes were instituted in the form and functions of certain apparatuses of the state. These changes effectively reduced the role of the Cabinet, resulted in the penetration of the military and security apparatuses into the political decision-making institutions of the state, and led to an ever-increasing concentration of power in these institutions. In addition, the transformation of the state resulted in a centralisation of power in the executive as parliamentary control over the former was progressively weakened.

In September 1978, P.W. Botha, the former Minister of Defence, became Prime Minister in the wake of the Information Scandal which reduced the power of conservative elements in the government. The new Prime Minister rapidly reorganised the structures and institutions of the state in order to institutionalise the centralisation of power. The first step in this process was the reduction of the number of government departments from 39 to 22. The replacement of the Cabinet as the executive decision-making authority was carried out by reducing the number of cabinet committees to four and making these committees responsible for Cabinet functions. The Prime Minister or his nominee headed each of these committees which effectively became the highest decision-making bodies in the government. The members of the cabinet committees, who were not necessarily drawn from Parliament, were appointed by the Prime Minister. The membership of these committees was a state secret and they had power over matters which were not subject to Parliamentary review.

These changes resulted in the virtual abolition of the Cabinet as the highest decision-making structure in the state and reduced executive responsibility to Parliament. The permanent cabinet committees took over the functions which were constitutionally the prerogative of the Cabinet. In addition, power was

centralised in the executive with the Prime Minister, as chairman of all the committees, having the power to appoint members to the committees. The most powerful government body, the State Security Council (SSC), consisted of senior Cabinet Ministers, senior military, police and intelligence personnel, and the heads of the main departments in the civil service and senior planners. The SSC became involved in almost every aspect of government as the definition of security was broadened. Security was defined as the preservation of the state against threat from any source and was therefore "broad enough to embrace virtually every area of government action both at home and abroad".⁹⁰ The SSC was mandated to scrutinise all aspects of policy ("regional policy, economic policy, man-power planning, constitutional planning") which were "influenced by security and internal stability considerations".⁹¹

The SSC was at the apex of a parallel system of government based on the National Security Management System (NSMS). The NSMS was first established in 1979 to eliminate competition between state departments but soon became an alternative to parliamentary and cabinet government. At the regional, district and local levels, the SSC was supported by a network of over 500 Joint Management Committees (JMCs) comprised of military, police and civilian officials, including business and black local government officials. The major function of these committees was state security and this was apparent in their committee structure. Three of the four committees which made up each JMC were concerned respectively with intelligence, security and communications. The JMCs provided a civilian political base for the

⁹⁰ Geldenhuys, D. (1984); The diplomacy of isolation: South African Foreign policy making, (Johannesburg, Macmillan for the South African Institute of International Affairs), p.92.

⁹¹ Grundy, K. (1983); The Rise of the South African Security Establishment: An essay on the changing locus of state power, (Johannesburg, South African Institute of International Affairs), p.10.

security forces and used detailed local information to formulate strategies to combat opposition.⁹²

By the early 1980s the South African state was characterised as "an institutionalised system of repression that is dedicated to preserving the political and economic superiority of an entire racial group".⁹³ South Africa's security system was designed to be a comprehensive response to revolutionary activity and was capable of extensive and systematic repression. The purpose of this system was to:

[1] counter what the state believes is a revolutionary onslaught against it. In practice, this means crushing all popular organisations working for radical political and economic transformation outside official structures; [2] to contain political resistance on an ongoing basis...[3] to co-ordinate a far-reaching "hearts and mind" strategy by improving social and material conditions in black areas...[4] to act as an early warning system, spotting potential problems and dealing with them on a military or material level, before they erupt in open revolt.⁹⁴

The transformation in the form and functioning of the state resulted in the construction of "a parliamentary regime with great power centralised in a militarised executive".⁹⁵ The rationale behind these changes lay in the policy of "Total Strategy" formulated by the security apparatuses of the state. This strategy was devised to counter what was perceived as a total internal and international onslaught against South Africa.

In the latter respect, South Africa's war with the South West African Peoples

⁹² See Swilling, M. and Phillips, M. (1989); "The Emergency State: Its structure, power and limits", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 5, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press); and Marks, S. and Trapido, S. (1989); "South Africa since 1976: An historical perspective", in Johnson, S. (ed.); South Africa: No turning back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press), p.28.

⁹³ Herbst, J. (1988); "Prospects for revolution in South Africa", in Political Science Quarterly, (Vol.103, No.4), p.672.

⁹⁴ Harden, J.; "The creeping coup", in Sash, (30 May 1987), p.3. Quoted in Herbst, J. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.674.

⁹⁵ Wolpe, H. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.80.

Organisation (SWAPO) in neighbouring Namibia (which began to escalate after 1966), and its collaboration with the Rhodesian police and Portuguese military in the late 1960s against national liberation movements in Rhodesia and the former colonies respectively, shaped security thinking within the politico-military establishment. The military identified the main threat as external: that the Soviet Union was mounting an international campaign through the ANC and other liberation movements to bring about the spread of communism in Southern Africa. This led to another significant element of Total Strategy: the regional destabilisation strategy which aimed at undermining those African-dominated governments on the borders of South Africa which were sympathetic to the ANC and PAC. These included direct military attacks on ANC and PAC targets in those countries, support for insurgent movements as well as economic pressure.⁹⁶

In addition to the reorganisation of the state apparatuses, "Total Strategy" included a restructuring of the recruitment of African labour and an attempt to transform the struggle of the black majority against white minority rule.⁹⁷ These included the recognition of the permanence of Africans in the "white" urban areas, the extension of trade union rights to African workers, and the introduction of new urban local government structures and a new constitutional dispensation.

The state recognised the permanence of Africans in the urban areas under the recommendations of the Riekert Commission (the Commission of Inquiry into Legislation affecting the Utilisation of Manpower). Africans living in and around the white urban areas were given the right to property, association,

⁹⁶ Price, R.M. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.93.

⁹⁷ Kibble, S. and Bush, R. (1986); "Reform of apartheid and continued destabilisation in Southern Africa", in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, (Vol.24, No.2), p.204. Refer also to Chapter 3, p.85 and Chapter 4, pp.124-5 below.

movement and representation that had hitherto been denied to them.⁹⁸ The state introduced freehold property rights for urban Africans, relaxed influx control for urban Africans between the white urban areas, and extended the powers of Black Local Authorities (BLAs).

The recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission (the Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation), led to the recognition of African workers as *bona fide* workers, while African trade unions could apply for registration and were able to participate in the Industrial Council system.

In 1977, the state introduced elected community councils which were made responsible for the administration of African urban townships. The Black Local Authorities Act (1982) provided for the upgrading of the community councils, presenting the new town councils as additional "political rights" for urban Africans. BLAs were to be politically autonomous and were thus given wider powers than the community councils. The new local authorities were also made self-financing, thus relieving the central state of the burden of financing urbanisation. BLAs, faced with enormous deficits inherited from the community councils, and without an effective tax-base in the form of local industries, were forced to increase rent and service charges to raise revenue.⁹⁹

A new constitutional dispensation provided for a tri-cameral Parliament including coloureds and Indians. Coloureds and Indians were given their own houses of Parliament linked to Ministers Councils which were responsible for the administration of "own affairs". Under this new dispensation, however, effective political power remained in the hands of the white government. The

⁹⁸ Swilling, M. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.412-3.

⁹⁹ Chaskalson, M. et al. (1987); "Rent boycotts and the Urban Political Economy", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds); South African Review 4, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), pp.54-5. Refer to Chapter 3, p.95, Chapter 8 and Appendix B below.

introduction of the new constitutional dispensation and the BLAs provoked an unprecedented level of protest and mass organisation. National co-ordination to oppose the tri-cameral parliament and the BLAs escalated with the formation of the UDF.

Thus, the main structural factors which shaped popular resistance in the 1980s were the emergence of militant worker and youth contingents, the existence of an institutionalised political system maintained by a powerful regime with a considerable repressive capability, and the proliferation of community organisations born in the context of popular struggles. The formation of the UDF in 1983 revitalised nationalist politics leading to unprecedented organisational and ideological achievements.

The following chapter provides an analysis of the internal political situation during the period 1960-1987. Five broad periods stand out in the development of popular resistance. The first was the destruction of political organisations during the period 1960-1963, which was followed by a period of relative quiescence until 1973. From 1973 to 1977, popular resistance was revitalised by the 1973 Durban strikes and subsequent developments in the African trade union movement and trade union struggles. This period was also influenced by the BCM which laid the basis for the 1976 Soweto revolt and the development of the revolutionary idea. From late 1977 to mid-1979 state repression placed constraints on popular resistance. Finally, the period 1979 to 1987 was characterised by the emergence and proliferation of grassroots organisations and movements concerned with issues such as rent, transport, etc., and the increasing co-operation of trade union, student/youth and community-based organisations in popular protest.

Chapter 3

POPULAR STRUGGLES AND THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS, 1960-1987

3.1. Introduction

The principal concerns of this chapter are the absence of an effective national political movement in the country during the period from 1960 to 1983 and the emergence and growth of community organisations from 1979. The focus in the first section of the chapter is on the low level of political activity (with the exception of student struggles) during the 1960s; the 1973 Durban strikes and subsequent developments in the African trade union movement and trade union struggles; the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the Soweto revolt; the emergence and proliferation of grass-roots organisations; and the increasing co-operation of trade unions, student and youth, and community-based organisations in popular protest.

The central argument here is that despite increasing popular resistance during the late 1970s and early 1980s, this period was one in which popular struggles were generally unco-ordinated and confined to single issues. The popular movements up to 1983 were characteristically small national activist groups with an original membership base measured in terms of tens of thousands of supporters at the most. There was no legal popular movement in the country which could coordinate the struggles of the subordinate classes and transform single-issue campaigns and national struggles into general opposition against white rule.

The second section of the chapter explores the emergence and growth of community organisations from 1979 onwards. The emergence and proliferation of community organisations followed a resurgence in militant black opposition

which began in the late 1970s and continued throughout the 1980s. Community organisations sprang up as a result of both local and national popular struggles - against apartheid institutions and the terms of labour reproduction - and the conscious efforts of political activists.

It is argued here that the emergence and proliferation of community organisations during the late 1970s and the 1980s led to a highly complex civil society. Such a highly complex civil society was one of the essential requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy. It set the basis for the formation of a United Front which could then become the centre of the variety of popular struggles for democratic rights, and those which express the demands of workers, women, students, and young people, as well as community movements of many kinds concerned with rent, transport, housing, and other issues.

3.2. The destruction of Black opposition, 1960-1970

The year 1960 was a watershed year for the black resistance movements in South Africa. This marked the beginning of a decade in which black resistance was silenced and in which repression led to the establishment of underground insurgency organisations and missions-in-exile by the major political organisations. The major events of this decade were the Sharpeville massacre on the 21st of March, 1960, the march on Parliament in Cape Town on the 30th of March, 1960, the banning of the ANC and PAC on the 8th of April, 1960, the anti-Republic Day strike between the 29th and 31st of May, 1961, and the first acts of sabotage carried out by the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) on the 16th of December, 1961.¹

¹ Refer to Davenport, T. (1987); South Africa: A modern history, Third Edition, (Johannesburg, Macmillan South Africa (Publishers) (Pty) Ltd), p.402 and Bloch, G. (1983); "Sounds in the silence: Painting a picture for the 1960s", in Africa Perspective, (No.23), pp.6-7.

The Sharpeville crisis and the mass-stay-at-home called for by the ANC and the PAC in 1960 provoked a firm response by the state. At this time the state had a number of repressive laws which permitted the containment of any opposition.² These repressive powers, together with those which were enacted immediately after the Sharpeville massacre, provided the state with the means to curb popular struggles in the early 1960s.

The ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), was formed in November 1961 and carried out its first acts of sabotage on the 16th December. This marked a change in strategy in which carefully planned sabotage was used "to pressure the government and to show blacks that violence could be closely controlled and guided by political objectives and strategy".³ The PAC launched its own military organ, Poqo, which did not restrict its activities to sabotage but was prepared to attack whites, as well as Africans who collaborated with the white regime. An uprising in rural Pondoland (1957-1960), which began in opposition to the introduction of Bantu Authorities and betterment schemes, set the stage for further uprisings in Thembuland in 1962-3. Poqo was able to influence this uprising and to direct it towards attempts to murder the Paramount chief of the Emigrant Thembus, Chief Kaiser Matanzima.⁴ In addition, a small group of white radicals in the National Committee of Liberation (later renamed the African Resistance Movement) embarked on its own sabotage campaign, planting bombs in Cape

² These included the Suppression of Communism Act, the Criminal Procedure Act which increased the government's powers of control of activities deemed undesirable, the Public Safety Act which provided for the proclamation of a state of emergency, the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957 which extended government control over meetings in the urban areas, and various Proclamations which controlled the holding of meetings in the rural areas. Refer to Horrell, M. (1971); Legislation and Race Relations, (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations), pp.88-94.

³ Leonard, R. (1983); South Africa at War. (Craighall, AD Donker Publishers), pp.32-3.

⁴ Davenport, T. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.385.

Town and Johannesburg.⁵

The government responded to these acts with new security legislation. Among these were the Unlawful Organisations Act (1960) which made it possible for the government to declare any organisation unlawful and to convict any person who performed acts calculated to further the aims of an illegal organisation. The Sabotage Act of 1962 carried a maximum penalty of death, and included within its scope peaceful actions such as those aimed at "disruption". The General Laws Amendment Act (1963) provided for the detention of people without trial. With this vast array of repressive legislation some 20,000 people were detained between 1960 and 1963.⁶

In July 1963, the headquarters of MK was raided, its leaders captured and sentenced to life imprisonment. By mid-1963 more than 3,000 alleged Poqo members had been arrested or detained by the government, and 124 had been convicted of murder.⁷ By the end of 1964 the leadership of the internal organisations of the ANC and the PAC had been crushed by the operations of the repressive apparatuses of the state. The central focus for these organisations shifted to the expansion of external missions. The African Resistance Movement was infiltrated and destroyed.⁸

The state also focused attention on the trade union movement during the early 1960s. The state did not ban the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) when it banned other organisations of the Congress Alliance.

⁵ Worden, N. (1994); The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, segregation and apartheid, (Oxford and Cambridge, Blackwell), p.114.

⁶ Refer to Bloch, G. (1983); *op.cit.*, pp.6-8.

⁷ Leonard, R. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.33.

⁸ Worden, N. (1994); *op.cit.*, p.115.

However, the organisational base of the trade union federation was destroyed by its political stance and its relationship with the ANC. Thus:

By the mid-1960s, the crackdown on its unions and the flight of its officials had so crippled SACTU that it no longer functioned: for almost a decade the only African worker organisations were a handful of small, conservative unions within the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA).⁹

The ANC and the PAC were able to establish bases in Zambia and Tanzania respectively, but it "was difficult to mount infiltration campaigns, given its terrain, the strength of the defence forces and the ring of surrounding countries allied to Pretoria".¹⁰ Although the ANC conducted joint campaigns with the Zimbabwean African Peoples Union (ZAPU) in the late 1960s, and the PAC attempted to conduct campaigns from Swaziland, they both failed to penetrate South Africa.¹¹

In the latter half of the decade new legislation was introduced to tighten the security apparatus.¹² These included the fourteen-day detention by any commissioned officer above the rank of Lt. Colonel, restrictions on publications on defence, police and prison matters, the Terrorism Act of 1967 with new provisions for indefinite detention, and the establishment of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) in 1969.

As well as repressive legislation specifically intended to contain popular struggles, the state enacted legislation providing for control of the social life of the African population, thereby effectively curbing African political dissent. This process was conducted at two levels: firstly, the application of the

⁹ Friedman, S. (1987); Building towards tomorrow: African workers in trade unions, 1970-1987, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.32.

¹⁰ Worden, N. (1994); *op.cit.*, p.115.

¹¹ *Loc.cit.*

¹² Bloch, G. (1983); *op.cit.*, pp.7-8.

homeland policy; and secondly, the tightening of labour and influx controls. These two measures operated to reverse the flow of African urbanisation and to restructure the industrial workforce into one composed principally of migrant labour as well as to break down existing networks of social solidarity and hamper the creation of new ones.¹³

As the state demonstrated its control through the suppression of organised political and trade union opposition after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, foreign capital was attracted back to South Africa.¹⁴ Direct investors moved to protect their investments in the economy, and United States interests, in an attempt to oust British capital from its dominant position in the economy, provided an inflow of capital.¹⁵ Thus, despite the crisis of initial investor confidence, the 1960s was a period of unprecedented economic growth for the country. The gross national products grew by 5 percent per annum while unemployment was relatively low.¹⁶

In sum, the 1960s was a period in which the South African state flexed its muscle to suppress popular resistance, refined its mechanisms of repression and control and managed the economic revival leading to an unprecedented rate of economic growth.

3.3. The revival of popular struggles, 1970-1983

The 1970s and early 1980s saw an upsurge of black working-class militancy and student struggles. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) introduced

¹³ Lodge, T. (1983); Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, (London and New York, Longman), p.321.

¹⁴ Davenport, T. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.287-8.

¹⁵ Lotta, R. (1985); "The political economy of apartheid and the strategic stakes of imperialism", in Race and Class, (XXVII, 2), p.25.

¹⁶ Refer to Worden, N. (1994); *op.cit.*, p.116 and Bloch, G. (1983); *op.cit.*, pp.12-17.

a new era of internal extra-parliamentary opposition in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The two organisations responsible for the origin, popularization and direction of the BCM were the South African Students Organisation (SASO) and the Black Peoples Convention (BPC).

The years from 1963 to 1968 were a period of ferment for many African students. There were three African student political movements during this period: the African Students' Association, sympathetic to the ANC; the African Students' Union, sympathetic to the PAC; and the Progressive National Students' Organisation.¹⁷ However, the principal student movement at the time was the white-led, multi-racial National Union of South African Students (NUSAS).

In 1967 disenchantment with NUSAS emerged among African students because the predominantly white leadership was unable to reflect the particular concerns of African students.¹⁸ In July 1969, SASO was established for students on black campuses. SASO's guiding philosophy was the psychological liberation of blacks (which included coloureds and Indians) in an attempt to eradicate dependency on white leadership in the liberation struggle and shape of the post-apartheid society. Underlying this were notions of group assertion as a response to oppression and a reliance on indigenous cultural traditions. Psychological liberation would lead to solidarity among black people, thus paving the way for their mobilisation towards liberation.

The events that marked the revival of popular struggles were the large-scale African workers' strikes in 1973. Industrial action in the early 1970s was initiated by the strike of 10,000 workers on the Namibian diamond mines.

¹⁷ Motlhabi, M. (1984); The theory and practice of Black resistance to apartheid, (Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers), p.110.

¹⁸ Lodge, T. (1983); *op.cit.*, pp.322-3.

This strike wave spread to Durban where approximately 60,000 workers struck against low wages in 1973. The strike was taken up in the East London and Port Elizabeth industrial areas, spreading to the Witwatersrand, Cape Town, and elsewhere.

The Durban strikes provided the impetus for industrial action and growth in the independent trade union movement. The government responded to the strikes by raising the minimum pay for unskilled workers, gave African workers a limited strike right and introduced works and liaison committees.¹⁹ Four worker organisations were now recruiting Africans in the main industrial centres. By August 31, 1975, 59,440 Africans had been organised into 24 trade unions, the majority of the organised workers (29,120) were members of unions affiliated to TUCSA.²⁰

Regional events also played a significant role in promoting resistance within South Africa. In the first place, South Africa's security situation was transformed by the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire in Mozambique and Angola in 1974. In this respect, black liberation movements which were sympathetic to the ANC and PAC came to power in these countries. This led to a growing challenge, including guerrilla attacks, to apartheid at home.²¹

Secondly, the defeat of the South African invasion of Angola by the MPLA and Cuban forces in 1975, the success of the liberation movements in Mozambique and Angola, and the increase in guerrilla attacks within the

¹⁹ Friedman,S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.50.

²⁰ Hemson,D. (1978); "Trade unionism and the struggle for liberation in South Africa", in Capital and Class, (No.6, Autumn), p.25.

²¹ Leonard,R. (1983); *op.cit.*, pp.3-4.

country, created an optimistic mood among blacks within the country. This was evident in the pro-Frelimo rallies organised by the BCM in celebration of the installation of the Frelimo government in September 1974. As one BC leader put it: "We thought if [FRELIMO] can do it, so can we; it just needs another push. There was a high level of optimism".²²

Before 1976, however, the BCM was confined to small activist organisations with limited membership numbers. Its policy of non-confrontation limited opportunities for mass mobilisation and its membership was largely confined to the black intelligentsia and students. A turning point in black opposition occurred in 1976. The Soweto uprising ushered in an era of mass mobilisation indicated by a mushrooming of community organisations, a growth in the independent trade union movement, increasing co-operation between student organisations and other community organisations, including trade unions, and continuous agitation on specific demands related to labour reproduction costs (rent, transport, social welfare, health).

However, on 19 October, 1977, every major BCM organisation was banned, including SASO and the BPC. Although the authorities placed the blame for the Soweto revolt on the BCM, there is no evidence that the movement was directly responsible for it.²³ However, it is widely accepted that the philosophy of the BCM was a significant factor in the outbreak of resistance by African students in 1976. According to Price:

Black Consciousness provided an ideological orientation for this generation - keeping alive and amplifying ideas about oppression and the inherent human right to liberation, providing an intellectual and psychological basis for solidarity among the dispossessed,

²² Cited in Marx,A. (1992); Lessons of the Struggle: South African internal opposition, 1960-1990, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), p.64.

²³ Mothlabi,M. (1984); *op.cit.*, pp.146-7.

and focusing on the common enemy.²⁴

The Soweto revolt resulted in the destruction of the organisational base of the BCM. State response to the uprising, in the form of bannings, detentions, political trials, led to the elimination of every political, cultural or social Black Consciousness institution. As Charney points out, the BCM had no structural base which could continue to build and sustain the momentum of struggle once its leaders had been detained and its organisations banned.²⁵

Nonetheless, the Soweto revolt signalled the radicalizing of black resistance in South Africa. After 1976 there was a resurgence in the growth of trade unions; increasing links between trade union struggles and the communities, in particular, the students; and an unprecedented growth in the number of community organisations engaged in struggles against rent and transport increases, the education system, etc. The state's response to the revolt was twofold: increased state violence, detentions, and bannings; and the relaxation of certain aspects of apartheid in an attempt to channel black communities into directions less threatening to the status quo.²⁶

During the second half of 1976 a process began which led to the virtual collapse of the independent trade union movement. These included, among others, a slump in the economy in the wake of the Soweto revolt resulting in wide-spread retrenchments, and the banning of twenty two trade union

²⁴ Price,R.M. (1991); The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political transformation in South Africa, 1975-1990, (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press), p.53.

²⁵ Charney,C. (1986); "Thinking of Revolution: The new South African intelligentsia", in Monthly Review, (Vol.38, No.7, December), p.15.

²⁶ Adelman (1985); "Recent events in South Africa", in Capital and Class, (No.26, Summer), p.19.

activists in November 1976.²⁷

At the same time, it became evident that repression was inadequate to control black workers and to ensure high levels of productivity and the development of the potentially large internal market.²⁸ Certain employers began to demand the rationalisation of the industrial relations system because they realised that the absence of channels of negotiation and the relative lack of organisation of black workers promoted labour action. In 1977 the government set up a commission of inquiry to investigate labour laws (the Wiehahn Commission) and a commission to examine the use of manpower (the Riekert Commission).

The Wiehahn solution called for the recognition and registration of African trade unions as a means of controlling the pace of union development and drawing them into the established industrial relations structures. The Riekert Commission provided for the redivision of African workers between those with permanent resident rights and those without (i.e., contract workers).²⁹

The Wiehahn Commission's recommendations, subsequently adopted by the government in 1979, aimed at placing unions under state control by prohibiting political activities on the part of the unions. By separating the political sphere from the economic one, it was hoped that the politicization of the emergent unions would be prevented. However, by providing for the recognition of African trade unions, the Wiehahn reforms presented an

²⁷ Maree, J. (1987); "Overview: Emergence of the Independent Trade Union Movement", in Maree, J. (ed.); The Independent Trade Unions, 1974-1984: Ten years of the South African Labour Bulletin, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.5.

²⁸ *Loc.cit.*

²⁹ Lewis, J. and Randall, E. (1985); "Trade union survey: The state of the unions", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.2, October/December), p.63.

opportunity for these unions to win space in their attempt to move beyond the struggle for recognition to direct negotiations at shop floor level.³⁰ As the emergent unions grew in membership, some began to realise the advantage of negotiating at an industry-wide level and opted for participation in the system.

In 1977 the independent trade union movement was organised into 25 unions with about 70,000 members. African membership in the independent trade union movement rose to 200,000 in 1982 and 300,000 in 1983.³¹ This period was also one of heightened trade union struggle, involving disputes over union recognition at plant level, unfair dismissals, wages and working conditions.

At the same time, the independent trade union movement was confronted with the question of political action.³² On the one hand, industrial strikes were seen as an important component of resistance and the popular struggles in the schools, universities and townships began to impinge directly on the workplace. On the other hand, students and the black communities actively supported trade union struggles, providing material and other assistance as well as supporting strike-related consumer boycotts.

Two important strikes signified the support of the community for industrial action. The first of these was the strike by coloured and African workers at a mill outside Cape Town owned by the Fattis and Monis company in 1979. The cause of the strike was the sacking of workers who called for the recognition of the Food and Canning Workers' Union. The striking workers

³⁰ *Loc.cit.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.60 and Maree,J. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.7.

³² Refer to Chapter 7, pp.261and 265-6 below.

began a campaign, backed by a call for a boycott of the company's products, for reinstatement and the recognition of the union.³³ Cape Town's African traders responded to the boycott by refusing to stock the company's products.

A second significant strike was the Cape Town meat-workers strike in 1980. Workers at the Table Bay Cold Storage firm walked off the plant following a call by workers in the meat industry (and other industries) for representation through unregistered, democratically elected worker committees.³⁴ A call for a boycott of red meat was made at a meeting of meat workers on the 21st May and this call was endorsed by a large number of community organisations, ratepayers associations, organisations of school and university students, and by butchers in the African townships.³⁵

The strike occurred during a period of intense popular struggle, in particular the 1980 school boycotts and a community-wide bus boycott. At the outbreak of the strike the education boycott was two months old and the strike came as an opportunity for students to extend their struggle beyond the schools and universities and to unify their struggle with the workers' struggle against economic exploitation and political domination.³⁶

During the late 1970s and early 1980s strikes took on a political significance. Although wages and calls for democratic worker organisation formed the basis of these strikes, they can be seen as part of a wider popular challenge to

³³ Friedman, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.187.

³⁴ Western Province General Workers' Union (1980); "The Meat Workers dispute", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.6, No.1), p.77.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.77-82.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.62.

the dominant classes - a challenge which took place in the schools and townships as well.³⁷

In April 1978 the Azanian Peoples' Organisation (AZAPO) was founded as the new major organisational manifestation of the BCM. Within four weeks of its foundation, with most of its national and local leaders in detention, AZAPO was effectively removed from the political arena.³⁸ In September 1979, a new executive was elected and the organisation re-emerged as the main internal national black political organisation. Unlike its predecessors, AZAPO incorporated a sophisticated class analysis into its policies and directed its activities towards the political involvement of black workers under the leadership of the organisation.³⁹

From the outset, AZAPO was plagued by internal ideological differences. Two issues dominated the ideological debate within the organisation.⁴⁰ Firstly, the role of white democrats in the national liberation struggle and, secondly, the relationship between class and national struggles. AZAPO maintained that whites had no role in the liberation struggle because they are "part of the problem". The organisation also maintained that all blacks are workers and are exploited by whites who are all capitalists. Opposition to these viewpoints led to the expulsion of the organisation's first president, Curtis Nkondo, by the executive in 1979.

During the period under study AZAPO did not develop any formal connections

³⁷ South African Labour Bulletin Comment (1980); "Strikes in 1980: An introduction", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.6, No.5), p.2. Refer to pp.99-111 below.

³⁸ Lodge, T. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.344.

³⁹ *Loc.cit.*

⁴⁰ Davies, R. et.al. (1988); The struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, (London and New Jersey, Zed Books Ltd.), p.309.

with significant labour organisations, nor did it develop a strong working-class following.⁴¹ According to Lodge, AZAPO officials' contempt of negotiated reforms involving bread-and-butter issues was the main reason for its inability to gain support from, or cooperation with, trade unions.⁴² AZAPO's popular following was insignificant during the period and was mostly drawn from some sectors of the black intelligentsia. In addition, it had very limited support in campaigns with only one sustained campaign against bus fare increases in the Pietersburg area in September 1981.⁴³

Despite this, the period 1979-1983 witnessed widespread outbreaks of strikes, school boycotts, and protests against the terms of labour reproduction. Numerous community-based organisations emerged in response to rent, transport, and consumer boycotts. The impetus for mobilisation and organisation also emerged in the Free-Mandela Campaign, the Anti-South African Indian Council Campaign, and the anti-Republic Day Campaign.

However, de La Harpe and Manson point out that:

These (community organisations) were usually oriented to single issues, often to a single area; their success was largely based upon the creation of local democratic structures, which involved organisation on a door to door level. ... local and single-issue organisations are unable to effectively fight national political campaigns on their own.⁴⁴

Most of these were of limited duration, unable to maintain "ongoing organisation and structures". What was absent was a national organisation to provide coordination to the various struggles of the popular classes, and to mobilize and sustain resistance to apartheid.

⁴¹ Lodge, T. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.345.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.345-6.

⁴³ *Loc.cit.*

⁴⁴ De la Harpe, J. and Manson, A. (1983); "The UDF and the development of resistance in South Africa", in *Africa Perspective*, (No.23), p.62.

A country-wide school boycott in 1980 played a major role in transforming popular strategies and tactics.⁴⁵ Student demands made during the boycott, which began in coloured schools in the Western Cape in April 1980, were directed at the reconstitution of society as a whole and included calls for changes in curricula; the ending of segregated educational systems; greater student control over their education; the release of all political prisoners; and for liberation from white minority rule. The boycott mobilised many students who joined youth groups of their local civic associations. The mobilisation and conscientisation of parents during the boycott also expanded the membership of community organisations.

The boycott also generated a greater political awareness and critical approach to the education system and society among students. During the course of the boycott students took over their schools instead of leaving them. In addition, an embryonic alternative education programme emerged when students began to hold "awareness programmes" during the course of the school day. Another important development was the establishment of "action-in-unity" as parents and teachers became involved in the boycott, while students became involved in community issues - such as the support for striking workers. Students also began to articulate a socialist consciousness, which included a belief in the vanguard role of the working class. These developments played a central role in the events of the eighties.

In sum, the 1970s witnessed the revival of popular resistance to apartheid following a decade of relative quiescence. The BCM revived the revolutionary idea by "keeping alive and amplifying ideas about oppression and the inherent human right to liberation".⁴⁶ The re-emergence of the independent

⁴⁵ Molteno, F. (1987); 1980 Students struggle for their schools, (Cape Town, Centre for African Studies Communication No.13, University of Cape Town), pp.154-167. Refer to pp.106-7 below.

⁴⁶ Price, R.M. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.53.

trade union movement after the 1973 Durban strike provided the impetus for the revival of extra-parliamentary organisation and resistance. By 1977/8, however, this movement was almost decimated by state reaction to the events in Soweto and elsewhere. In addition, the BCM and its progeny, AZAPO, failed to provide the organisational form to sustain popular resistance and mobilisation.

Increasing co-operation between trade unions, student organisations and community-based organisations in the period thereafter resulted in extensive popular action against the state and capital. During the early 1980s, many organisations sprang up around the country waging struggles at local levels against economic exploitation and political domination.

3.4. The Emergence of Community Organisations

The emergence and proliferation of community organisations in South Africa followed a resurgence in militant black opposition which began in the late 1970s and continued throughout the 1980s. Community organisations sprang up as a result of both local and national popular struggles (against apartheid institutions and the terms of labour reproduction) and the conscious efforts of activists.

The process was accompanied by the revival of the ANC and the popularisation of its Freedom Charter. Many student groups such as COSAS and AZASO transferred their allegiance from the BCM to the ANC.⁴⁷ The formation of the UDF brought many of these organisations under a national umbrella movement and provided a national focus to local struggles.

Five interacting variables can be identified as the main factors responsible

⁴⁷ Friedman, S. (1986); "Black politics at the crossroads", South African Institute of Race Relations Topical Briefing, 2/01/86, p.1.

for the emergence and proliferation of community organisations during the late 1970s and 1980s: the changing material conditions within the country as a whole and their effects on the black population: state policy and popular resistance during the period; the numerous popular struggles against the terms of labour reproduction and apartheid policies; the political realignment of black activists away from the BCM towards the ANC and its Freedom Charter; and the formation of new organisations after the establishment of the UDF in 1983.

3.4.1. Changing Material Conditions

Changes in national economic conditions and their impact on the black population provoked the emergence and growth of community organisations. Economic changes had two important effects: they brought about alterations in state policy resulting in changes in popular struggles. Popular struggles emerged in response to the opportunities or constraints alterations in state policies placed on the black population.

An economic upswing which began in the late 1970s followed a severe recession which began just before the 1976 uprising.⁴⁸ This economic recovery was notable for a number of reasons. In the first place, the increased revenue accruing to the state through taxes permitted it to make concessions which improved the living conditions of Africans. This gave them the confidence to make further demands on the state. Such concessions included introducing ninety-nine year leaseholds for urban Africans. In addition, the state increased its expenditure on African education, thus giving some Africans a chance to improve their material conditions.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.107.

⁴⁹ The aim was to create a large black middle class. Refer also to Chapter 6, pp.223-4 below.

Concessions were linked to the government's Total Strategy, in particular, modifications of certain aspects of urban policy. The key elements of the changes in urban policy were: the recognition of the permanence of urban Africans with freedom of movement and association and the right to property and representation at the local level. In addition, the legal right to form trade unions was extended to African workers.

The official recognition accorded to African trade unions made recruitment and organisation easier. This resulted in an explosion in black union membership.

The reason for this is that once the state conceded through registration the principle of statutory legal recognition of black unions it summarily withdrew from the hands of employers a powerful weapon with which they had been able to beat their black employees - the threat of sanctions against them for belonging to unions which employers claimed were illegal".⁵⁰

In addition, because of the recognition of African trade unions and the growth in union numbers, unions were able to secure concessions from both employers and the state, including the right to strike and better material benefits.⁵¹

This brief period of economic prosperity also permitted unions to use collective action to increase the wages of their members. Once the unions had demonstrated this ability they were able to attract more workers. Trade union membership consequently increased dramatically during this period.

Industrial concentration was another feature of the changing economic conditions in the country which encouraged the growth of the trade union movement.⁵² Since the 1960s there has been a rapid growth in the

⁵⁰ Innes,D. (1982); "Trade unions and the challenge to the state", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.8, No.2, November), p.61.

⁵¹ Bonner,P. (1983); "Independent trade unions since Wiehahn", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.8, No.4, February), p.16.

⁵² Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.192.

manufacturing sector accompanied by increasing concentration of manufacturing concerns in a small number of conglomerates. Sixty percent of all non-state assets in the country were controlled by eight corporate groups in 1981.⁵³ Industrial concentration promoted the need for a more settled, trained black labour force. This, in turn, meant a change in the industrial relations system and a transformation of laws relating to conditions under which Africans could remain in the urban areas of South Africa. This was accompanied by a "rapid rise in urbanisation and in the concentration of labour, enhancing opportunities for workers to discuss common concerns and to organise".⁵⁴

As we noted above, unfavourable economic conditions also encouraged the growth of community organisations.⁵⁵ The resulting drop in the living standards of the black population gave rise to numerous rent and transport struggles in many parts of the country.

3.4.2. State Policy and Popular Resistance

The development of community organisations was also facilitated by the South African state's policies in the late 1970s and early 1980s: a mixture of reform and repression. These provided space for the emergence of community organisations and gave rise to popular struggles which promoted mass organisation.

The government's policy for urban Africans and reform of local government also provoked mass mobilisation and organisation. The introduction of the community councils in 1977 prompted the first spate of widespread township resistance after the 1976 uprising. The tactical forms of resistance to the

⁵³ *Loc.cit.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.193.

⁵⁵ Refer to Chapter 2, pp.67-8 above.

community councils took the form of an electoral boycott, calls on councillors to resign and physical attacks on some councillors or their property.

The principal cause of popular resentment was the state's attempt to make these councils self-financing. Without a tax-base in the form of local industries, the major source of revenue for the community councils were rent and service charges. Increases in these charges prompted widespread resistance and was expressed in the formation of a number of community organisations and the growth in membership of existing organisations.

In 1983, in an attempt to legitimize the system of local government, the state replaced the community councils with the BLAs which were provided with considerably more powers than their precursors. The BLAs were rejected by the urban African population for the same reasons that they rejected the councils: they were illegitimate and, because of their fiscal inviability, were likely to impose economic hardships on the urban African population. In addition, the state presented them as alternatives to representation of Africans in the central political system which was to be extended to the coloured and Indian populations. Once again, the boycott strategy was employed, with low polls registered for the elections of BLAs in most urban townships.

The administration of Africans in the "white areas" of South Africa cannot be understood in isolation from another significant area of state reform during the early 1980s: constitutional reform. In 1983 the South African parliament passed a Constitution Act which introduced three separate parliaments for the white, coloured and Indian populations. African political rights were linked with the homelands. The UDF was formed in August 1983 to bring together all forces opposed to the new constitution, as well as the so-called "Koornhof Bills" (which included the Black Local Authorities Bill). A national anti-elections campaign resulted in widespread rejection of the new constitution with low

polls recorded in the majority of areas where elections were held.

The state's reform policies during the period were accompanied by the rigorous application of its repressive policies. State repression took two forms: state violence, vigilante actions, detention without trial, etc.; and the policies of influx control, forced removals and homeland consolidation.

Repression also has a counter-productive aspect for the state. According to Gottschalk, state violence and vigilante attacks anger as much as they intimidated; closures of schools, colleges and universities disperse an increasingly revolutionary intelligentsia throughout rural South Africa; assaults on black youth increased recruitment and support for MK; forced conscription alienated some white youth from the state; and the security forces were weakened by widespread deployment while their deployment became increasingly predictable to the opposition.⁵⁶

State repression during the various emergencies resulted in the emergence of a number of civics and the expansion of the support base of many existing ones. During the country-wide revolt which emerged in the wake of the Vaal Triangle uprising in 1984, communities in many parts of the country responded to state repression by forming youth congresses and mass-based organisations. In towns and villages previously insulated from political activity, youth groups rapidly sprang up to defend their communities against state repression.⁵⁷

The state's separate development policy, in terms of which all Africans were linked politically and socially with one of the homelands, also promoted mass

⁵⁶ Gottschalk, K. (1987); "State strategy and the limits of counter-revolution", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); *op.cit.*, pp.495-507.

⁵⁷ Refer to Chapters 6 and 8 and Appendix B below.

organisation. This policy was linked to influx control, which controlled the conditions under which Africans were permitted to enter and remain in the urban areas of South Africa, and forced removals.

Between 1960 and 1983 an estimated 3,548,900 people were forcibly moved by the state through these measures.⁵⁸ Resistance to forced removals/relocation took a variety of forms. Communities employed legal means to fight against removals. Communities also sought the help of support groups to bring publicity to their plight. In some cases communities reacted violently to the state's efforts to have them removed.⁵⁹

Resistance to forced removals generated earnest efforts to organise in some of the communities involved and in some cases communities were able to get a reprieve because of their degree of organisation. For example, the residents of Huhudi, near Vryburg, resisted the threat of removal to Pudumong in Bophuthatswana through the Huhudi Civic Association, formed in 1983.⁶⁰ Residents of the illegal squatter settlement of Crossroads outside Cape Town also organised themselves to oppose relocation to Khayelitsha township.

Resistance and popular mobilisation were also provoked by the homeland policy. All the homelands had certain common features which provoked widespread resistance. These included excessive repression, corruption, and poverty. These characteristics of the homelands, as well as the place they

⁵⁸ Platzky, L. and Walker, C. (1985); The surplus people - forced removals in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), Table 1, p.10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.281-2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.216. Refer also to Chapter 8, pp.382ff. below for the struggle of the residents of Durban's African townships against incorporation into KwaZulu, and pp.395ff. below for the struggle of Moutse residents against incorporation into KwaNdebele.

occupied in the policy of separate development, led to the widespread rejection of the homeland system by the African population in general and the citizens of the homelands in particular.

The independent homelands presented a number of obstacles to mass mobilisation and politicisation. Among these obstacles were the repressive activities of the homeland authorities (often surpassing even those of the South African security forces).⁶¹ In a number of homelands, trade unions and other organisations were banned.⁶² Rural resistance was directed largely against apartheid in general and features of the homeland system in particular. Examples of these are the anti-independence campaigns in Venda and KwaNdebele and struggles against homeland repression and corruption. The focus of rural resistance were the tribal authorities and the homeland authorities. Resistance was characterised by attacks on chief's kraals and businesses, tribal authority offices, the chiefs and indunas, and security personnel living in the villages. Many chiefs were forced to flee their villages, some were killed, while others were forced to resign from the tribal authorities.⁶³

Some chiefs responded to the violence directed against them by recruiting vigilante squads. In KwaNdebele, for example, resistance to incorporation into the homeland and homeland independence led to a reign of terror by the

⁶¹ Naidoo, K. (1989); "Internal resistance in South Africa: The political movements", in Johnson, S. (ed.); South Africa: No turning back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press), pp.189-190. Refer also to Chapter 5, pp.187-8 below.

⁶² "Homeland Tangles", Financial Mail, (28.09.84), p.56.

⁶³ "Chiefs power is challenged in the villages", in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec, 1986), p.16. Refer to Chapter 5, pp.188-9 and Chapter 8, pp.395-400 below.

Mbokodo, a vigilante group closely connected to the homeland authorities.⁶⁴ In Lebowa, the so-called Thari ya Sechaba was formed to "flush out opposition and make Lebowa a safe place for the smooth running of the bantustan divide and rule system".⁶⁵ The activities of such groups, together with the harassment of activists by the security forces, politicised rural villagers and contributed to rural resistance, mobilisation and organisation.

In some cases, chiefs and tribal authorities joined the progressive forces in their popular struggles. In KwaNdebele and Moutse, progressive chiefs came together to form the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) in 1987.⁶⁶ Contralesa aimed to unite all traditional leaders in the country, to build and deepen democratic relationships with the youth, workers and all sections of the population and to take up demands jointly with their communities. The new organisation was seen as a revival of the tradition of resistance held by chiefs in the past and a rejection of apartheid-created structures by progressive chiefs.

3.4.3. Popular Struggles

Numerous popular struggles over a wide range of issues played a leading role in mass politicisation and mobilisation during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These issues include economic exploitation, the apartheid education system, and changes in the terms of labour reproduction. These struggles were also influenced by changing economic conditions which created opportunities or hardships for the African population in particular.

⁶⁴ See Transvaal Rural Action Committee (1988); "KwaNdebele: The struggle against independence", in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds.); Popular struggles in South Africa, (New Jersey, Africa World Press).

⁶⁵ "Vigilantes back bantustan rule", in SASPU National, (Last Quarter, 1987), p.6.

⁶⁶ "Chiefs go back to their people", in SASPU National, p.14.

Popular struggles took both national and local forms: resistance to state reform initiatives and the education system often involved large parts of the country; resistance to hikes in rent and service charges, bus fares, and food prices, and resistance to forced removals and incorporation into the homelands were generally local, with some notable exceptions. They also took a number of forms - rent, transport, consumer, school, and electoral boycotts and the withdrawal of labour were the most common strategies employed.

During the period under review, township communities waged numerous local struggles over the terms of labour reproduction. Such struggles were not novel to South Africa. However, what was new was the extent to which these struggles gave rise to community organisations within the resisting communities as well as increasing cooperation among student/youth, civic and trade union organisations. Most of these struggles were fought in the African townships, which

are the setting for class conflict. Established as part of a network of controls that are meant to regulate the movement, location, housing, employment/unemployment, health, welfare, recreation, education, political participation, citizenship, and relocation of the African working class and their families, the structure and functioning of the townships has been disrupted by the playing out of contradictions and class struggles.⁶⁷

3.4.3.1. Rent Struggles: A significant aspect of popular resistance during the early 1980s were the townships struggles against increases in rent and service charges. The increase in rent charges, coupled with general opposition to the BLAs and an economic recession prompted widespread rent boycotts in the Vaal Triangle townships in September 1984.

The rent boycott soon spread to the Orange Free State, with Tumahole, near Parys, and townships in Vredefort, Kroonstad, Bothaville and Viljoenskroon following suit at the beginning of 1985. By June, residents of the Eastern

⁶⁷ Joffe, A. (1986); "Aspects of the Struggle: Youth", in Monthly Review, (Vol.37, No.11, April), p.89.

Transvaal townships of Ethandukukhanya (Piet Retief), Silobela (Carolina), KwaThandeka (Amsterdam), KwaZanele (Breyten), Wesselton (Ermelo), and Umgwenya (Waterval Boven) were refusing to pay rent.⁶⁸

While most of these boycotts were in response to increases in rent and service charges, by mid-1986 they took on a strategic significance. Rent boycotts were now used as a general weapon of protest and boycotting communities began to link national political demands with their local demands.⁶⁹ According to Marx:

Given the immediate benefit of saving on rent, boycotts and related protests spread quickly, requiring little enforcement. Occasional police attacks reinforced popular support for the boycotts. By acting collectively, the boycotters were reassured that evictions or attempts to place new residents in their homes would be jointly confronted and, if necessary, resisted. By 1986, up to fifty-four townships with over a half-million households were withholding their rent, with 95 percent of those polled in Soweto supporting the boycott even if not all participated in it.⁷⁰

Rent boycotts increased support for local organisations and in some cases gave rise to new organisations.⁷¹ The Durban rent boycott of 1983 led to the formation of the Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC), while the Tumahole Civic Association was formed in October 1984 in response to the rent issue. The Sharpeville, Bophelong, and Boipatong Civic Associations were also formed to negotiate with officials over rent boycotts.⁷² In Soweto a rent boycott, coordinated by the Soweto Civic Association, led to a sharp increase in membership of the civic. A threat to evict rent defaulters from Soweto

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.54.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.58.

⁷⁰ Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁷¹ Refer to Chapter 8 below for an analysis of the impact of rent struggles on popular mobilisation and organisation.

⁷² Chaskalson,M., Jochelson,K. and Seekings,J. (1987); "Rent boycotts and the urban political economy", in Moss,G. and Obery,I. (eds); South African Review 4, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.69.

prompted the formation of defence committees, increasing participation in grassroots structures.⁷³

3.4.3.2. Transport Struggles: Bus boycotts have been a feature of popular resistance in South Africa since the early 1940s when the residents of Alexandra township near Johannesburg engaged in a bus boycott against sharp increases in bus fares.⁷⁴ Most transport struggles are the result of a fundamental contradiction in transport policy.⁷⁵ South Africa's urban African townships are generally located large distances from the places of employment. The continued operation of the cheap labour system depends on the maintenance of a cheap transport system. This cheap transport system relies on substantial state subsidies - a major drain on the state's resources. Any increases in bus-fares places demands on the limited resources of poorly-paid township residents.

On a number of occasions entire townships boycotted the public transport system in response to hikes in bus-fares. They often used private transport or walked the long distances to get to their places of employment. In some instances resistance to higher transport costs brought entire communities together and gave rise to community organisations. For example, the bus boycott which broke out in Durban in December 1982 resulted in the formation of a Local Commuter Committee (LCC) in each area affected by

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.70. Refer to Chapter 8, pp.337-9 below.

⁷⁴ See Stadler,A.W. (1983); "A long way to walk: Bus boycotts in Alexandra, 1940-1945", in Bonner,P. (ed.); Working Papers in Southern African Studies, Vol.2, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press).

⁷⁵ McCarthy,J. and Swilling,M. (1984); "Transport and Political Resistance", in South African Research Service (eds.); South African Review II, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), pp.26-44.

the boycott. These LCC's later formed the core of JORAC.⁷⁶ During the East London bus-boycott in 1983, which linked up shop-floor and community issues, the idea of establishing a civic organisation in Duncan Village was first mooted.⁷⁷ The bus boycott set the stage for building a civic association. An interim committee was established and the idea propagated throughout the township through discussions among residents.⁷⁸

The 1983 bus boycott also led to the development of organisations in Mdantsane, the dormitory township located near East London and under the rule of the "independent" Ciskei government.⁷⁹ The idea of forming civic associations in Mdantsane emerged during this boycott and alliances were established between organised workers and the community prior to the formation of the UDF in the Border region in September.

3.4.3.3. Consumer boycotts: Activists also used consumer boycotts as a means of resistance and promoting mass politicisation and organisation. Consumer boycotts were generally directed against price increases but at times involved other local and national demands. According to Marx:

Activists found consumer boycotts an effective way to politicise and mobilise communities around popular resentment for those white retailers whose prices were then rising even more than usual in proportion to black incomes. Such activity had the advantage of being legal and difficult for the state to restrict, as purchases from particular vendors could not be enforced by the police. The boycott was also useful for isolating the regime from some of its traditional supporters, with vulnerable white merchants being pressed to reduce prices and to present grievances to the state in order to win back their lost black clientele....

⁷⁶ McCarthy, J. and Swilling, M. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.36 and Grest, J. and Hughes, H. (1984); "State strategy and Popular Response at the Local Level", in South African Research Service (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.55. Refer to Chapter 8, pp.376-7 below.

⁷⁷ McCarthy, J. and Swilling, M. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.65. Refer to pp.367-8 below.

⁷⁸ "Building from the bottom up", in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec 1986), p.12.

⁷⁹ Refer to Swilling, M. (1984); "'The buses smell of blood': The East London Boycott", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.9, No.5, March).

The consumer boycotts, like the rent boycotts and the early stayaways, served to unify and broaden popular mobilisation around local economic needs, and only later around more explicitly political demands. The initial nexus of these activities was the grass roots, reflecting the pragmatic concerns of a populace not principally concerned with ideology.⁸⁰

The first of these consumer boycotts occurred in 1985 in Port Alfred, where local organisations initiated a boycott against white retailers following a price increase. This boycott ended when local businessmen agreed to end segregation in town council meetings and in stores and lobby for the withdrawal of police from the townships and the construction of a new school.⁸¹ The success of this boycott led to the spread of its use to other towns in the region and by August at least 23 centres were affected, including the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage industrial complex. By the end of the year all the major centres - Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban - and scores of small towns throughout the country had been affected by consumer boycotts.⁸²

Initially, consumer boycotts involved entire townships withholding their purchasing power from the white, and sometimes coloured and Indian retailers in the area in response to price increases and local socio-economic issues.⁸³ However, activists soon realised the potential uses of the consumer boycott and soon began to link local demands with national political demands. Since the success of the boycott depended on the widest possible participation by the community, organising committees representing all sectors of the community sprang up in a number of areas. The boycotts also led

⁸⁰ Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, pp.153-4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.153.

⁸² Helliker,K. et.al. (1987); "'Asithengi!': Recent consumer boycotts", in Moss,G. and Obery,I. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.34. See also Obery,I. and Jochelson,K. (1985); "Two sides of the same bloody coin", in Work in Progress, (39, October).

⁸³ *Loc.cit.*

to mass politicisation and mobilisation, particularly in the Eastern Cape townships, where support for the boycotts came from almost the entire population of the participating townships.⁸⁴ The linkage of political demands to socio-economic demands also raised the political consciousness of township residents.

Consumer boycotts also involved coercion and intimidation by the youth responsible for organising and enforcing boycotts. White, however, argues that the media consistently exaggerated the level of coercion involved in boycotts.⁸⁵ By contrast, Seekings points out that in certain instances, such as Crossroads in 1986, the enforcement of boycotts by the youth provoked violent conflict.⁸⁶ In such instances, coercion and intimidation promoted opposition to community organisations involved in the organisation of the boycott.

3.4.3.4. Education struggles: Since 1976, resistance to the apartheid education system has played a central role in mass mobilisation and politicisation in the black townships.⁸⁷ Education struggles were directed against both the state's education policy and the resulting conditions in black schools. This resistance has been directed largely against Bantu Education, which is the clearest manifestation of the shortcomings of the apartheid education policy. Resistance to the Bantu Education system involved widespread and lengthy boycotts of schools by students, the destruction of classrooms and school property and, ultimately, the elaboration of an

⁸⁴ Refer to Chapter 8, pp.357-9, 390 and 364-5 below.

⁸⁵ White,R. (1986); "A tide has risen; A breach has occurred: Towards an assessment of the strategic value of consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.5, May).

⁸⁶ Seekings,J. (1986); "Workers and the politics of consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, June), pp.25-6.

⁸⁷ Refer also to Chapter 6 below.

alternative education system.

It is widely accepted among scholars that Bantu Education was introduced by the state in 1953 to maintain the political domination and economic exploitation of the African people. According to Molteno, the goal of Bantu Education was to "bring greater numbers of black youth into the ambit of direct control" in an "attempt to subvert the political and economic aspirations of the oppressed".⁸⁸ By ensuring central control of the educational system and thereby providing the required ideological control, Bantu Education was utilised to maintain the political subjugation of the African population. Resistance to this ideological domination and state control of the educational system have been features of popular struggle since the inception of the system in 1953.

The racial division of the education system in South Africa also gave rise to inadequate and unequal government spending on education. The results of inadequate state spending on African education are the terrible conditions which prevail in African schools.

Grossly overcrowded classrooms are taught by ill-qualified teachers in authoritarian schools; pupils who survive monumentally high drop-out and failure rates are forced into deadening reliance on rote learning of heavily ideological syllabi.

And not surprisingly, the short-term or immediate demands of student movements - from SASO and SASM through to COSAS - have addressed themselves directly to the manifest shortcomings of the education system. Highly specific demands about textbooks, school equipment, corporal punishment and sexual harassment have been joined by calls for elected Student Representative Councils, for the scrapping of age restrictions that disqualify older (and frequently politically active) students, and for the non-victimisation of student leaders.⁸⁹

School boycotts also erupted in support of local community struggles -

⁸⁸ Molteno, F. (1980); "The schooling of Black South Africans: An historical overview", Department of Sociology Seminar paper, University of Cape Town, March, p.57.

⁸⁹ Bundy, C. (1987); "Street sociology and pavement politics: Aspects of youth and student resistance in Cape Town", in Journal of Modern African Studies, (Vol.13, No.3, April), p.311.

against state repression, in support of striking workers and rent, transport and consumer boycotts - and nationally in opposition to the education system and apartheid.

During the post-Soweto period, the first significant boycott by school students occurred in Cape Town in 1980. The boycott began in Cape Town's coloured schools in protest against inferior education and school facilities. The boycotts spread to coloured and Indian schools elsewhere in the country, especially on the Rand, and subsequently to Department of Education and Training (DET) schools which controlled African school education.⁹⁰

In Cape Town, the boycotting students formed a "Committee of 81", which represented all participating schools. Community organisations came out in support of the boycott and the first Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) were formed during this protest action. These PTSAs played a central role in creating a greater degree of student-community solidarity than was experienced elsewhere in the country.⁹¹

The school boycott in the Western Cape was notable for the high level of politicisation: students participated in political struggles outside the classroom, developing their own organisations and links to the community groups; they attacked the class basis of the education system and its role in reproducing cheap labour; and they challenged the role of the school by organising alternative curricula and "awareness programmes", and challenging teachers'

⁹⁰ Hyslop, J. (1988); "School student movements and state education policy: 1972-87", in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.188; Refer to Molteno, F. (1987); *op.cit.* for a more detailed analysis of the boycott.

⁹¹ Hyslop, J. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.199.

authority.⁹²

Another wave of student boycotts began during the middle of 1983 and continued to the end of 1986. An important feature of this wave of protest was the linkage of demands around educational issues with national political issues. This can be attributed to the central role played by COSAS in the boycott and the general nature of political protest in the country during the period. With the economy in the midst of a deep recession, and widespread resistance to the state's introduction of the BLAs and the new constitution, the wave of student boycotts which began in 1983 intensified the political crisis in South Africa.

The boycott, which began in Atteridgeville in the Transvaal and Cradock in the Eastern Cape, was taken up by COSAS, which, along with the matric issue, made other demands around educational issues.⁹³ As the boycott spread over the country, student demands shifted from demands for radical reforms of the existing education system, to a contestation with the state over control of the school - for "people's power" in education.⁹⁴

The 1983 school boycotts marked three main developments in the student movement which dramatically sharpened the form and intensity of national struggle.⁹⁵ Students increasingly focused on the question of power and control over the educational process; the emergence of youth congresses

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.188 and Klug,H. and Seidman,G. (1985); "South Africa: Amandla Ngawethu!", in Socialist Review, (No.84), p.18.

⁹³ Hyslop,J. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.191.

⁹⁴ Wolpe,H. (1988); "Educational Resistance", in Lonsdale,J. (ed.); South Africa in Question, (Cambridge, University of Cambridge African Studies Centre), p.206.

⁹⁵ Chisholm,L. (1986); "From revolt to a search for alternatives", in Work in Progress, (No.42, May), p.16.

infused a deeper militancy into student and community politics; and a growing alliance was established between students, youth and the democratic and trade union movements.

The elections for the coloured and Indian Houses of Parliament in August 1984 sparked the boycott of up to 800,000 students in the coloured and Indian schools, with limited support from the DET schools. Township protests at the beginning of September led to the extension of the school boycott to other townships in the Vaal Triangle. Anger was directed against police action which resulted in a number of deaths, and the deployment of the SADF in this area transformed school boycotts into a leading component of a national revolt.⁹⁶

The school crisis and the occupation of Sebokeng, Sharpeville and Boipatong by the SADF in October led to a COSAS call for a mass stayaway. In the process, COSAS organised a parent-student meeting on the 10 October to explain its demands. In KwaThema a parent-student committee, which included several trade unionists, was formed. In effect, with the backing of the trade unions, most of the township's workers supported the KwaThema stayaway on the 22 October.⁹⁷

The success of this stayaway led to a suggestion by COSAS that a regional stayaway be organised to back a wide range of student and community demands. These included student demands for SRCs and an end to age limits, and community demands for an end to rent and bus-fare increases and calls for the withdrawal of the army from the townships. An estimated thirty-seven organisations - including trade unions, local UDF affiliates, church

⁹⁶ Hyslop, J. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.193-4.

⁹⁷ Friedman, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.447.

bodies, etc. - formed the Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee. The two-day stayaway, which took place on the 5-6 November, involved an estimated 400,000 students and some two million workers.⁹⁸

During 1985 the school boycott of DET schools spread countrywide: at one point some 650,000 students and hundreds of schools were involved. The DET responded to the school crisis by closing schools, following students' rejection of the Department's offer to establish a form of student representation including teachers, principals and official school committee members.⁹⁹ The government proclaimed a partial state of emergency in July 1985 in response to the school boycott and other popular struggles in many parts of the country and banned COSAS in August 1985.

In the latter half of 1985 the boycott spread to coloured schools in the Western Cape. Within a week of the declaration of the state of emergency coloured schools began boycotting in protest against it. They were soon joined by DET schools in the area, leading to three months of street fighting between students and police, mass rallies and consumer boycotts.¹⁰⁰

The school boycotts of 1985 were significant for a number of reasons. In the first place, they lent support to other popular struggles in various parts of the country. Students often played a leading role in consumer boycotts and stayaways, and, together with the young unemployed, were generally responsible for organising and enforcing boycotts and stayaways. In the second place, they precipitated the politicisation of the youth and promoted mass mobilisation around educational and other local and political issues in

⁹⁸ Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of agony, time of destiny, (London, Verso), p.258.

⁹⁹ Wolpe, H. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.206.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.195.

the townships. Thus,

During 1985 it became clear that the student movement had shifted its focus from educational demands as such to broadly political ones. Amongst short-term demands, the calls for the withdrawal of troops from the townships and the release of detainees became prominent. At a wider level, it was apparent that immediate and educational demands were now seen by large numbers of students as mobilising issues which were just a facet of a wider struggle to overturn the existing social order.¹⁰¹

Thus, by the end of 1985 the educational struggle had become an important component of the national political struggle against apartheid. Widespread boycotts and the closure of DET schools in many parts of the country made a national response to the educational crisis vital. A number of problems which emerged during the wave of boycotts made it absolutely necessary for other sectors of the community to become involved in educational issues.

The beginnings of a national response to the crisis in education occurred with the formation of the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) in October 1985 to negotiate student demands with the DET. A conference held in December gave rise to a new national body to coordinate the education struggle - the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC). A new slogan was devised ("People's Education for People's Power") coupled with the call for a return to school, the setting up of local crisis committees and the establishment of alternative educational authorities in schools, the PTAs.

The student struggles during this period had a number of implications for organisation and for the general struggle against apartheid. The boycotts led to the widespread radicalizing and politicising of the youth and the community. Student demands during the boycott included wider community issues and general political demands while the community dramatically increased its involvement in the education struggle. The call for People's Education reflected a demand for control over the education system by the

¹⁰¹ *Loc.cit.*

community and a new perception of the role of education itself. Students who participated in the boycotts later became members of youth, trade union and other community organisations, investing these organisations and their popular struggles with a militancy derived from the education struggles.

3.4.4. Political Realignment

The BCM was the major black extra-parliamentary political movement in South Africa during the 1970s. The late 1970s, however, was a period during which political activists increasingly transferred their allegiance from the BCM to the ANC. We can identify a number of factors which led to this political realignment. One was the destruction of the BCM in the immediate aftermath of the Soweto uprising in 1976 and activists' growing awareness of the limitations of the movement's role in the revolt. The second was the increasing popularisation of the ANC as it escalated its guerilla attacks and embarked on a programme to popularise itself. The third was the impressive successes of the revolutionary movements in Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe.¹⁰²

The Soweto revolt resulted in the destruction of the organisational base of the BCM. State response to the uprising, in the form of bannings, detentions, and political trials, led to the elimination of every political, cultural or social institution which adopted the philosophy of Black Consciousness.

In the wake of the Soweto revolt young black activists increasingly became disillusioned with the tactics and policies of the BCM. More particularly, young student activists began increasingly to reject the elite student and intelligentsia core of BC and to identify with the black working class. Thus, according to a young activist:

¹⁰² Charney, C. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.14.

the key transition was the 1980 school boycott in Cape Town. The leaders said we must learn the lessons of 1976. Those lessons were [the failures of] black exclusivism, the failure to see the working class as vanguard, and [the reliance on] charismatic leadership.¹⁰³

Many activists, conscious of the lack of organisation of the 1976 uprising, began to stress disciplined strategic action and the need to return to grassroots work around specific local conditions.¹⁰⁴ Local struggles against rent and bus-fare increases, "the shortage of houses and their poor condition, the corrupt and controversial activities of the government-controlled community councils, refuse removal, water and electricity all offered real and ready possibilities for organisation, mobilisation, and politicisation".¹⁰⁵ Student leaders of the 1980 school boycotts in Cape Town, called for "a new revolutionary strategy" that would build on the achievements of the BCM and in which workers, parents, and students would "stand united as one community".¹⁰⁶

Another feature of this political realignment was the replacement of the exclusivist black nationalism of the BCM by a commitment to non-racialism. This was justified by the need to "isolate the regime" and to draw the widest possible number of people into the anti-apartheid struggle. All South Africans who shared a commitment to the ideals of a non-racial, democratic country were encouraged to join the "national democratic struggle" against apartheid. Young activists also began to justify multi-class cooperation in the same manner as they did the principle of non-racialism.¹⁰⁷ Thus, business

¹⁰³ Quoted in Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.112.

¹⁰⁴ Joffe,A. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.90 and Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.112.

¹⁰⁵ Joffe,A. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.90.

¹⁰⁶ Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.112.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.126.

leaders were encouraged to participate in or support popular struggles. At the same time, the new organisations avoided the question of economic transformation by focusing attention on the more immediate need to destroy apartheid.¹⁰⁸

The increasingly successful guerilla attacks by the ANC's armed wing, a propaganda campaign to popularise the ANC and the Freedom Charter, discussions among activists in prison and the population as a whole, and the emergence of ANC leaders as leaders of the new community organisations increased the popularity of the ANC.

The resurgence of MK guerilla attacks began during the 1976 Soweto uprising with 12 reported attacks between October 1976 and March 1978, and an average of one small bomb exploding each week for the five months after November 1977.¹⁰⁹ In 1979 MK turned its attention to state personnel when it conducted attacks against police stations. In the following year, a number of attacks were made against government installations, including electrical plants, the Sasol oil-into-coal refineries, oil depots and the Koeberg nuclear power plant.¹¹⁰

In 1980 the ANC also began to link its guerilla attacks with popular struggles in the township: the January 1980 attack on the Soekmekaar police station, at a time when residents there were fighting forced removals; the October 1980 bombing of the railway line between Soweto and Johannesburg on the day residents called a stayaway to protest rent increases; the

¹⁰⁸ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁰⁹ Lodge, T. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.340.

¹¹⁰ Klug, H. and Seidman, G. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.19.

demolition of the Ciskei consulate during the Mdantsane bus boycott in 1983.¹¹¹

This resurgence of guerilla warfare placed the exile movement at the centre of the liberation struggle in the minds of many black South Africans. Media reports of MK activities and the state's condemnation of the ANC and its armed wing also influenced this trend. Although these activities were not aimed at achieving military victories they did serve to shake the confidence of the regime and to bolster both internal resistance and the ANC's reputation.¹¹² At the same time, the revival of MK activities during this period was both a cause and effect of a growth in external and internal support of the exile movement.

In the wake of the Soweto uprising thousands of young activists left the country to escape repression and to prepare themselves for the armed struggle against the state. Although many of these activists were influenced by the BCM, the only movement in exile with the necessary infrastructure and funds to organise shelter, food and training for the new young exiles was the ANC.¹¹³ This influx of new recruits to the ANC's camps increased the ANC's exile population from an estimated one thousand in 1975 to nine thousand in 1980.¹¹⁴ These young exiles provided the core of new recruits to MK in the period.

Equally important was the work of underground structures which infiltrated

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.19-20.

¹¹² Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.93.

¹¹³ *Loc.cit.*

¹¹⁴ Davis,S. (1987); Apartheid's rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War, (New Haven, Yale University Press), pp.57 and 28. Cited in Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.93.

organisations in order to guide them and obtain recruits for the ANC. The execution of Solomon Mahlangu, an MK cadre, on 6 April, 1979, provided the movement with its first contemporary martyr. According to Lodge, his funeral and subsequent wakes "attracted already politicised young people at a time when BC organisations and leadership had been seriously eroded by government repression".¹¹⁵

The ANC also embarked on an internal propaganda campaign to complement the armed struggle. This was directed at laying the organisational and ideological support base of its peoples war revolutionary strategy. The ANC declared 1980 the "Year of the Freedom Charter", 1981 the "Year of the Youth", 1982 the "Year of Unity in Action", and 1983 the "Year of United Action". The propaganda campaign took two main forms. In the first place, the ANC encouraged a resurgence of its popularity in the late 1970s by drawing attention to itself through appeals to symbolic loyalties that had been overshadowed by BC.¹¹⁶ During the early 1980s copies of the Freedom Charter began to circulate in the black townships. Secondly, the ANC encouraged a renewed interest in its jailed leaders, in particular Nelson Mandela and others who were jailed for life in 1963. According to Marx, "these prisoners provided a powerful symbol of the ANC's long commitment to the struggle, unsullied by association with any of the shortcomings of internal or exile opposition in the intervening years".¹¹⁷

In 1980, the Release Mandela Campaign and a campaign celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Freedom Charter's adoption both provided the

¹¹⁵ Lodge, T. (1991); "Rebellion: The turning of the tide", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); All, Here, and Now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s, South Africa Update Series, (Cape Town, David Philip), p.44.

¹¹⁶ Marx, A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.95.

¹¹⁷ *Loc.cit.*

means for focusing attention on the ANC and its policies.¹¹⁸ A number of organisations took up the Freedom Charter Campaign in response to the ANC's call for the popularisation of this statement of its aims and objectives. COSAS, one of the first mass organisations to adopt the Freedom Charter, together with NUSAS, played a central role in this campaign. Copies of the Freedom Charter were distributed by both high school and university students to the masses of South Africans. This was the first time many people had access to this document and many new supporters were drawn to the ideals of the ANC.

The effect on the black population was dramatic with widespread demonstrations of ANC support.

ANC songs and slogans could be heard in mass meetings across the country; by 1982, the ANC colours were appearing regularly at activists' funerals, which became a common setting for what were essentially political rallies. Despite the danger to those who openly expressed support for the ANC, thousands of people participated in mass commemorations of important ANC events and personalities, and in memorials held in township churches for ANC members killed in South African attacks on neighbouring countries.¹¹⁹

According to Phillips, the Freedom Charter Campaign was a highly successful and very important development in resistance politics in South Africa. The popularisation of the Charter was seen as a means of providing political direction and content and rejuvenating ANC cadres, structures and resolve in the context of a revival of resistance.¹²⁰ According to Phillips:

The sentiments expressed in the *Freedom Charter* are also meant to provide the basis of unity in action and purpose and to provide a 'common political base from which to proceed' in the ongoing conflict with Pretoria. (ANC (1985); 'Political Report of the National Executive Committee to the Second Consultative Conference' in ANC Documents of the Second National Consultative Conference of the African national Congress,

¹¹⁸ Klug, H. and Seidman, G. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.20.

¹¹⁹ Marx, A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.95.

¹²⁰ Phillips, I. (1991); "The Political Role of the Freedom Charter", in Steytler, N. (ed.); The Freedom Charter and Beyond: Founding principles of a democratic South African legal order, (Cape Town, Wyvern), p.69.

Zambia, 16-23 June 1985, London, ANC).¹²¹

The ideological appeal of the ANC was also extended by elder statesmen of the movement serving lengthy prison sentences, particularly those on Robben Island. In the wake of the Soweto revolt, hundreds of BC activists were detained and imprisoned where they came into contact with imprisoned members of the ANC. Through discussions with older prisoners and in their readings, many BC adherents altered their political allegiance and on their release from prison, were ardent supporters of the ANC. Some of these became leaders of the new organisations which were emerging throughout the country. They took with them the ideas they had generated while in prison and subsequently affected the direction taken by these organisations.¹²²

In addition, ANC activists resurfaced to play a prominent role in these organisations. All of these factors conspired to revitalise the internal debate on the strategy and tactics of the struggle. By the early eighties, many activists were committed to grassroots organisation around local issues, to a non-racial, democratic struggle, and to the policies of the ANC. Above all else, people were drawn towards the ANC's people's war revolutionary strategy which included building a united front of anti-apartheid community organisations operating legally and semi-legally inside South Africa.

3.4.5. The influence of the United Democratic Front (UDF)

The formation of the UDF also promoted the development of community organisations in South Africa. This national umbrella organisation brought together numerous local community struggles and a large number of local, regional and national organisations. It also led to increasing cooperation

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.62-3.

¹²² Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, pp.98-9 and Klug,H. and Seidman,G. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.21.

among different organisations in local and national struggles: student, trade union, women, and community organisations coordinated their actions in a wide range of struggles at the local level. Moreover, national opposition to the BLAs and the tri-cameral parliament involved the cooperative efforts of a wide range of local organisations under the UDF umbrella. In addition, young activists in many parts of the country used the models of organisations affiliated to the UDF in the formation of civic, youth and women's organisations in their townships. The second half of the 1980s, in particular, has seen the proliferation of community organisations in small towns previously insulated from political mobilisation.

Prior to the formation of the UDF, townships conducted numerous struggles in relative isolation from each other. Since most of these isolated struggles were over local issues the organisations they gave rise to tended to exist only for a limited period. Thus,

Organisations had mobilised people and grown during campaigns but at the end of the campaigns, membership and participation fell off. The problem of keeping people involved on an ongoing basis did not seem to be affected by the success of the campaign. Victory or failure, people drifted out of organisations. This was blamed on the issue-oriented nature of the campaigns, which also limited organisations' ability to make members aware of the root causes of their daily problems.¹²³

It was only through a national political organisation that isolated struggles could be linked together and directed against the entire system of exploitation and oppression. When some 600 organisations came together to form the UDF, it became possible to provide national co-ordination of local struggles. Thus,

Issues affecting only one category of people in one place at one time become issues affecting wider categories of people at different times in different places. Finally they are defined as issues affecting all oppressed people, issues that will continue to affect those people so long as racial oppression and economic exploitation remains unchallenged on a national scale.¹²⁴

¹²³ SASPU, State of the Nation, August 1983, p.12. Quoted in De la Harpe, J. and Manson, A. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.63.

¹²⁴ De la Harpe, J. and Manson, A. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.63.

In conclusion, this chapter focuses on the emergence and development of community organisations. The emphasis is on material and political grievances which gave rise to mass mobilisation and protest. Mention is also made of the ideological shift from the Black Consciousness Movement to the ANC and the impact of the UDF on popular mobilisation and organisation. Thus, changing economic conditions, state policy, popular struggles, the political realignment of black political activists, and the emergence of the UDF all contributed to the emergence and proliferation of community organisations during the late 1970s and 1980s.

This analysis of the emergence and development of community organisations demonstrates the existence of a highly developed and politicised civil society. It also demonstrates the conscious efforts of activists and organisations to mobilise and organise among the dominated classes. More importantly, however, such a highly complex civil society met one of the requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy which set the basis for the formation of a United Front and for the subsequent upsurge in mass mobilisation and politicisation.

This was the emphasis placed on mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which were primarily directed against the ruling bloc. The existence of a highly complex civil society provided the opportunity to direct the particular struggles of various popular movements in society towards a united struggle for the destruction of apartheid and the introduction of a democratic society. During the late 1970s and early 1980s trade unions, student/youth organisations, women's organisations and civic associations sprang up in many parts of the country. The struggles of these organisations found their nexus in the national struggle against the apartheid system of oppression and exploitation after the formation of the UDF.

Chapter 4

THE FORMATION, POLICIES AND AIMS, AND STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

4.1. Introduction

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, black opposition underwent a significant revival with the growth and consolidation of the independent trade union movement and the emergence of numerous student/youth and community organisations. In addition, co-operation between trade unions, student and community organisations increased dramatically. However, with the exception of COSAS, many of these organisations had a limited membership and were unable to maintain sustained political action. What was lacking was a national political organisation which could coordinate the activities of the growing number of organisations opposed to apartheid. The formation of the UDF in late 1983 provided the conditions under which this could be achieved.

It is argued here that the formation of the UDF, the development of certain united aims and objectives, and the adoption of specific strategies and tactics conformed to certain strategic requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy: the creation of a historical bloc of all classes and strata opposed to the ruling bloc, united with common political, intellectual and moral objectives, and engaged in a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system which is directed at a democratic revolution. These have their parallels in the ANC's strategic objective of creating a mass-based national front, winning members of the front and its affiliates to positions aligned to the ANC, and promoting internal resistance to apartheid.

Thus, it is argued that by 1987 the UDF had drawn close to ideological

positions held by the banned ANC, thus bringing together a large variety of social forces under a minimum programme, with common political, intellectual and moral objectives. It is further argued that the popular struggles of the 1980s eventually evolved into a universalistic challenge of the apartheid system.

4.2. Formation of the UDF

The introduction of the new constitutional dispensation and the "Koornhof Bills" - the Black Local Authorities Act, the Black Communities Development Act and the Orderly Movement and Resettlement of Black Persons Bill - led to an upsurge in black political activity in opposition to these measures. According to Irvine, white domination has the effect of forging a broad unity in opposition among Africans, coloureds, and Indians, even of differing classes. The new constitutional proposals were designed to destroy this unity, and did indeed lead to divisions between blacks and within the Indian and coloured communities.¹ Despite these divisions, the UDF, formed in August 1983, represented an organisational fusion of groups representing different class forces of the black communities as well as a number of whites into a broad opposition to these measures.

The political incorporation of coloured and Indian people was on the agenda of the ruling National Party for some time. In 1976, the Theron Commission recommended the direct political representation of coloured people at all levels.² However, nothing came of these recommendations until the beginning of the 1980s. Two reports emanating from the Constitutional Committee of the President's Council, an advisory body established in 1981 and charged

¹ McKinnon Irvine, D. (1984); "South Africa: Federal Potentialities in current developments", in International Political Science Review, (No.4), p.439.

² Republic of South Africa; Verdrag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na Aangeleenthede Rakendend die Kleurlingsgroep, RP, 38/1976, p.513.

largely with the task of framing new constitutional proposals, recommended the extension of political rights to the Indian and coloured communities.³ Finally, in a speech to the National Party Congress in mid-1982 the Prime Minister, P. W. Botha, laid down the guidelines for the new constitutional dispensation which were embodied in the Bill that was enacted by Parliament in 1983.⁴

The new constitution, which came into effect on September 3, 1984, was designed to draw so-called coloureds and Indians into a political alliance with the white minority in opposition to the African majority. In Adelman's words:

It was hoped that the basis of a black middle class with a vested interest in stability might be generated through the co-optation of certain petty bourgeois elements in the coloured and Indian communities, making them share-holders in apartheid, partners in their own oppression.⁵

The need to co-opt these strata of the dominated classes stemmed from several factors.⁶ First, there was the collapse of separate political structures for coloureds in 1980 when the Labour Party, which held a majority of the elected seats in the Coloured Persons' Representative Council, withdrew its cooperation from the government. By 1982, both coloured and Indian political rights were in a limbo. Secondly, there was a need to offset the increasing unity of Africans, Indians and coloureds following the Soweto revolt by drawing the latter two communities into the apartheid structure. Finally, security considerations linked the extension of political rights of the Indian and coloured people with military conscription on the same basis as for

³ Republic of South Africa; First Report of the Constitutional Committee of the President's Council, PC, 3/1982; Second Report of the Constitutional Committee of the President's Council on the adoption of Constitutional Structures in South Africa, PC, 4/1982.

⁴ Welch, D. (1984); "Constitutional changes in South Africa", in African Affairs, (Vol. 83, No. 331, April), p. 147.

⁵ Adelman (1985); "Recent events in South Africa", in Capital and Class, (No. 26, Summer), p. 23.

⁶ Welch, D. (1984); *op.cit.*, pp. 147-150.

whites.

For the African majority, who were excluded from the constitutional dispensation, Black Local Authorities (BLAs) in the African urban townships of South Africa were given a degree of "autonomy" and presented as a partial substitute for representation at parliamentary level. It was hoped that the problem of the political rights of urban Africans would be partially solved by giving them control over affairs in their own communities. The "autonomy" of the BLAs would mirror in miniature the kind of "autonomy" (called "independence") offered at a higher level.⁷ In addition, these Local Authorities enabled the state to shift the administration of the worst effects of its apartheid policies - for example, the provision and allocation of housing and evictions - to African councillors.⁸

The state's reform package was an attempt at the ideological level to gain the people's (or at least important sectors of it) acceptance of the apartheid system. The Constitution Act and the Black Local Authorities Act were attempts to legitimize the apartheid system by incorporating certain strata from the dominated majority. The provisions of the Orderly Movement and Resettlement of Black Persons Bill, based on the recommendations of the Riekert Commission, entrenched divisions between urban and migrant African workers by providing stricter influx control measures. Under the terms of the Black Labour Regulations of 1980, "qualified" urban African residents were provided with freer horizontal movement. Section 10 (1) (a), (b), and (c) - of the Native (Urban Areas) Act - rights were made transferable from one urban

⁷ Grest, J. and Hughes, H. (1984); "State Strategy and Popular Response at the Local Level", in South African Research Service (eds.); South African Review II, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.46.

⁸ Brewer, J. (1982); "Racial politics and nationalism: The case of South Africa", in Sociology, (16), p.396.

area to another, providing "established" workers with a virtual monopoly over jobs in secondary industry.

The Orderly Movement and Resettlement of Black Persons Bill shifted emphasis to the prosecution of employers of illegal entrants to the urban areas in an attempt to reduce the incentive for such activities. Fines of up to R5,000 were to be imposed on employers of African workers who entered the urban areas illegally. In addition, workseekers from the homelands would be permitted to enter the urban areas only if they had a firm offer of employment, approved housing was available and there was a shortage of suitable local workseekers. This Bill was therefore an attempt to reduce African numbers in "white" South Africa, linking their political rights to the homelands and to entrench divisions between "established" urban and migrant African workers.

Under the terms of the Black Communities Development Act, Administration Boards (subsequently called development boards) were placed under the control of the Department of Co-operation and Development and made responsible for influx control, local government in African areas, housing, and co-operation with other government departments in their areas of jurisdiction.

In 1979 the ANC-led alliance adopted a new revolutionary strategy - the people's war revolutionary strategy. The objectives of this strategy included building a united front of anti-apartheid community organisations operating legally and semi-legally inside South Africa. The implementation of the new revolutionary strategy was preceded by a four-year organisational and propaganda campaign. The ANC declared 1980 the "Year of the Freedom Charter", 1981 the "Year of the Youth", 1982 the "Year of Unity in Action", and 1983 the "Year of United Action". This resulted in a major realignment of internal support away from the BCM towards the ANC. Increasing numbers

of people and organisations began to support the ANC and its ideological appeal became increasingly evident inside the country.⁹

The new revolutionary strategy and realignment towards the ANC were important factors behind the formation of the UDF. The formation of a United Front was one of the central elements of the people's war revolutionary strategy and the organisation's "Year of United Action" culminated in the formation of the UDF. Among the leading organisations which participated in the processes leading to its formation was COSAS, the first organisation inside the country to adopt the Freedom Charter.

Three important national anti-apartheid campaigns in the early 1980s provided the initial organisational basis for the formation of the UDF. These were the anti-Republic Day, anti-SAIC (South African Indian Council) and Anti-President's Council campaigns. The first of these was directed against the twentieth anniversary celebrations of the formation of the Republic of South Africa on the 31st May 1981. Ad-hoc Anti-Republic Day Committees emerged to voice opposition to these celebrations.

The nationwide Anti-SAIC campaign followed, mobilising opposition, especially in the Indian communities, to the SAIC elections scheduled for the end of 1981. The decision to revive the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) was taken at the Transvaal Anti-SAIC conference in Johannesburg on the 23rd January 1983. The need was recognised for the creation of an organisation able to "convert into programme and action" the political work done in the Anti-SAIC campaign.¹⁰

⁹ Refer to Chapter 2, pp.57-62 above for changes in ANC strategy and tactics and to Chapter 3, pp.111-118 above for political realignment towards the ANC.

¹⁰ Barrell, H. (1984); "The United Democratic Front and National Forum: Their emergence, composition and trends", in South African Research Service (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.9.

At a meeting in Eshowe in January 1983, the congress of the Labour Party voted overwhelmingly in favour of participating in the new constitutional arrangement. This provided the impetus for the formation of an Anti-President's Council (Anti-PC) Committee in the Transvaal. The idea of an organisation to mobilize various community organisations against the President's Council proposals was first mooted at a conference held in Roodepoort during the middle of 1982.¹¹ However:

The feeling then by the people present at the meeting was that the reform proposals were a non-issue and the community would not be hoodwinked and would not support any of the proposals and therefore there was no need to go out and organise organisations into a Front.¹²

A subsequent meeting on the 6th of January 1983 in Johannesburg, attended by members of community organisations, discussed "the response to the reform proposals and the decision at Eshowe". "That group of 50 people then set up an *ad hoc* committee, to plan and assess the situation within the coloured and other communities".¹³ In May 1983, the *ad-hoc* Transvaal Anti-President's Council committee was formally inaugurated at a meeting at Coronationville, Johannesburg. The purpose of this committee was to mobilise and organise people against the constitutional proposals. According to its Chairman, Dr. I. Mahomed:

Initially the anti-PC was a very small body. It had organised people in various areas and met with Labour Party dissidents. It set up local committees to explain to the people what the decisions of the Labour Party mean - conscription of their children, divisions of the whole democratic struggle. It has issued pamphlets in various areas and has set up working committees in a number of areas and it has carried out, on a small scale, house to house visits. ... Initially support (for the Anti-PC) came mostly from radical young people, determined to see changes in our country, involved in various struggles and it came from various organisations like the *ad hoc* Anti-Republic Day Committees, COSAS, AZASO and so on. But there are also people who've come from other community organisations, grass roots organisations like residents' committees, church committees,

¹¹ Interview with Dr I Mahomed, Chairperson Anti-PC Committee, in *Africa Perspective*, (No.23, 1983), p.49.

¹² *Loc.cit.*

¹³ *Loc.cit.*

student/school organisations. People have come as individuals, not as representatives of any organisation.¹⁴

The anti-Republic Day, anti-SAIC and Anti-President's Council campaigns were similar in form if not in degree to other struggles waged by the dominated classes (rent, transport and consumer struggles) during the early 1980s. They were single issue struggles, often of short duration.

On the 23rd January 1983, the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee held a conference in Johannesburg where Dr Allan Boesak called for unification of the forces opposed to apartheid and the formation of a "united front". Boesak pointed out that:

There is...no reason why the churches, civic associations, trade unions, student organisations and sport bodies should not unite on this issue, pool our resources, inform people of the fraud that is about to be perpetuated in their name and, on the day of election, expose their plans for what they are.¹⁵

The conference endorsed Boesak's proposal and appointed a commission to investigate the feasibility of a united front. The conference adopted a statement presented by the commission laying down the basis of the internal organisation for the initial regional structures of the UDF. It also drew up guidelines for the new organisation which included dedication to the "creation of a non-racial, unitary state, undiluted by racial or ethnic considerations as formulated in the bantustan policy", the adoption of a non-racial form of organisation and the need to consult with "all democratic people wherever they may be".¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.50-1.

¹⁵ Speech at the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Conference by Dr A Boesak. Quoted in Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.10.

¹⁶ Statement by the "Commission on the Feasibility of a United Front against the Constitutional reform proposals", at the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Conference. Quoted in Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.10.

A steering committee was set up to establish the Front. This was followed by the election of an interim national UDF executive. Organisations represented at the meeting such as the Natal Indian Congress, the Joint Rent Action Committee and individuals who were members of the Cape Housing Action Committee contacted their members in other regions. The idea was passed on and mobilisation took place especially in Natal, the Transvaal and the Western Cape.¹⁷ In these areas UDF regions were being formed at meetings in April, May and June respectively.

Numerous meetings were also held by organisations intending to affiliate to the UDF, where discussions covered such topics as policy, structure and strategies. A Natal regional UDF was established on the 14th May with 40 affiliated organisations. A week later 28 organisations committed themselves to a Transvaal UDF, although this was only formalised subsequently. In the Western Cape, a regional UDF was formed on 24 July out of 22 organisations. By the year's end, regional UDFs had also been constituted in the Border and Eastern Cape and a Northern Cape UDF was at an advanced stage of development.¹⁸

The following is an account of events which occurred in the setting up of the Transvaal UDF:

What was initially set up was essentially a council of representatives to represent each of the participating organisations....

What happened was that the council was set up as a consultative body, functioning as an executive committee but called a consultative council, made up of six representatives from the trade unions, six from community organisations, three from church organisations, three from women's organisations, three from residents' organisations and three from student organisations. The trade unions and community organisations will receive greater representation as more organisations come in. That council was set up to basically plan

¹⁷ Interview with Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, publicity secretary of the UDF, at Khotso House, Johannesburg on the 13th October 1983; "The UDF on the Unions", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.9, No.2, November 1983), p.79.

¹⁸ Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.11.

the kind of activity that would be carried on. There was also a secretariat of five people - so by and large the work was actually being done by the secretariat and the consultative committee. A conference was convened, the third meeting of the UDF, to plan the Transvaal UDF structures and also to work towards a national UDF.¹⁹

Consultations with the regional UDFs led to the decision to launch the UDF nationally and in late July, the UDF *ad hoc* national executive announced the national launching of the organisation. The inaugural conference was to be held in Cape Town on the 20th August. A commentator points out that:

One of the most extensive propaganda campaigns in the history of resistance to apartheid followed. More than 400,000 UDF newsletters, posters and pamphlets were distributed nationally to advertise the launch. The gist of the propaganda was to inform people of the national political dimension of their fractured struggle and the need to reconstruct formal country-wide resistance to the new government manoeuvres".²⁰

Within a month of the announcement of the inaugural conference, 1,000 delegates representing 575 organisations from all over the country came together on August 20, 1983 at Rocklands Civic Centre, Mitchells Plain, to launch the National UDF.²¹ Represented at this conference were political, women's, community, civic, trade union, student, youth, sport, religious, professional and other organisations from many areas of the country. The subsequent "people's" rally which unanimously endorsed the decisions taken at the conference comprised between 10 and 15 thousand people. Thus, by the end of 1983 a United Front organisation had been set up in the country, achieving both the ANC's objective and the Leninist/Gramscian United Front.²²

¹⁹ Interview with Dr. Mahomed, (1983); *op.cit.*, p.51.

²⁰ Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.12.

²¹ South African Institute of Race Relations, (1984); Survey of Race Relations, 1983, (Johannesburg, Institute of Race Relations), pp.68-9. (Hereafter Survey of Race Relations).

²² This does not imply that the leadership involved in the formation of the UDF were aware of the ANC's strategic objective or consciously adopted a Leninist-Gramscian strategy. There were too many people and organisations involved for this to be true.

4.3. Principles and Objectives

The principles and objectives of the UDF were not fixed, but evolved over the years. Principles and objectives were determined at national conferences attended by delegates of all organisations affiliated to the UDF.

The commission appointed by the Transvaal anti-SAIC conference to investigate the feasibility of a united front set out the broad principles of the Front.

We declare that the broad principles on which this UDF is constituted are:

1. a belief in the tenets of democracy;
2. an unshakeable conviction in the creation of a non-racial, unitary state in South Africa undiluted by racial or ethnic considerations as formulated in the bantustan policy;
3. an adherence to the need for unity in struggle through which all democrats, regardless of race, religion or colour, shall take part together;
4. a recognition of the necessity to work in consultation with and reflect accurately the demands of democratic people wherever they may be in progressive worker, community and student organisations.²³

The concept democracy, as articulated by the UDF, involved two related aspects. Firstly, it referred to the internal organisation and practices of affiliates and of the Front itself. Secondly, it referred to the democratic aims of the UDF and the organisations and individuals which participated in the Front.

In the first place, the UDF and its affiliates would practice the principles of accountability, mass participation and recall of leadership. Murphy Morobe listed the following basic principles which characterised the democratic character of organisations affiliated to the UDF:

1. Elected leadership: leadership of organisations must be elected (at all levels), and re-election must be held at periodic intervals. No single individual must be irreplaceable. Elected leadership must also be recallable before the

²³ Statement by the "Commission on the Feasibility of a United Front against the Constitutional reform proposals", at the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Conference. Quoted in Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.10.

end of their term of office if there is indiscipline or misconduct.

2. Collective leadership: This involves continuous, ongoing consultation at all levels. Leadership skills, experience and knowledge must be spread, not hoarded.

3. Mandates and accountability: Leaders and delegates have to operate within the delegated mandates of their positions and delegated duties.

4. Reporting: Reporting back to organisations, areas, units, etc., is an important dimension of democracy.

5. Criticism and self-criticism: Regular evaluations must be held, questions must be asked and constructive criticism encouraged.²⁴

Secondly, individuals and organisations which could join the UDF would have as their objective the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. According to the UDF, the first step in the creation of a democratic society in South Africa was the abolition of all discriminatory legislation and the extension of democratic rights to all its citizens. According to Morobe: "A democratic solution in South Africa involves all South Africans, and in particular the working class, having control over all areas of daily existence - from national policy to housing, from schooling to working conditions, from transport to consumption of food".²⁵

Underlying this conception of democracy is the concept "people's power". People's power arises when people "feel that they have some direct control over where and how they live, eat, sleep, work, how they get to work, how they and their children are educated, what the content of that education is; and that these things are not done for them by the government of the day,

²⁴ Morobe, M. (1987); "Towards a People's Democracy", in South Africa International, (18, No.1, July), p.36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.33.

but by the people themselves".²⁶ In practice, people's power refers to the assumption of administrative, judicial, welfare and cultural duties by "organs of people's power" - street committees, defence committees, shop-steward structures, SRCs, and PTSAs.

In its Working Principles, determined at the inaugural conference in 1983, the UDF listed the following aims and objectives:

1. To oppose the Constitutional and Koornhof Bills as decided at the first national conference held in Cape Town on 20 August 1983 and any future conference;
2. To develop the maximum possible participation in the front; and
3. To encourage and assist democratic and full participation in the UDF.

Opposition to the Constitutional and Koornhof Bills was a short-term aim of the UDF. The long-term objective of the Front was included in its Declaration, also made at the inaugural conference. The UDF declared that: "we stand for the creation of a true democracy in which all South Africans will participate in the government of our country; we stand for a single, non-racial, unfragmented South Africa, a South Africa free of bantustans and Group Areas; we say all forms of oppression and exploitation must end".²⁷

Initially the prevailing view on the role of the UDF was that it would coordinate opposition to the government's reforms. By 1985, however, it became clear that the Front's role was more extensive and, in a report to the National General Council, the Secretariat listed the following objectives of the UDF:

1. to take the ideological initiative out of the hands of the state;
2. to unite our people across class, colour, ethnic and organisational lines to oppose the apartheid reforms;
3. to coordinate the activities of all organisations opposed to apartheid;
4. to advance the mobilisation and to deepen the organisation of our people;
5. to prevent the state from implementing its so-called reforms, or at least, to make it

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.34.

²⁷ "UDF Declaration", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.9, No.4, February 1984), p.72.

difficult for them to do so;

6. to deepen the understanding of our people on issues affecting their lives, such as the P.C. Proposals and Koornhof Bills, the Community Councils and Black Local Authorities, the Coloured Management Committees and the new housing policy, etc.;
7. to establish a broad front to serve as the voice of our people;
8. to link politics with the day to day experience of our people; and
9. to draw into the front groupings operating outside the government structures.²⁸

This view of the Front's objectives extended the life of the organisation beyond resistance to the government's reforms. Its role became more comprehensive and included coordinating resistance to apartheid and advancing mobilisation and organisation. In 1987, the UDF stated that:

Now our broad aim is to unite the broadest mass of the people, black and white, in an unstoppable tide towards liberation. Millions of people are yearning for a new South Africa. The UDF has to organise these forces in the most effective way, so that our people can act as one, while the regime itself is divided and isolated from the overwhelming majority of the people.²⁹

In terms of both its principles and objectives, the UDF sought to unite "all democrats", regardless of class or race, in the struggle to create a "non-racial, unitary South Africa". The UDF worked quite openly with whites and with predominantly white organisations such as NUSAS, the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC) and the Black Sash.³⁰ UDF publicity secretary Mosiuoa Lekota said:

Many of us see that we are not ruled just by whites but by a section of whites in collaboration with a section of blacks. Some of those committed to apartheid are not white...and those committed to a free and democratic society are not only black.³¹

However, the Front called for the unity of all oppressed groups (Africans, Indians and coloureds), but called for participation by individual white democrats. It was argued that achieving both the immediate and the long-

²⁸ Document; Report of the Secretariat to the National General Council of the UDF, 1985.

²⁹ United Democratic Front (1987); "Build the Front", in Isizwe (The Nation), Discussion Paper, p.13.

³⁰ Laurence,P. (1984); "South African Black party politics", in Africa Insight, (Vol.14, No.4), p.274.

³¹ Interview with Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, (1983); *op.cit.*, p.79.

term advantages of white inclusion required that the liberation struggle itself be nonracial.³² According to Lekota:

By 'a truly national character', the UDF means that we are non-racial, which means we embrace all races, and that we bring together all classes.³³

The UDF identified the black working-class as the largest component of the dominated classes in South Africa. In early August 1983, the interim executive of the UDF emphasised that while it articulated the view-point of a broad section of people, it accepted that "the main burden of exploitation and discrimination" fell on the African working class. It pointed out that the main thrust of the organisation should be towards the participation of workers in the broad struggle against apartheid.³⁴

In its resolution on workers, the UDF called for the leadership of the working class in the democratic struggle for freedom. The organisation resolved to encourage the building of genuine democratic trade unions, and strengthen the unity between genuine democratic trade unions and all patriotic and freedom loving people in the struggle for political rights for all.³⁵ UDF spokesmen repeatedly called for the participation of workers in the movement. In October 1983, the UDF publicity secretary stated in an interview:

We are not satisfied that we have achieved as much trade union support as we had hoped for. But we see the participation of workers in the UDF as important. The more workers come in the closer we are to gaining a truly national character. South Africa is still under colonial conditions and the struggle against imperialism is a struggle against capitalism. For this reason the working class must provide the backbone of the struggle.³⁶

³² Marx,A. (1992); Lessons of the Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), p.123.

³³ Interview with Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, (1983); *op.cit.*, p.79.

³⁴ Survey of Race Relations, 1983, p.57.

³⁵ UDF (1983); "UDF Declaration", *op.cit.*, pp.75-6.

³⁶ Interview with Mr Mosioua Lekota, (1983); *op.cit.*

Nevertheless, the UDF in practice clearly rejected distinct class mobilisation and maintained instead that the issues of class should be largely subsumed under the broader umbrella of the popular struggle against apartheid.³⁷

Lekota put it bluntly:

The UDF is not a class organisation. It doesn't claim to work in the interests of the working class, the capitalist class or the peasantry. It is an alliance of these classes. All those who don't have political rights and who are willing to do battle, have a home in the Front. We have never claimed to be led by the working class.³⁸

Several middle-class business groups affiliated to the Front, including the Western Cape Traders Association. Furthermore, in an attempt to isolate the National Party government white businessmen were encouraged to join or support the UDF and eventually major industrialists such as Tony Bloom of Premier Milling and Chris Ball of Barclays Bank provided the UDF with much-needed resources.³⁹ To appeal to these groups the UDF avoided discussions of economic transformation and did not recommend an immediate transformation to socialism.⁴⁰

The UDF identified its immediate role in uniting opposition to apartheid. The fragmented and localized struggles of the dominated classes - rent, transport, consumer, trade union, student, unemployed, women, etc. - were organised under a "national structural form which guarantees the broadest possible unity in action of different social groups". The UDF thus emerged as "a mechanism that ensures the maximum concentration of energies and resources of organisations previously acting independently".⁴¹

³⁷ Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of agony, time of destiny, (London, Verso), p.216.

³⁸ "Solidarity interviews", in Azania Frontline, 8, 1984. Quoted in Murray, M. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.229.

³⁹ United Democratic Front (1987); "Build the Front", *op.cit.*, p.7.

⁴⁰ Marx, A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.126.

⁴¹ Njikelana, S. (1984); "Unions and the UDF", in Work in Progress, (No.32, July), pp.30-31.

Most of the community organisations which became the organisational foundation of the UDF developed out of local popular struggles that took place before and after the formation of the Front. In most cases, organisations which combined to form local structures of the UDF included youth and student organisations, a civic association, a women's organisation and local branches of sympathetic trade unions which often acted independently. In addition, however, there were a number of *ad hoc* and constituency-based committees dealing with single issues involving squatters, hostel dwellers, traders, detainees, unemployed groups, professionals, and various Crisis Committees dealing with issues ranging from education to problems such as housing grievances and crime.⁴²

Initially, it was felt that adherence to the goals of the Freedom Charter was not a necessary condition for affiliation to the UDF. Instead, in order to achieve the desired maximum unity, the UDF articulated its own moderate declaration of intent in a move designed to accommodate liberal groups unable to reach consensus on the document.⁴³ According to a prominent UDF member:

the basis of any organisation coming in [to the UDF - G. H.] must be an acceptance of the declaration and any application to come into the UDF will be considered - we will of course look at the history and tradition of the particular organisation. It cannot simply be a verbal statement to the effect that we accept this declaration. There will have to be tangible evidence of the kind of struggle that they have been engaged in....it will have to be debated whether in fact they are advancing the progressive movement in the country.⁴⁴

Thus, the UDF Declaration served as the initial minimum programme around which the UDF was formed, and adherence to which was the basis for acceptance as an affiliate.

⁴² Swilling, M. (1988A); "The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt", in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.93.

⁴³ Howe, G. (1985); "The politics of non-collaboration: Moving towards co-optation, repression or exclusion?", in *Indicator SA*, (Vol.2, No.4, January), p.20.

⁴⁴ Interview with Dr I Mahomed, (1983); *op.cit.*

The organisations which affiliated to the UDF were diverse in their nature and historical tradition. Organisations which declared their opposition to the new dispensation and the "Koornhof Bills" included the Western Cape African Traders' Association, CUSA, JODAC, the Black Sash, church groups, and sports groups. However, as Lodge points out, "from the beginning, adherence to the Charter was viewed by most UDF leaders as signifying an advanced stage of ideological progress". In consequence, the early years of the UDF were characterised by repeated reference to the Freedom Charter by prominent UDF leaders.⁴⁵ The Front was closely identified with "Charterism" by the end of the first of its existence while Black Consciousness-inclined organisations united to establish the National Forum.

A number of references were made of the Freedom Charter by the UDF over the years. In an editorial in the UDF's journal Isizwe ("The Nation") in 1985, the Front depicted its struggle as an attempt along the lines of the Freedom Charter, to "fuse two strands of the South African movement for liberation - the national (for the people to rule their own country) and the workers' struggle for socialism".⁴⁶ In July, the UDF took the position that the Freedom Charter was "the most democratic document expressing the wishes and aspirations of our people".⁴⁷ In this view, "Charterism" links the national struggle for liberation and the workers' struggle for socialism while the Freedom Charter is seen as an expression of the will of the people.

Policy decisions made at a National Working Committee in 1987 included a call on all affiliates to discuss the adoption of the Freedom Charter by the

⁴⁵ Lodge, T.; "The United Democratic Front: Leadership and Ideology", Paper presented to the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 August, 1987, p.6.

⁴⁶ Isizwe (The Nation), (Vol.1, No.1, 1985), p.6.

⁴⁷ "Freedom Charter", in UDF Update, (July 1985), p.5.

Front. It was noted that a large number of key affiliates had already adopted the Charter. According to the Committee, if the Charter was adopted, "it would provide the UDF with a political programme". In addition, it contained "all the popular demands of the people which the UDF has been articulating over the past four years". The Freedom Charter had also served "as a unifying document" and could be "a tool for education, for mass mobilisation, and for building organisation and unity". It was also seen as "the people's alternative to various divisive and undemocratic schemes".⁴⁸ The UDF officially adopted the Charter in August of the same year.

Accusations that the UDF was a front for the ANC were made by the government, senior security force officers, leaders of Indian and coloured political parties participating in the tri-cameral parliament and Inkatha's Chief Buthelezi. In 1983 Lekota said that the two organisations could never be affiliated because the one was illegal and had a strategy encompassing violence while the other was committed to non-violence. However, ANC support was welcome as was that of others opposed to apartheid.⁴⁹

The UDF admitted to being in the tradition of the ANC but denied being a front organisation. Many UDF leaders were close to the ANC, or were even ANC members before it was banned. However, the UDF was too diffuse and loosely organized to be considered a conspiracy and too popular to be considered no more than a tool of ANC sympathizers among its leaders.⁵⁰ The UDF did, however, provide a linkage with the tradition of struggle associated with the Congress Alliance of the 1950's, the Freedom Charter,

⁴⁸ See United Democratic Front (1987); UDF focus on the Freedom Charter, (Johannesburg, UDF), p.2; and UDF (1987); "National Conference: We did it!!", in UDF News, Newsletter of the Transvaal Region, (Vol.4, No.2, June), p.1.

⁴⁹ Survey of Race Relations, 1983, p.60.

⁵⁰ "South Africa: The UDF", in Africa Confidential, (Vol.28, No.2, 21 January 1987), p.5.

and the ANC.⁵¹

There was a strong convergence at both the personal and ideological level between the ANC and the UDF. Its three presidents, Archie Gumede, Oscar Mpetha and Albertina Sisulu, were all supporters of the ANC before it was banned in 1960. Its patrons included the imprisoned ANC leaders, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki, as well as imprisoned members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the underground fighting wing of the ANC. Many, though not all, affiliates of the UDF endorsed the Freedom Charter before it was formally adopted by the Front in 1987. Many of the aims espoused by the ANC before it was banned were adopted by the UDF.

The UDF contended that people like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oscar Mpetha as well as the aims espoused by the ANC are part of a long-standing tradition of black resistance in South Africa. Any movement which opposes apartheid and seeks the support of black people must reflect this tradition.⁵²

However, these comments must be seen in the context of the period during which they were made. The UDF had to publicly distance itself from the ANC in order to avoid the fate of the latter organisation. This does not imply that the ANC and its policies did not play a role in the formation of the UDF, or in its activities thereafter.

The major difference between the two organisations was that the UDF had to reject violence whereas the ANC advocated armed struggle. Many of the 680-plus organisations affiliated to the UDF could not be described as

⁵¹ Price, R.M. (1991); The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political transformation in South Africa, 1975-1990, (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp.180-1.

⁵² Laurence, P. (1984); *op.cit.*, pp.273-4.

revolutionary. They included several middle class business groups, such as the Western Cape Traders Association, many church groups, and many cultural and sporting bodies, as well as the mainline township and civic associations which provided the core of the UDF.

What is significant here, however, is that by the end of the period of review the UDF had moved beyond its minimum programme of intent to develop ideological coherence around the aims and objectives of the ANC's Freedom Charter. Furthermore, the evolving principles and objectives of the UDF gave rise to a set of common objectives which were aligned to the ANC's position. These included: the achievement of democracy, including the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa, maintaining democratic practices within affiliated organisations, and the establishment of "organs of peoples power"; mass mobilisation and organisation by linking politics to the day-to-day issues concerning people such as worker, rent, transport, group area, community council, and other local issues; unity in struggle through which all democrats, regardless of race, religion or colour, shall take part together; and the achievement of the economic and political aspirations of the Freedom Charter.

This also met one of the strategic requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy: the creation of a broad alliance of social forces with united political, intellectual and moral objectives, while drawing the affiliates of the Front and the Front itself to the ANC's Freedom Charter.

4.4. Strategy and Tactics

An understanding of the UDF's strategies and tactics must include an analysis of the strategies and tactics of its affiliates. The UDF did not make policy for its affiliates nor did it impose particular strategies on them. The affiliates took up campaigns in ways suited to their own activities and

constituencies. In many cases tactics arose spontaneously. However, in some instances, a broad consensus on particular strategies arose among UDF affiliates.

The UDF and its affiliates used a wide variety of strategies and tactics during the period under review. Strategies and tactics changed many times and varied from affiliate to affiliate, from region to region, from time to time, and with varying degrees of success. These included boycotts of institutions, extensive mass mobilisation and organisation, the formation of alliances, challenge and confrontation, withdrawal of economic support, negotiation, clandestinity, and the creation of alternative administrative structures. The following analysis of the evolution of strategies and tactics demonstrates a shift from opposition and protest, to confrontation and challenge, resulting in a universalistic challenge of the dominant system.

4.4.1. Boycotts of institutions: The first purpose of the UDF was to oppose the new constitution and the "Koornhof Bills". During its campaign against these reform measures discussions were held over the strategies and tactics to be used by the Front and its affiliates.

On the 2nd November 1983, the South African government consulted the white electorate on the new constitution in a referendum. The white electorate endorsed the adoption of the constitution with a 66 percent majority support for the government. In mid-December 1983, the UDF held its first national conference in Port Elizabeth to discuss its strategy towards possible referenda for the Indian and coloured communities. At the centre of discussion was whether members should participate in the racial referenda and register a "no" vote, totally boycott the referenda, or allow each region freedom of choice. The conference was unable to reach a decision and regions indicated that they wanted to consult their membership. The UDF unanimously accepted

that if elections were held instead of referenda, it would call for a boycott.⁵³

Regional differences emerged on the question of the Front's participation in the racial referenda. The Natal UDF in particular argued that the majority of Indian voters in Natal would reject the new constitution.⁵⁴ They thus proposed that the UDF contest the issue in the referenda for Indians and coloureds. The Western Cape and Transvaal regions opposed participation in the referenda because they felt that their communities might vote in favour of the new constitution. This reflected an awareness of divisions within the Indian and coloured communities in these areas as well as uncertainty about the attitudes of these communities to the new dispensation. The Western Cape UDF pointed out that contesting the referenda was tantamount to participating in the new Parliament.⁵⁵ A decision, taken by the UDF national executive on the 25 January 1984, called for a non-racial referendum, a boycott of ethnic referenda, but left the way open for affiliates to take part in ethnic referenda if this was appropriate in terms of "local conditions".⁵⁶ However, with evidence of mounting opposition to participation in the tri-cameral constitution, Indian and coloured leaders opting for participation persuaded the government to abandon the idea of referenda for their communities.

The elections for the first 26 BLAs were scheduled for November and December 1983. The UDF and its affiliates stood at the forefront of the anti-election campaign. UDF volunteers distributed thousands of pamphlets and

⁵³ Survey of Race Relations, 1983, p.61.

⁵⁴ Mufson, S. (1990); Fighting Years: Black resistance and the struggle for a new South Africa, (Boston, Beacon Press), p.58.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.59.

⁵⁶ Statement of the UDF national executive committee, 25.01.84. Cited in Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.18.

conducted house-to-house campaigns in some African townships. In this campaign the pattern was set for meetings at houses in the townships where eligible voters were encouraged to boycott the elections. Despite new government efforts to break the tradition of boycott and election apathy within the townships, percentage polls were generally lower than the 1978-79 elections for the former community councils.⁵⁷ Percentage polls in the elections to the new Local Authorities were exceptionally low, for instance, in Soweto, 10,7 percent, Lekoa, 14,7 percent and Evaton, 5,9 percent.⁵⁸

Elections for the coloured and Indian chambers were scheduled for the end of August 1984. The UDF and its affiliates, together with other major anti-apartheid movements, such as the National Forum (NF) and several major trade unions not affiliated to the UDF, decided on a boycott campaign. But, as a test of its support and of opposition to the reform proposals, the UDF launched a "Million Signatures Campaign" on the 21 January 1984. This campaign involved large numbers of UDF members who were charged with collecting signatures throughout South Africa indicating the rejection of the new constitution and the Koornhof Bills and demanding a non-racial, unitary, and democratic South Africa. The campaign offered an opportunity to educate South Africans about the aims and objectives of the UDF and the implications of the constitution, to build unity, to establish grassroots support, and inform the international community of the mass rejection of apartheid.⁵⁹ By October just under 400,000 signatures had been collected. The UDF claimed that police harassment of UDF supporters was largely responsible for the shortfall. The campaign had also been overtaken by the anti-election

⁵⁷ Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁵⁸ Laurence, P. (1985); "Resistance to African town councils: The collapse of indirect rule", in Indicator SA, (Vol.2, No.4, January), p.12.

⁵⁹ Survey of Race Relations, 1984, p.19.

campaign.⁶⁰

The Million-signature campaign was initially over-shadowed by debate among Indian and coloured members of the UDF on whether to vote or abstain if given an opportunity to vote in a referendum on the new constitution. More importantly, however, Lodge points out that the Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO) was unenthusiastic about the tactic used during the campaign. SOYCO felt that the "signature blitz" (UDF canvassers visiting households in the townships to popularize the UDF) was too moderate.⁶¹ This demonstrates that the UDF did not have the capacity to direct the activities of its affiliates and may have contributed to the failure to achieve the objective of one million signatures. Eventually the focus shifted to a boycott of the elections for the Indian and coloured chambers.

The campaign took the form of a two-pronged attack. On the one level there was the direct mobilisation of Indian and coloured people through the UDF and its affiliates. This involved a series of mass rallies, house-to-house campaigns, distribution of literature and the holding of public meetings in which UDF spokesmen urged those attending to boycott the new constitutional dispensation. On another level, the UDF mobilised every potential anti-apartheid force through the trade unions, youth, student, women, religious, civic and other organisations. As one commentator put it:

The essence of the campaign was the basic grassroots mobilization of the people. It is here that the dynamism of the UDF and its affiliated bodies was displayed. The activity which provided the main thrust was meeting the people in their homes, churches, streets, sports grounds and elsewhere.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁶¹ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.60-61.

⁶² Georgie (1985); "Indian people on the march", in The African Communist, (No.106, Second Quarter), p.93.

On the weekend of 29/30 October 1983, the UDF held mass rallies in Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. On the eve of the November whites-only referendum, the UDF held a "people's weekend" - which comprised rallies in most major cities voicing opposition to the new constitution and Koornhof Bills - and was attended by about 30,000 people. Altogether, about 20,000 people attended UDF rallies in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth called over the weekend of 17 to 20 August 1984 to highlight opposition to the elections and to mark the UDF's first anniversary.⁶³

The tactics used by the UDF in these campaigns - grassroots mobilisation through house-to-house meetings, meetings in churches, streets, and elsewhere, and mass rallies - are exactly the type of Weberian tactics that Frost talks about. Essentially, these tactics served two main purposes - they popularized the UDF and mobilized opposition to the new political dispensation.

The results of the elections for the tri-cameral parliament indicate the widespread opposition to the new dispensation: the official percentage poll in the coloured election was 30 percent and in the Indian election 20 percent. The UDF put the figures at 17,5 percent in the coloured election and 15,5 percent in the Indian election. Following the election, the UDF claimed a large victory for the "forces of democracy" and called upon the newly-elected Members of Parliament to resign on the grounds that they did not have a mandate.⁶⁴

The debate over strategy was renewed in 1987 when general elections were

⁶³ Barrell, H. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁶⁴ Survey of Race Relations, 1984, p.19.

held for the tri-cameral parliament. UDF president Archie Gumede argued that the Front should reconsider its position because of the state of emergency. According to Gumede, contesting the elections would permit the UDF to operate publicly and openly express its views. In addition, because of the popularity of the Front, there would be little chance of losing. Elected UDF representatives would then refuse to take their seats and thereby destroy the legislature. These suggestions provoked an uproar within UDF circles but led to no change in strategy. Most UDF leaders continued to favour boycotting the elections and the Front decided not to participate in the general elections.⁶⁵

4.4.2. Mass mobilisation and organisation: During the late 1970s and early 1980s widespread popular struggles gave rise to a number of organisations in the black townships. This was in part a result of a conscious effort by anti-apartheid activists to establish broad-based, grassroots structures. Organisations also emerged in the aftermath of spontaneous township-wide struggles against the shortage and inadequate nature of housing; against increases in rent and transport costs; against forced removals and relocation in the homelands; against incorporation into the homelands; against squatter removals; and against Bantu Education.⁶⁶ The majority of these organisations were student organisations, youth congresses, and civic associations.

The UDF consciously used the tactics utilised by activists before its formation, i.e., it began to organise communities around concrete local issues and problems. The UDF drew attention to the "essential linkage between worker, rent, transport, group area, community council, and other local

⁶⁵ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.270.

⁶⁶ Refer to Chapter 3, pp.81-99 above.

issues".⁶⁷ UDF organisers, such as Terror Lekota in the Orange Free State, and Mathew Goniwe in the Eastern Cape, assisted in forming civic associations, youth congresses and student organisations by bringing people together on the issues which directly affected them.

The UDF's theme for 1985, "From Protest to Challenge: Mobilisation to Organisation", shifted the emphasis from mass mobilisation to mass organisation. The Front identified the need to develop "well-knit, cohesive mass organisations" to take advantage of widespread popular mobilisation during the previous year. This theme emphasised the need for organisational coherence and UDF activists proceeded to establish numerous community organisations. According to Friedman:

Before the early 1980s black resistance relied on mobilisation rather than organisation, on rallying protest rather than wielding power. Successive resistance movements were often able to mobilise large numbers of people around specific issues or behind charismatic leaders but they did not wield them into an organised and disciplined movement which could press for change. Numbers are no automatic guarantee of strength and these movements were crushed when the government acted against their relatively small group of leaders.⁶⁸

Large mass meetings were a key organisational tool of the UDF and its affiliates, particularly the civic associations which held regular mass meetings. Funerals for victims of clashes with the security forces also served as another form of recruitment for mass organisation. At these mass meetings and funerals, large crowds of UDF supporters and other mourners were led through speeches by leaders of the Front, while freedom songs were sung, and flags of the banned ANC and SACP openly displayed.

In 1985, UDF affiliates in the Eastern Cape introduced the street committee

⁶⁷ Price, R.M. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.181.

⁶⁸ Friedman, S. (1987B); "The struggle within the struggle: South African resistance strategies", in Transformation, (3), pp.58-9.

system into their structures. Each street formed a cell, headed by a committee, which formed the pillars of the civic associations and youth structures. These committees played two central roles: they assessed the feelings of the community with regard to certain issues and they mobilised support for political campaigns.

In 1987, in the wake of state repression and a clampdown on extra-parliamentary organisations following the declaration of a state of emergency in mid-1985 and another in the middle of 1986, the UDF decided on a change in strategy. Two factors were responsible for this change. Firstly, UDF activists realised that the state was nowhere as weak as it appeared before mid-1986 and that the fight for change would be protracted.⁶⁹ Secondly, the state clampdown on the UDF and its affiliates during the emergency provoked a search for new strategies to surmount the setbacks of the previous year. The debate over new strategies took place at a conference of the UDF National Working Committee. The conference adopted the theme DEFEND! CONSOLIDATE! ADVANCE!!

The UDF resolved to consolidate its organisational base by: (1) developing strategies and tactics, including underground work, and building organisations that were best able to weather the onslaught of repression; (2) deepening ideological and organisational unity within the UDF; (3) developing powerful, sector-based national affiliates; and, (4) developing political centres ("organisational collectives that are capable of providing political leadership") at every level of the UDF. The Front aimed to establish political centres by transforming all coordinating structures - the zonal, area and township structures, regional and national executive committees - into structures that

⁶⁹ Friedman, S. (1988); "Shifting strategies in black politics", in *Optima*, (36, September), pp.148-9.

provided political leadership in all popular struggles.⁷⁰

Thus, unlike the organisations leading the previous decade of resistance, the UDF committed itself to the formation of strong mass-based organisations, including sector-based ones, while establishing co-ordinating political centres to lead the political struggle. This commitment to strong organisation rather than the previous reliance on mass mobilisation led to sustained political involvement, thus providing greater opportunities for political education while providing the UDF with the dedicated foot-soldiers required to challenge the apartheid regime.

4.4.3. The creation of alliances: The formation of the UDF itself was the result of alliances between a broad range of community, political, church and other organisations. Although alliances are not new to extra-parliamentary opposition in South Africa - the most significant was the Congress Alliance of the 1950s - the alliance formed in the UDF is without precedent in its sheer magnitude. In 1983, the UDF brought together close to 600 organisations with a combined membership of two million people. It also brought together people from almost every walk of life, young and old, male and female, educated and uneducated, petty bourgeois and working class, socialist and liberal, religious and non-religious, Christian and Muslim, and black and white.

Tactical alliances also emerged during local, regional and national campaigns. Such alliances were of short duration and normally created as issues arose. These included campaigns against the tri-cameral parliament, the BLAs, Bantu Education, the various emergencies, etc. They took the form of alliances of numerous organisations to boycott elections, to organise mass stayaways, to

⁷⁰ See United Democratic Front (1987); "Build the Front", *op.cit.*

co-ordinate consumer boycotts, etc.

The UDF also began to consider tactical alliances with groups outside the "broad democratic movement" in order to broaden its political and moral influence over the widest possible range of South Africans. The UDF aimed to spread its influence by developing a working relationship with groups such as taxi-owners, traders, sports bodies, and religious and cultural groups and increasing the Front's influence over sectors within the ruling bloc - members of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), professionals, big business, etc.⁷¹

For the UDF, the most important strategic alliance was with the organised labour movement. From the outset, the UDF called on organised labour to join the Front. This call was rejected by sectors of the trade union movement, in particular FOSATU. However, the pressure of events in the townships and from members of the federation resulted in increasing cooperation between organised labour and the UDF in 1984.⁷² The formation of COSATU in December 1985 strengthened this relationship. A resolution taken at the UDF's 1987 national conference, calling for the building of united front structures which included COSATU affiliates at all levels, aimed at drawing COSATU members into the UDF.

4.4.4. Challenge and confrontation: The introduction of the new constitution and the "Koornhof Bills" also provoked a violent response by townships residents. The Vaal Triangle uprising, which began on 3 September 1984, was a popular response to the reforms as well as school-related grievances. In particular, residents of the African townships of the Vaal Triangle resented the new town councils and the rent increases they proposed towards the end

⁷¹ *Loc.cit.*

⁷² Refer to Chapter 7, pp.273-6 below.

of 1984. A wave of student protests, which began in Atteridgeville at the beginning of the year, combined with the volatile position resulting in a stayaway on the 3 September in the Vaal Triangle. Amidst calls on town councillors to resign, township youth attacked their houses and businesses and a number of councillors were murdered. The invasion of the townships by the security forces - an estimated 35,000 troops in 93 townships - provoked widespread clashes between the security forces and township youth.

This marked the beginning of the involvement of the SADF "on a continuous and country-wide basis in suppressing township resistance".⁷³ It set the stage for the widespread deployment of troops during the various states of emergency which followed from mid-1985. Consequently, the SADF 'assumed a major and permanent role in township control, in some cases surpassing the police as the primary elements of "law and order"'.⁷⁴

In addition to the national campaigns against the new political dispensation and the "Koornhof Bills", a large number of UDF affiliates were involved in a wide range of local popular struggles during the first years of the Front's existence. The wave of resistance which took place during the second half of 1984 and the first half of 1985 finally resulted in a crackdown on the extra-parliamentary opposition and the declaration of the first state of emergency on 21 July 1985. The repression and harassment of community organisations, the UDF in particular, led to transformations in the strategies and tactics of the Front. In particular, a major transformation of tactical responses to apartheid occurred as the UDF was drawn into an uprising

⁷³ Evans, M. and Phillips, M. (1988); "Intensifying Civil War: The role of the South African defence Force", in Frankel, N. et al. (eds.); State, resistance and change in South Africa, (Kent, Croom Helm), pp.128-9.

⁷⁴ Price, R.M. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.257.

which took the form of a revolt.⁷⁵

The wave of popular struggles waged by UDF affiliates during the uprising transformed the Front from an organisation formed to oppose the new constitution and the "Koornhof Bills", to the political centre of the internal struggle against apartheid. The majority of internal struggles waged against racial domination and capitalist exploitation were fought under the UDF banner. In addition, violent confrontation with the security forces reflected a transformation of tactics from resistance to revolt.

The characteristic features of this revolt involved school, rent and consumer boycotts, attacks on town councillors and collaborators, and street-fighting with the security forces. During this period, however, the notorious "kangaroo courts", "necklacing" of informers, and intimidation of residents who opposed or disobeyed calls for stayaways and consumer boycotts became widespread, particularly in the Eastern Cape. From September 1984 to May 1987, the "unrest" situation in South Africa was marked by widespread violence.

There is no universally accepted definition of the term political violence.⁷⁶

Nieburg defines political violence as:

Acts of disruption, destruction, injury whose purpose, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation, and/or effects have political significance, that is, tend to modify the behaviour of others in a bargaining situation that have consequences for the social system.⁷⁷

This broad definition of violence also includes state violence. A definition of

⁷⁵ Lodge, T. (1991); "Rebellion: The turning of the tide", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); All, Here, and Now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s, South Africa Update Series, (Cape Town, David Philip), p.65.

⁷⁶ See Booth, D.G. (1987); An interpretation of political violence in Lamont and KwaMashu, unpublished M.Soc.Sc. Dissertation, University of Natal, January, pp.14-19.

⁷⁷ Nieburg, H.L. (1969); Political Violence: The behavioral process, (New York, St. Martin's Press), p.13. Cited in Booth, G.B. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.15.

political violence by opposition groups is provided by Gurr in Why Men Rebel. Gurr defines political violence as:

All collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors - including competing political groups as well as incumbents - or its policies.⁷⁸

A working definition of political violence by opposition groups would combine these two definitions and read as follows: political violence by opposition groups includes all acts of disruption, destruction, injury against the regime, its actors, or its policies, which are intended to modify the behaviour or policies of the regime that have consequences for the social system. Such a working definition includes mass stayaways, school boycotts and consumer boycotts which, although not inherently violent, often end in violence because of other factors, particularly, the actions of the security forces.⁷⁹ Other obvious examples of political violence are attacks on personnel and property, and bomb attacks.

The first phase of this revolt began in the Vaal Triangle townships on 3 September 1984 and reached a climax with a ninety percent successful mass stayaway strike on November 5 and 6. The violent upheaval in the African townships of the Vaal Triangle was directed towards elected town councillors. Town councillors were called on to resign, while the rejection of the councils was often expressed violently. Three town councillors were murdered while others were subjected to continuing physical and psychological pressure to resign.⁸⁰

The uprising soon spread to the PWV area and was taken up in the

⁷⁸ Gurr, T.R. (1970); Why Men Rebel, (Princeton, Princeton University Press), pp.3-4. Cited in Booth, G.B. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁷⁹ Booth, G.B. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.16.

⁸⁰ Laurence, P. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.12.

Eastern Cape resulting in a virtual collapse of the town councils. The ANC also made its call on the struggling masses to make themselves ungovernable at this time.⁸¹ During the first half of 1985, popular resistance to local government spread to small rural communities and by June, only two African townships still had functioning councils.⁸² A wave of student boycotts began during the middle of 1983 and continued to the end of 1986. An important feature of this wave of protest was the linkage between demands around educational issues and national political issues.

Although the UDF officially opposed violence - any attempt to officially support violence would have resulted in a swift crackdown on the organisation and possibly its banning - violence became an integral element of the revolt. With the spread of the revolt from the Vaal Triangle to almost every part of the country, violent confrontation with the security forces became widespread. Violent clashes with the security forces, barricading of streets, attacks on town councillors and their property, and destruction of government property became a characteristic feature of township struggles. The black youth were at the forefront of this confrontation with the security forces and apartheid agents.⁸³

According to the Bureau of Information, between September 1984 and May 1987, 374 people were killed by the necklace method.⁸⁴ 4,638 private houses, 1,549 schools, 1,048 shops/factories, 1,021 houses of policemen, 111 offices, 64 post offices, 47 churches and 27 clinics were damaged during

⁸¹ *Loc.cit.*

⁸² Klug,H. and Seidman,G. (1985); "South Africa: Amandla Ngawethu!", in Socialist Review, (No.84), p.28.

⁸³ Refer to Chapter 6 below.

⁸⁴ Bureau of Information (1987); "The unrest situation in South Africa, September 1984 - May 1987", in ISSUP Strategic Review, (August), Graph 10, p.32.

unrest incidents.⁸⁵ 9,704 private delivery vehicles, 8,368 buses, 3,634 police vehicles and 198 Post Office vehicles were damaged.⁸⁶ Between January 1985 and December 1986, 4,140 attacks were made on the security forces, including 2,485 incidents of stone throwing and 816 petrol bomb attacks in 1986.⁸⁷

The emergence of vigilantes - e.g. the African Parents' Concerned Committee in Uitenhage - and the activities of municipal policemen, as well as clashes with other political organisations led to the formation of defence systems around street committees in some areas. The first of these self-defence units were set up in the Transvaal, Cape, and Natal townships as a means of protecting leaders from vigilante and police attacks. These units soon became responsible for enforcing consumer boycotts and stayaways.⁸⁸

The uprising initiated a change in tactics for many local affiliates of the UDF. According to Murray:

...the tactical focus on large-scale mass mobilisation (rallies, marches, street agitations, and so forth) gradually gave way to low-profile highly mobile hit-and-run actions. ...the cycle of mass mobilisation/police killings/public funerals reached a point of exhaustion in every community transfixed by the political upheaval. Small groups of self-conscious activists experimented with new organisational forms, modifying their tactics to respond to the particular situation they faced.⁸⁹

This tactical shift involved the search for more radical solutions that required harsher tactics. And:

Over the course of events, assaults on town councillors, black policemen, and other local officials characterised as collaborators achieved a certain popular legitimacy and

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Graph 13, p.35.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Graph 14, p.36.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Graph 11, p.33.

⁸⁸ Davis, S.M. (1987); Apartheid's rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War, (New Haven, Yale University Press), p.91.

⁸⁹ Murray, M. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.374.

resonance, replacing and superseding the vague commitment to nonviolence that had historically deep roots amongst the oppressed in South Africa.⁹⁰

On the one hand, the UDF was confronted by a spontaneous wave of militancy over which it had no control. The violence which erupted during the revolt was driven by the demand for action and retaliation on the part of young blacks who were raised in an era of conflict, harassment, and torture.⁹¹ The UDF had to tread carefully on the issue of violence, for fear of losing influence with the militant youth they wanted to restrain.⁹² On the other hand, any overt support for the violent activities of the youth would have increased the possibility of the proscription of the Front.

4.4.5. Creation of alternative administrative structures: Violence during the revolt was directed specifically against local government structures and town councillors. Between September 1984 and the end of March 1985, there were 243 acts of violence against community councillors, including 66 petrol-bombings which totally destroyed 32 homes.⁹³ Between September 1984 and June 1985, 240 town councillors, including 27 mayors, resigned.⁹⁴ 'Within a short time, action against "collaborators" became elevated into a tactic which purportedly aimed to make the townships "ungovernable" by driving from them anyone who was seen to be "making apartheid work" by collaborating with the authorities'.⁹⁵ The destruction of local town councils had two objectives:

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.376.

⁹¹ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.96-7.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁹³ Morris, M. (1985); Soapy Water and Cabinda, (Cape Town, Terrorism Research Centre), p.17.

⁹⁴ Murray, M. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.303.

⁹⁵ Friedman, S. (1986); "Black politics at the crossroads", South African Institute of Race Relations Topical Briefing, 2/10/86, p.3.

firstly, as pointed out above, to make apartheid unworkable; and, secondly, to establish "people's power" in the townships.

In early 1984, ANC president Oliver Tambo put forward this strategy in an address entitled "Liberation is in Sight". He said:

We must begin to use our accumulated strength to destroy the organs of government of the apartheid regime. We have to undermine and weaken its control over us, exactly by frustrating its attempts to control us...rendering the enemy's instruments of authority unworkable...creating conditions in which the country becomes increasingly ungovernable.⁹⁶

The concept of "ungovernability" became a regular theme of UDF speakers thereafter. For example, Thami Mali, chairman of the Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee, echoed this theme in the following words:

No amount of intimidation can stop us on our way to liberation ...our duty as the oppressed people is to step up our resistance and create an ungovernable situation.⁹⁷

4.4.6. Withdrawal of economic support: The uprising was also accompanied by a rent boycott in the Vaal Triangle townships. The rent boycott soon spread to the Orange Free State and the Eastern Transvaal. While most of these boycotts were in response to increases in rent and service charges, by mid-1986 they took on a strategic significance. This followed a meeting of civic associations convened by the UDF at the beginning of the year. Rent boycotts were now used as a general weapon of protest and boycotting communities began to link national political demands with their local demands.

The highly successful mass stayaway in the Transvaal on 5 and 6 November 1984 radically altered the character of co-operation between community organisations and trade unions. The COSAS-initiated stayaway drew support from a number of affiliates of FOSATU. On the weekend of 16 and 17

⁹⁶ Tambo, O. (1984); "Liberation is in Sight", in The African Communist, (2nd Quarter). Cited in Pomeroy, W.J. (1986); Apartheid, Imperialism and African freedom, (New York, International Publishers), p.220.

⁹⁷ The African Communist, (2nd Quarter, 1985). Quoted in Pomeroy, W.J. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.220.

March 1985, workers and residents of Port Elizabeth heeded PEBCO's call for a stayaway from work and a boycott of white shops, despite the rejection of the action by organised labour. In 1986, two mass stayaways, called by Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth community organisations, were widely supported.

Consumer boycotts were introduced in 1985 in the Eastern Cape coastal town, Port Alfred, where local organisations organised a boycott against white retailers following a price increase.⁹⁸ The success of this boycott led to the spread of its use to other towns in the region and to the rest of the country by the end of the year.⁹⁹

4.4.7. Negotiations¹⁰⁰: Popular struggles during 1985 and early 1986 introduced a new tactic at the local level, particularly in the Eastern Cape townships (in Uitenhage, Port Alfred and Cradock) and Tumahole (near Parys). A number of UDF-aligned community organisations entered into local-level negotiations with private as well as government bodies. These included local Chambers of Commerce and Industry, businesses, white local authorities and the police. Such negotiations were directed towards gaining concessions - stemming from a wide range of popular demands - from the government. In particular, the collapse of the BLAs and popular support for local UDF campaigns persuaded the white business-community and white authorities to negotiate with UDF-aligned boycott committees. According to Friedman:

This has been prompted either by the consequences of "ungovernability" - the local councils have collapsed and the authorities, forced to keep township services running,

⁹⁸ Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.153.

⁹⁹ Helliker,K. et.al. (1987); "'Asithengi!': Recent consumer boycotts", in Moss,G. and Obery,I. (eds.); South African Review 4, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.34. Refer to Chapter 3, pp.103-5 above.

¹⁰⁰ The crisis within the country during the mid-1980s also gave rise to discussions between delegations of prominent white South Africans and the ANC outside the country. This began with talks between several executives of South Africa's larger industrial firms and the most senior members of the ANC's National Executive Committee in Lusaka in September 1985. Refer to Price,M. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.238-9.

have been compelled to deal with the only organised bodies in the townships that seem to enjoy legitimacy - or by the consumer boycott, which has prompted business and municipalities to deal with its local organisers. These talks are significant because they give local black communities an opportunity to influence township conditions for the first time and so represent a shift of power, albeit a limited one, from whites to blacks.¹⁰¹

4.4.8. Clandestinity: The widespread detention of UDF members and leaders, removal of UDF leaders through political trials and imprisonment and a nationwide clampdown on extra-parliamentary opposition soon began to take their toll on the UDF's operations. In August 1987 it was estimated that 75 per cent of the 30,000 detainees at the time were members of the UDF or its affiliates. In addition, numerous UDF activists were also killed or "disappeared" in mysterious circumstances.¹⁰² The net result of this was to force many UDF activists underground, with many affiliates of the organisation operating semi-clandestinely. Organisations developed "a structure of shadow leaders who were never publicly identified and thus were less vulnerable to harassment".¹⁰³

The banning and disruption of public meetings during the second state of emergency (declared in mid-1986) had a negative affect on organisational practices. Many affiliates of the Front conducted meetings in secrecy, often without recording minutes. National conferences and workshops of the UDF had to be held in secrecy during the emergency. In addition, some UDF affiliates had to be launched secretly, including SAYCO and the Women's Congress, both launched in 1987.

In some instances, community organisations stepped into the power vacuum

¹⁰¹ Friedman,S. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.6.

¹⁰² Davies,R., O'Meara,D. and Dlamini,S. (1988); The struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, (London and New Jersey, Zed Books Ltd.), p.452.

¹⁰³ See Lodge,T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.95.

created by the disintegration of local state structures. Certain civic organisations took over some of the functions of local councils, including refuse removal, policing the townships, and the establishment of parks. From mid-1985 onward, community organisations set up street committee structures, designed to ensure "people's power", or mass participatory democracy. Townships governed by people's power were often called "liberated zones", which became no-go areas for state apparatuses, including the police and white authorities.

During the middle of the 1980s, civic organisations began challenging the state's authority by forming people's courts as an alternative means of administering justice in the townships. People's courts effectively removed issues from the jurisdiction of the state and placed them under the jurisdiction of community organisations. People's courts became increasingly acceptable to township residents as the lack of confidence in the police grew with the spread of civil unrest at the end of 1984. The functions of people's courts included: resolving disputes between neighbours and resolving family arguments; trying petty criminals; imposing curfews to lower the incidence of street brawling and alcohol-related violence; and disciplining young comrades guilty of "hooliganism and criminal behaviour" during campaigns.¹⁰⁴

In sum, the strategies and tactics which stressed the formation of alliances, mass mobilisation and mass politicisation during the early years of the UDF conformed to the Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy. Indeed, these tactics became a central goal of UDF activists through most of the period under review where there was a conscious effort to establish organisations, to link all popular struggles and to create alliances around

¹⁰⁴ Seekings, J. (1989); "People's courts and popular politics", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 5, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.120. and Lodge, T. (1987); "The United Democratic Front", in Brewer, J.D. (ed.); South Africa: Five minutes to midnight, (London, Verso), pp.220-226.

organisations formed in response to these struggles (in other words, to promote unity-in-action). This is also demonstrated by some of the principles and objectives of the UDF and its affiliates, the role of activists like Mathew Goniwe and Terror Lekota, and the structural transformations of the UDF (the formation of area committees) and the activities of affiliated organisations.¹⁰⁵

However, this was punctuated by significant episodes of confrontation and an insurrectionary mood became more evident during the last years of the period under review. This was a result of both the level of struggle throughout the country (the successful creation of areas of "people's power" in many parts of the country) and the resulting clampdown by the authorities. What has been demonstrated, however is that the strategies and tactics of the UDF and its affiliates eventually evolved "into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system", thus meeting an essential requirement of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy. In this sense, the particular interests and demands of affiliates of the UDF were transformed into popular struggles and universal political demands aiming at national liberation.

In conclusion, this analysis has demonstrated that the formation of the UDF, its objectives and aims and its strategies and tactics met certain essential requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy: a historical bloc of all classes and strata opposed to the ruling bloc, united with common political, intellectual and moral objectives, and engaged in a universal political challenge of the dominant system. Here we see in practice the necessity of creating a broad alliance of social forces under a minimum programme during that stage of struggle which leads to a democratic revolution.

¹⁰⁵ This does not imply that all affiliated organisations were formed or led by people who were conscious of these principles and objectives but that conditions of struggle (such as the strong need for the establishment of local organisations to engage in struggles involving material or socio-political issues, the existence of other organisations in the area, etc.) promoted the formation of organisations and of unity-in-action.

In the first place, the UDF was formed in 1983 by a large number of anti-apartheid forces consisting of members from every racial and virtually every class group. Its formation was provoked by the introduction of a new constitution, which excluded Africans from the central political system, and the so-called "Koornhof Bills". Initially the prevailing view on the role of the UDF was that it would coordinate opposition to the government's reforms. In this sense it was a broad alliance of social forces under a minimum programme. In 1985, however, it became clear that the Front's role was more extensive and included coordinating resistance to apartheid and advancing mobilisation and organisation. Its role became one of promoting mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc, thus meeting another essential requirement of the Leninist/Gramscian model. In 1987, the UDF claimed a prime role for itself in the struggle for liberation: that of organising the masses of the people "in an unstoppable tide towards liberation". Its role now was that of a broad alliance of social forces which was directed primarily at the goal of a democratic revolution.

Secondly, by the end of the period of review the evolving principles and objectives of the UDF had given rise to a set of common political, intellectual and moral objectives. These included: the achievement of democracy, including the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa, democratic practices within organisations, and the establishment of "organs of peoples power"; mass mobilisation and organisation by linking politics to the day-to-day issues concerning people such as worker, rent, transport, group area, community council, and other local issues; unity in struggle through which all democrats, regardless of race, religion or colour, shall take part together; and the achievement of the economic and political aspirations of the Freedom Charter. These objectives were also closely aligned to the objectives of the ANC.

Finally, the evolution of the UDF's strategies and tactics culminated in a universalistic challenge of the dominant system. At first the UDF stressed the formation of alliances and mass mobilisation. These are exactly the type of Weberian tactics that Mervyn Frost talks about. Essentially, these tactics served two main purposes - they popularized the UDF and mobilized opposition to the new political dispensation. From 1985 onward, the UDF stressed the formation of mass-based organisations as a means of sustaining political activism. This new tactic was accompanied by a wave of popular struggles, beginning in September 1984, which soon took the form of a country-wide revolt as community organisations engaged in numerous struggles which challenged the state's authority. Violent clashes with the security forces, barricading of streets, attacks on town councillors and their property, and destruction of government property became a characteristic feature of township struggles.

This violent uprising was accompanied by a transformation of rent and consumer boycotts from a weapon of protest to a challenge of the dominant system as boycotting communities began to link national political demands with their local demands. The uprising, which continued into 1986, gave rise to two important shifts in tactics which reflected a limited shift in the locus of power in the African townships: firstly, the establishment of "peoples power", when certain civic associations took over the running of local administration and justice; and negotiations with white authorities and businessmen. The combined effect of all these was a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system, thus meeting an essential requirement of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy. In this sense, the particular interests and demands of affiliates of the UDF were transformed into popular struggles and universal political demands aiming at national liberation. This also met the ANC's strategic objective of intensifying internal resistance.

Chapter 5

MEMBERSHIP OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

5.1. Introduction

One of the essential requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy was the political and ideological struggle to raise revolutionary consciousness. This is a struggle for hegemony, in which the United Front increasingly acquires political and ideological leadership through a shift in the balance of social and cultural forces towards it. For both Lenin and Gramsci, this is done by taking leadership of all organisations in civil society engaged in popular democratic struggles and uniting all protest against the ruling class into a single stream. It is necessary, then, to examine the membership of the UDF in order to determine the extent of its organisational and political leadership within South African civil society.

5.2. Overview

The United Democratic Front was essentially a coalition of close to 700 organisations varying in function, size and popular impact. In terms of the UDF's constitution, membership was only open to organisations and not to individuals. The UDF's Working Principles outlined the conditions of membership of the Front:

* All organisations present at the first national conference otherwise than as observers, shall be members of the UDF subject to:

- their right to withdrawal
- review by the National Executive Committee in consultation with regional councils or by the National General Council from time to time.

* All organisations which are prepared to commit themselves to the declaration policy and to the programme of action will be eligible to make an application for affiliation through the regional councils.

* In terms of membership of national organisations which are not members of regional committees shall be decided from time to time by (the) National Executive Committee in

consultation with regional councils.¹

In order to qualify for membership organisations had to have: a belief in the tenets of democracy; an unshakeable conviction in the creation of a non-racial, unitary state in South Africa undiluted by racial or ethnic considerations as formulated in the bantustan policy; an adherence to the need for unity in struggle which all democrats regardless of race, religion or colour shall take part together; a recognition of the necessity to work in consultation with, and reflect the demands of democratic people wherever they may be - in worker, community and student organisations.

At the inaugural conference of the UDF in 1983, five hundred and sixty-five organisations, totalling 1,5 million supporters registered delegates.² These organisations can be divided as follows:

1. Student/youth organisations: Forty-seven student and 313 youth organisations registered at the conference providing the majority of participants.
2. Trade unions: Only eighteen trade unions were represented at the conference.
3. Civic organisations: Representatives of eighty-two civic organisations participated.
4. Women's organisations: Thirty-two women's organisations were represented.
5. Other organisations: including political organisations such as the Transvaal Indian Congress; religious organisations; sports organisations, etc. Some

¹ United Democratic Front (1983); National Launch, (Cape Town, United Democratic Front), August 20, pp.8-9.

² Lodge, T. (1991); "Rebellion: The turning of the tide", in Lodge, T and Nasson, B. (eds.); All, Here, and Now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s, South Africa Update Series, (Cape Town, David Philip), p.51. Refer also to Appendix A below.

seventy-three such organisations were represented at the launch.³

"At its peak the UDF would claim the adherence of about seven hundred affiliates grouped in ten regional clusters embracing every major concentration of population throughout the country."⁴ The UDF claimed a membership of close to two million. However, a number of factors make it virtually impossible to determine the actual membership of the Front. One of the main obstacles to establishing the membership of the UDF was the fact that many of its affiliates could not provide verifiable membership figures. Many UDF affiliates did not have membership numbers (they did not give out cards, did not collect dues) and this, coupled with fleeting membership in many cases and state repression, rendered any estimate of UDF membership unworkable.⁵ Another difficulty lay in the widespread practice of individuals with membership in more than one local affiliate of the UDF. However, as Njikelana points out:

The mass base of organisations which are unable to issue membership cards, collect dues, have dues deducted, pay full time organisers and operate through formal structures, can only be assessed according to the support their programmes enjoy. Therefore it is primarily in the struggles waged by these organisations that the extent or lack of mass base can be assessed....It is the organisation's ability to act and respond in struggle that exposes the degree of support, or the mass base, that it can call upon.⁶

Support for the UDF was not confined to the membership of its affiliate organisations. There were large numbers of unorganised people who supported the policies and objectives of the UDF. Some of these people participated in national campaigns of the UDF such as the anti-tricameral parliament campaign and the million signature campaign while many

³ *Ibid.*, Table 1, p.51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁵ Lodge, T. (1987); "The United Democratic Front: Leadership and Ideology", in Brewer, J.D. (ed.); After Soweto: An unfinished journey, (Oxford, The Clarendon Press), p.207.

⁶ Njikelana, S. (1984); "Unions and the UDF", in Work in Progress, (No.32, July), p.31.

participated in campaigns initiated by local affiliates of the UDF, e.g. consumer, rent, and transport boycotts.⁷ Thus, it is necessary to focus on the support the UDF was able to command rather than membership to determine the mass base of the organisation.

The UDF conducted a number of national campaigns during the period of review.⁸ The first of these, the "Million Signature Campaign", led to the collection of 400,000 signatures indicating the opposition of close to half-a-million people to the introduction of the tri-cameral parliament. The UDF's anti-election campaigns in 1984 also contributed to the low polls recorded in the elections for the new parliament and the BLAs.

Another indication of support for the UDF can be drawn from the numerous local mass campaigns conducted largely by UDF affiliates. These campaigns centred around local issues and involved rent, consumer and transport boycotts as well as mass-stayaways.⁹ According to Kotze, from mid-1984 to 12 June 1986, at least 49 boycott actions took place.¹⁰ However, this is an inadequate means of assessing support for the UDF because boycotts have been a central feature of popular culture since the 1940s. The growth and development of this political culture is manifested, among other popular struggles, in the 1973 Durban strikes, the 1976 Soweto revolt, the 1980 school boycotts, and the numerous local protests between the period 1979-1984 which were generated by diverse and disparate grievances. Furthermore, the participants in such campaigns may have experienced similar grievances

⁷ Lodge, T. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.207.

⁸ Refer to Chapter 4, pp.142-7 above for an outline of national campaigns of the UDF.

⁹ Refer to Chapter 8 below.

¹⁰ Kotze, H. (1990); "The support base of the ANC: Myth or reality?", in Esterhuysen, W. and Nel, P. (eds.); The ANC and its leaders, (Cape Town, Tafelberg Publishers), p.79. Refer to chapter 8 below for an analysis of campaigns by local civic associations.

underlying these campaigns - such as high rents, bus-fare increases, etc. - and may not necessarily have been supporters or members of the UDF.

Another means of determining support for the UDF is through the use of opinion polls. However, careful use must be made of surveys as indications of political support. With the climate of suspicion and fear which prevailed in South Africa during the 1980s, and an unprecedented level of state repression, surveys of political opinions underestimated the real measure of support for resistance movements.¹¹ Fear of persecution, arrest and imprisonment renders many opinion surveys in South Africa unreliable. Nevertheless, certain preferences can be observed by focusing on a number of surveys.

In 1984, two surveys were conducted into support among urban Africans for various political groups. Table 1 below provides the results of these surveys.

Table 1: Support among urban Africans for political organisations, 1984

Political Organisation	HSRC Survey	Schlemmer Survey
ANC/Mandela	20,0%	27,0%
UDF	19,8%	11,0%
AZAPO	19,6%	5,0%
Inkatha/Buthelezi	18,9%	14,0%
Other/None	55,0%	43,0%

Source: De Kock, C.J., Rhodie, N. and Couper, M.P. (1985); 'Black views on socio-political change in South Africa', in Van Vuuren, J. et.al. (eds.); *South Africa: A plural Society in Transition*, (Durban, Butterworths); and Schlemmer, L. (1984); *Black Workers' attitudes to disinvestment*, (Durban, Butterworths). Cited in Swilling, M. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.107.

In a 1985 study of African political preferences in the urban areas, Orkin

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.71.

found that Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha drew 8 percent of support, Bishop Tutu had 16 percent of support, the UDF and so-called "radical groups" 14 percent, Nelson Mandela and the ANC 31 percent, and others 3 percent, while 8 percent said they didn't know and 13 percent supported none.¹²

In September 1985, the Institute of Black Research, based in Durban, and the Centre for Applied Social Sciences, based in Johannesburg, conducted a survey into black attitudes to change in South Africa. The following are the results of the responses to the question: Which one leader or organisation would you most like to represent you in solving your problems or grievances?¹³

Mandela (23) and ANC (8).....	31
Bishop Tutu (16).....	16
UDF (8) and other anti-investment groups (6).....	14
Buthelezi (6) and Inkatha (2).....	8
P.W.Botha/Government (5).....	5
Other pro-investment groups.....	3
Other.....	3
None.....	13
Don't Know.....	8

Table 2 below provides the results of a 1987 nationwide Government poll on African support for organisations. This survey revealed that the UDF drew 28 per cent of the support in the Eastern Cape and 23 per cent of the support

¹² Orkin, M. (1986); Disinvestment, the struggle and the future: What black South Africans really think, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press). Cited in Kotze, H. (1990); *op.cit.*, Figure 1, p.73.

¹³ Meer, F. (ed.) (1989); Resistance in the townships, (Durban, Madiba Publications), p.274.

in the Western Cape.¹⁴

Table 2: Government poll on support for organisations among Africans, 1987

Organisation	Support	Metropolitan	Urban	Rural
ANC	30,9%	49,3%	30,3%	20,0%
Inkatha	14,1%	3,8%	11,0%	20,3%
UDF	10,2%	14,1%	9,5%	6,6%
Trade Unions	1,2%	1,4%	1,9%	0,8%
AZAPO	1,3%	1,7%	0,8%	0,8%
COSAS	1,2%	1,4%	0,6%	0,7%
NP	1,0%	0,6%	1,8%	0,9%
PFP	1,4%	1,7%	1,5%	1,1%
PAC	0,9%	2,4%	0,1%	0,3%
Uncertain	33,5%	18,3%	36,1%	44,7%
Refused	2,8%	3,3%	4,4%	2,2%
Other	1,5%	2,0%	2,0%	1,6%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Kotze, H. (1990); *op.cit.*, Table 5, p.76.

Most of the surveys above tend to obscure the extent of support for the UDF. A large number of supporters of the ANC were also likely to be members and supporters of the UDF. But it is clear from these surveys that the Charterist tradition - which the UDF was clearly identified with by the end of its first year of existence - enjoyed widespread support.

The Front's membership was drawn from almost every major anti-apartheid tradition in the country. The older members were largely people who grew up under the Congress tradition and brought into the UDF their experiences of the 1950s Defiance Campaign. These included members of the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Congress. The Front's membership included a small number of defectors from the coloured Labour Party and the Western Cape-based Unity

¹⁴ Kotze, H. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.76.

Movement. But the overwhelming majority of UDF members were the students and youth who grew up during the heyday of Black Consciousness.

5.3. Leadership

The UDF had three levels of leadership: national, regional, and local. The national leadership consisted of the patrons and the National Executive Committee (NEC). The NEC comprised a Presidency consisting of three Presidents, an executive chairperson appointed by the NEC from time to time, two vice-presidents appointed by each duly constituted region, the two secretaries of each constituted region, two executive members elected by each region and two national treasurers. The NEC was responsible for implementing the policy and programme of the UDF. The UDF also had two full-time officers - a General-Secretary and a Publicity Secretary, who were also members of the NEC. The NEC was also empowered to co-opt persons at its discretion from the regions which were not constituted at the time, or any other person likely to make a significant contribution to its functions. The NEC, which consisted of approximately 30 people, met every two months while the secretariat carried out the day-to-day work of the Front.

At the regional level there were ten Regional Executive Committees (RECs): Transvaal, Natal, Western Cape, Border (East London and environs), Eastern Cape (around Port Elizabeth), South Coast (southern Natal), Southern Cape, Northern Cape, Orange Free State, and Northern Transvaal. The RECs consisted of a president, two secretaries, a treasurer and a number of additional executive members as determined by the Regional General Council (RGC). The day-to-day work of the region was carried out by the Regional Secretariat.

The major authority for decision-making lay at the local level with affiliate organisations grouped under the regional committees or, in some cases,

under more localised sub-regions or area committees.¹⁵ In the Western Cape sub-regions were created for Cape Town, Northern Suburbs, Southern Suburbs, Athlone, Mitchells Plain, Townships, Stellenbosch, Paarl and Worcester. In the Transvaal, sub-regions were established for Soweto, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Vaal Triangle, West Rand, and East Rand. In Natal, UDF sub-regions were established for Western Areas, North Coast, Merebank and Pondoland.

The UDF National Patrons were prominent public individuals and leaders of large organisations. Patrons had no duties or function in the structure but their prominence in the anti-apartheid struggle and high profiles permitted them to make statements on behalf of the organisation. The Launching Conference elected 20 Patrons. The three founding presidents were Archie Gumede, son of a former ANC leader, Albertina Sisulu, wife of Walter Sisulu, life-prisoner in Pollsmoor prison, and Oscar Mpetha, the veteran trade unionist. There were six vice-presidents: Christmas Tinto and Joe Marks from Cape Town; George Sewpersadh and Virgil Bonhomme from Natal; and George du Plessis and Frank Chikane from the Transvaal. The six regional secretaries were Yunus Mohamed, Joe Phaahla, Trevor Manuel, Cheryl Carolus, Mohamed Valli and Moss Chikane. Popo Molefe was elected national secretary of the UDF. The treasurers were Mewa Ramgobin and Cassim Salojee. Other executive members were Prof. Jerry Coovadia, Rev. Mcibisi Xundu, A.M. Salojee, Aubrey Mokoena, Mildred Lesia, and Rev. M.A. Stofile. Patrick ("Terror") Lekota was elected publicity secretary.¹⁶

According to one commentator:

In schematic terms, the upper echelons and middle-range organisers of the UDF consist

¹⁵ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.52.

¹⁶ "The UDF Advance", in *Africa Confidential*, (Vol.26, No.25, 11 Dec, 1985), p.3 and United Democratic Front (1983); *National Launch*, *op.cit.*, p.6.

principally of three general types: (1) an older generation, veterans of the popular struggles initiated by the Congress Alliance in the 1950s and early 1960s; (2) a younger generation of radical/Marxist university-trained white intellectuals with little or no direct experience of earlier phases of struggle but firmly committed to the programmatic aims of the Freedom Charter; and (3) a youthful contingent of black people - the Soweto generation - impatient for radical change and seeking an organisational focus for their anti-apartheid energies.¹⁷

Tom Lodge made a study of the national executive of the UDF, together with the leadership of the five most developed regions in 1985. He found that only eight of the sixty-one leaders were women. They were mainly young, with six in their twenties, seventeen in their thirties, eleven in their early forties, four were in their fifties and ten were over sixty. Fifteen were ANC veterans which included those involved in clandestine ANC activities in the 1960s and 1970s. Of the ANC group, five were also members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, seven were involved in SACTU (in some cases the same people), and seven served long prison sentences for political offenses. Four executive members were associated with the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses, two with the Liberal Party, two with the Coloured Labour Party, six with the Black Consciousness Movement, and one with the New Unity Movement.

Lodge found that the leadership was heavily middle class: eleven from highly-paid professional backgrounds (legal, medical or academic), and three priests, eight teachers, a nurse, a legal clerk, a social worker, a researcher, and two technicians; 17 were workers (including four full-time trade union officials), three of them skilled artisans and the rest labourers or industrial workers. Six executive members were professional activists, mainly youth or student congress organisers. However, the leadership did not contain people from middle-management, modern commercial occupations, township business, and petty trading. Finally, the UDF leadership was predominantly African, though

¹⁷ Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of agony, time of destiny, (London, Verso), p.216.

the five executives included six Indians, eight coloureds, and five whites.¹⁸

Mark Swilling investigated the 62 UDF leaders from six regional UDF executives. He found that 33 were in economic positions that could be defined as working class, while sixteen were teachers/lecturers, four were doctors/nurses/ social workers, five were lawyers, two priests, two technicians and two students. Swilling concluded that "this profile reflects the existence of a working class and intellectual/professional leadership".¹⁹ Most of the leaders owed their positions to their activities in political, trade union and other local organisations. According to Swilling, twenty were active in civic associations, sixteen in political organisations (including the ANC and Indian Congress), fourteen in trade unions, ten in youth organisations, eight in student organisations, five in white organisations and three in women's groups.²⁰

Lodge found that the Western Cape regional executive was almost evenly balanced between workers and professionals, with three of the seven professionals from working-class backgrounds.²¹ Nine members of this regional executive were teachers, lecturers and students, according to Swilling.²² The Eastern Cape's executive comprised two old SACTU/Umkhonto stalwarts, two teachers, a factory worker, and a technician with some experience as a trade union organiser. The Transvaal executive included a high proportion of young members and had an unusually high proportion of

¹⁸ Lodge, T. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.207.

¹⁹ Swilling, M. (1988); "The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt", in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds.); Popular struggles in South Africa, (New Jersey, Africa World Press), p.97.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.98.

²¹ Lodge, T. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.208.

²² Swilling, M. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.97.

people (ten) with some experience of working in youth organisations during the 1970s and 1980s. A large proportion of the Natal executive fell into the professional/middle class categories, with most having experience in leading local organisations. This executive also contained a number of young leaders but contained very few representatives of organised labour.²³

Leadership at the local level reflected the diversity of affiliated organisations and their membership. Local leaders were drawn from every race group and from virtually every class group. Thus, the multi-class and multi-racial nature of the leadership at all levels reflects the wide-ranging participation within the UDF of people from different class and racial backgrounds. Furthermore, the UDF was able to draw into its leadership ranks people from a wide variety of political traditions.

5.4. Regional Characteristics

The 1980s was a period of mass political organisation with most organisation taking place in the urban areas. However, political organisation in the townships developed unevenly with differences within the townships, between townships near the same city, between cities in the same region and between regions. The UDF's membership was derived exclusively from its national, regional and local affiliates and its support was a reflection of the ability of these organisations to promote and sustain popular organisation. This depended to a large extent on the peculiar local conditions.²⁴

There are a number of factors which contributed to differences in promoting

²³ Lodge, T. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.208.

²⁴ Refer to Appendix B below for an analysis of the conditions giving rise to mass mobilisation in the specific areas under study.

and sustaining political organisation between various areas.²⁵ These include the differences: in roles played by specific affiliates of the UDF in their areas; in political traditions; in the relationships between local organisations; in functioning at local and regional levels; in the relationships between organisations and the community; and in the levels of and responses to state repression at the local level.

In some townships the existence of strong student and youth organisations, trade unions or civic associations played an important contributing factor to political mobilisation. For example, SAAWU played an important role in promoting political mobilisation in East London, while PEBC) was able to mobilise Port Elizabeth's township residents during 1979-80. In townships where these were absent political mobilisation tended to lag behind other areas in the region. This was apparent in the Pietermaritzburg townships where local activists failed to develop strong civic associations while the absence of a strong trade union movement was one factor behind the organisational weakness of the Soweto Civic Association (SCA) during its early years.

The UDF was most successful in drawing support from communities which have a long history of political resistance and which have traditionally been ANC strongholds. Regions and townships which played a significant role in the squatters, bus boycotts and other popular resistance movements of the 1940s and the Defiance Campaign of the early 1950s tended to form strong local organisations with widespread community support. These areas also tended to support the UDF because of the Front's association with the ANC's Freedom Charter.

²⁵ This is also demonstrated in chapter 8 below.

Limited support for the UDF arose in some areas where strained relations developed between local affiliates of the UDF, between local affiliates and allied organisations, and between local affiliates and hostile political movements. In a number of areas differences arose between civic associations and local youth organisations, particularly over the tactics used by the youth to enforce campaigns such as consumer boycotts.

A problem which arose during the UDF's first year was the conflict between student/youth organisations and local trade union organisations, particularly those affiliated to FOSATU, over strategies to be used during political campaigns. In a number of instances, the unions felt that they were not adequately consulted when the youth called for mass-stayaways. Ideological conflicts between the UDF and other organisations, namely Inkatha and AZAPO, and the contest for hegemony, misdirected the organisational energies of UDF affiliates and prevented the consolidation of grassroots structures in certain regions.

The differences in functioning at local and regional levels also contributed to differences in local and regional support for the UDF. Where strong leadership and organisational expertise existed, the UDF generated a much greater political influence. In certain areas local organisations were extremely successful in drawing wide-spread popular participation in their activities and decision-making processes. In addition, membership and support of local organisations at times depended on their performance in bread-and-butter struggles.

Accountability to the community, widespread participation by residents in the decision-making process and the capacity of the organisations to respond and act upon community needs and issues are factors which promoted support for the UDF. Strained relations between UDF affiliates and the community

arose largely in areas where unrestrained coercive measures were used to sustain campaigns. In particular, communities resented the use of excessive violence by "people's courts" and by the youth during community boycotts and stayaways.

State repression played a major role in retarding or promoting membership in, and support of, the UDF. In some areas, severe repression in the form of bannings, imprisonment, detentions, political trials and state violence resulted in the removal of political activists, a reduction in political activity and diminishing support for the UDF. In others, state repression led to an increase in support for the Front as well as a strengthening of local structures.

During the various emergencies, the UDF suffered serious setbacks in its ability to transform widespread rebellion into organisational gains. Over two-thirds of the nearly eight thousand people detained during the first emergency in 1985 were UDF members. Night-time curfews were imposed in certain centres, while daytime curfews operated to keep school students off the streets and in the classrooms. The army occupied a number of townships, set up roadblocks, conducted house-to-house searches, and maintained twenty-four-hour patrols. In August 1985, COSAS, the UDF's largest affiliate, was banned. Detention, deaths and political trials immobilised forty-five out of eighty national and regional leaders.²⁶

Finally, in later years the UDF suffered much more serious setbacks as the state supplemented repression with other counter-insurgency techniques. These included certain measures to create dissension within the UDF and among blacks in general (e.g. widespread media coverage of conflict between UDF

²⁶ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.78-9.

and AZAPO supporters, extensive media coverage of Inkatha coupled with censorship of the media's coverage of the unrest, the use of vigilantes, encouraging disinformation about the extent of anti-Indian sentiment within the UDF, and the distribution of fake pamphlets to create confusion within the UDF). Media coverage of UDF and ANC violence (in particular, the so-called "necklace" murders) were manipulated by the government to alienate more conservative blacks. Finally, upliftment programmes were instituted in selected townships in an attempt to "win the hearts and minds" of township dwellers by providing them with concrete improvements in their living conditions.²⁷

The UDF drew its strongest support from the Eastern Cape, which has a long tradition of sympathy for the ANC. By mid-1986, the approximately 40 Eastern Cape organisations were by far the strongest in the country due to the skill and energy of the leaders, the level of support the organisations enjoyed, and the extent to which the communities had been drawn into various structures of the UDF's local affiliates. The Eastern Cape also has a rich history of mass struggle and this contributed to a high level of political consciousness in the region. This political consciousness was a vital factor in the development of mass organisation and mobilisation during the 1980s. The country's first mass-based civic organisation, PEBCO, was formed in this region, while SAAWU played a major role in political mobilisation in East London during the early 1980s. In addition, by the middle of the eighties, student/youth, women's and civic organisations had surfaced in many small Eastern Cape towns.

The Eastern Cape was the first region to develop embryonic organs of people's power to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of government-created bodies. The Eastern Cape is also notable for the response of its

²⁷ Marx, A. (1992); Lessons of the struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), pp.183-4.

people to calls for national campaigns. It has been estimated that the average response to stayaway calls in the region from mid-1985 onwards was 90 percent in the African areas (compared to 73 percent in the Transvaal and 65 percent for Natal).²⁸

In the Western Cape, the UDF enjoyed comparably limited support because of the relatively insignificant number of Africans living in the region. In addition, there was a noticeable lack of support for the organisation from organised labour. During 1985-6 class differences led to a split in the leadership of the African organisations in the region. In the coloured townships, the residents associations split along ideological lines between UDF affiliates and those supporting the New Unity Movement. Factors which limited mass organisation in the region include the "Coloured Labour Preference Policy" - which resulted in the Western Cape being the only region in the country where Africans are a minority (15 percent compared to over 50 percent coloured people and 30 percent white in 1980); the political divisions created by the differences in national oppression of the coloured and African people; a historical tradition of weak, ultra-left political organisation, particularly among the coloured people; and a weak tradition of trade union organisation. These combined to minimise the impact of the UDF in the Western Cape. Thus, for national actions where figures are available, average support by coloured workers in the region was less than 15 percent, while the average support by the African workers was about 51 percent.²⁹

The existence of Inkatha in Natal was a major factor limiting UDF organisation in the region. During the early 1980s, Natal's African townships, particularly those in Durban, experienced massive mobilisation as the commun-

²⁸ "Historical significance of three days of national protest, June 6, 7 and 8", in Phambili Special Supplement, (October 1988), pp.30-1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.33-5.

ities became embroiled in struggles against rent and transport increases. By the end of 1985, however, confrontation with Inkatha over the incorporation of certain African townships into KwaZulu resulted in an organisational decline. The conflict between the UDF and Inkatha derived from differences which arose between the ANC and the Zulu movement.

Inkatha's leader, Chief Buthelezi, maintained a cordial relationship with the ANC even after he became Chief Minister of KwaZulu in 1976. During the 1970s he continued to hold meetings with the mission-in-exile in spite of being condemned by the BCM as a government stooge. This relationship changed in 1979 after Buthelezi publicised discussions with the ANC which the latter had intended to keep secret. In an attempt to increase his political credibility, Buthelezi claimed that the ANC had recognised Inkatha's role and sanctioned its non-violent strategy and participation in homeland structures. The rift was deepened when Buthelezi condemned the 1980 school boycotts. By 1983, relations between Inkatha and ANC-oriented organisations had taken a violent turn.³⁰

The divisions in the African townships because of confrontation with Inkatha prevented the consolidation of grassroots structures and organisational gains made during the period 1982-3. Leaders and members of local organisations such as JORAC and of other local UDF structures faced a wave of "economic and military intimidation and terror", thus preventing these organisations from "effectively harnessing their mass support".³¹ By the end of 1985, local UDF structures in Durban's African townships were unable to

³⁰ See Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.161.; Davies, R. et.al. (1988); The struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, (Vol.2, New Edition, London and New Jersey, Zed Books), p.393; and McCaul, C. (1988); 'The wild card: Inkatha and contemporary Black Politics', in Frankel, P. et.al. (eds.); State, Resistance and change in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Southern Book Publishers (Pty) Ltd.), p.165.

³¹ "Historical significance of three days of national protest, June 6, 7 and 8", *op.cit.*, p.31.

operate successfully because township residents, aware of the dangers of being associated with the UDF, distanced themselves from the Front.³²

During the first half of the 1980s, the UDF in Natal had no relationship with powerful worker organisations and trade unions and very little effort was made to forge links with FOSATU affiliates. It relied largely on community-based affiliates, particularly in the small townships of Lamontville, Chesterville and Hambanathi. The largest contingent of UDF support in the region came from young people.³³ In the capital city, Pietermaritzburg, civic organisations were not created, while local youth congresses were at the forefront of the conflict with Inkatha. The position changed during 1986 as the conflict with Inkatha incorporated local COSATU affiliates in the region. Natal's African population began to challenge the power of Inkatha, particularly in areas around Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands. Once people in the townships realised that active involvement in the structures of the UDF was the only way to turn the tide of Inkatha repression, they began to build structures to defend themselves (defence committees, street committees, etc.).³⁴

An important consequence of the clashes between Inkatha and the UDF in the African townships was an enhancement "of the importance of the relatively protected Indian activists". These activists began to play a very important role in UDF politics, particularly at the regional level.³⁵ This, together with the removal of many leading African members of the UDF through detentions as well as the banning of meetings, later led to

³² De Villiers, R. (1985); "Inkatha and the State: UDF under attack", in Work in Progress, (39), p.34.

³³ *Loc.cit.*

³⁴ "Historical significance of three days of national protest, June 6, 7 and 8", *op.cit.*, p.32.

³⁵ Swilling, M. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.95.

accusations that the Indian leadership had formed a cabal.

The UDF enjoyed widespread support in the industrial centres of the Transvaal, "but the sheer size of the urban centres, their social complexity, and the uncertainties of the UDF's relationship with a well-established trade union movement, make its own capacity for marshalling disciplined support questionable". However, the UDF's local affiliates in the region were much stronger than those in Natal or Cape Town, but not as coherent or active as those in the Eastern Cape.³⁶

By 1986, local organisations in the PWV region were particularly strong in most areas surrounding Johannesburg and Pretoria, and in many small towns in the Eastern Transvaal. Local UDF affiliates in other areas in the Transvaal enjoyed considerable legitimacy despite relatively weak and incoherent structures at grassroots level. The strength of the Transvaal UDF was a result of the absence of ideological divisions which plagued the UDF in Natal and the Western Cape, and because of the "massive size, steady deterioration and bankruptcy of the PWV townships".³⁷

After the declaration of the 1986 Emergency, a shift in the centre of political gravity from the Eastern Cape to the Transvaal occurred. Initially, the region was plagued with differences between local trade unions and local affiliates of the UDF over campaigns, consultation and co-ordination. By the middle of 1986, however, these differences were swept aside as the trade union movement was drawn into political activity by the tide of events in the region. This was demonstrated by an unprecedented degree of political unity and support for a programme of united action of the UDF and COSATU.

³⁶ Lodge, T. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.206; Swilling, M. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.94-95.

³⁷ *Loc.cit.*

Increasingly, workers were drawn into leadership positions in the civics, street committees, youth congresses and the UDF itself.³⁸

In February 1986 the rural Northern Transvaal region of the UDF was formed. This region, consisting of sixty-three affiliates, was situated in and around the Lebowa, Gazankulu, Venda and KwaNdebele homelands. These included women's organisations, parents' committees, civic associations, trade unions and youth congresses in Lebowa, and youth and village committees in Kwandebele. The youth organisations were the most developed and most active. The Sekhukhune Youth Congress (SEYCO), for example, based in central Sekhukhuneland, consisted of fifteen village committees.

Mass mobilisation in the region was promoted by the demographic dominance of the very young, a high level of youth unemployment, the widespread collapse of the moral authority of traditional leaders, opposition to homeland "independence", the effects of forced resettlement to the homelands (poverty, over-population, drought), hostility to local white farmers arising from low wages and poor working conditions, the emergence of trade unionism in the region, a radical leadership with trade union experience, and a tradition of support for the ANC and SACP. The resulting social movement represented a combination of two themes: the working-class nationalism of the cities and the peasant rebellion of the countryside.³⁹

However, the rural regions in the Eastern and Western Transvaal were poorly organised by the end of 1987. The Western Transvaal region, in particular, which borders Bophuthatswana, was crippled by the state of emergency. Very few organisations were established in this area and it was relatively inactive

³⁸ "Historical significance of three days of national protest, June 6, 7 and 8", *op.cit.*, p.29.

³⁹ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.117-126.

during the period under review. The Eastern Transvaal was divided into the Highveld with 13 affiliates and Lowveld with eight affiliates in 1987. Most of these were youth structures and the region had no civic organisations.

In early 1984 the UDF had only 2 affiliates from the Orange Free State - one youth and one student. Mass mobilisation soon spread in the region with the emergence of six major community/educational organisations in Bloemfontein and about ten more in several small northern Free State towns during 1984-86.⁴⁰ However, throughout the 1980s the level of UDF political organisation in the region remained relatively insignificant. The Orange Free State is essentially a rural region with the majority of Africans living on the farms where they work. Because the African population was totally dependent on the white farmers for employment and shelter, political organisation was extremely difficult. Problems of organisation were further compounded by the disparate and isolated nature of life for the region's African population.⁴¹

However, the Free State was not isolated from the national political crisis of the mid-1980s. For example, the rent boycotts, which began in the Vaal Triangle in September 1984, soon spread to Free State towns. The small and medium-sized towns of the Northern Free State were also hit by the waves of student boycotts which occurred throughout the country during 1985. In addition, during 1984-86 mass mobilisation occurred extensively in Botshabelo, a township that lies about a forty-five minute drive east of Bloemfontein, in which hundreds of thousands of Africans were dumped.⁴²

⁴⁰ Swilling, M. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.92.

⁴¹ Mufson, S. (1991); "Introduction: The roots of insurrection", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.13.

⁴² *Loc.cit.*

The independent homelands proved exceptionally difficult for the urban-based UDF to draw into its organisational structures. Although these areas have a history of resistance to apartheid, resistance has largely been spontaneous and generally failed to give rise to efficient organisations. More importantly, the homelands presented a number of obstacles to mass mobilisation and politicisation. Among these obstacles were the repressive activities of the homeland authorities (often surpassing even those of the South African security forces), numerous practical problems (such as the non-availability of venues for community meetings, difficulties in publishing pamphlets, shortages of skilled speakers, and a general inexperience in dealing with security force repression), and the necessity for dealing with traditional and conservative elements within the community.⁴³

In a number of homelands, the UDF and many of its affiliates were banned by the authorities. For example, in addition to the proscription of the Front, the Transkeian government banned AZASO and COSAS, and targeted their activists.⁴⁴ The independent trade union movement was particularly affected by repression in the homelands. The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956, which made no provisions for trade unions or employer organisations, operated in the Transkei. Venda's trade union legislation passed in 1982 did not make provision for unions.⁴⁵ In 1983, the Ciskei government banned SAAWU, while Bophuthatswana passed a law to ban all South African-based unions in the homeland in 1984.

Despite these obstacles, mass mobilisation and politicisation did occur in the

⁴³ Naidoo, K. (1989); "Internal resistance in South Africa: The political movements", in Johnson, S. (ed.); South Africa: No turning back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press), pp.189-190.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.190.

⁴⁵ "Homeland Tangles", Financial Mail, (28.09.84), p.56.

"independent" homelands. In Bophuthatswana, for example, local protests gave rise to organisations and mass activism on a wide scale. Large-scale protests took place in Garankuwa, Mabopane and Winterveld on a range of issues. The Huhudi Civic Association coordinated a rent boycott; a bus boycott was implemented in Garankuwa; and school protests resulted in many detentions.⁴⁶ The Garankuwa Youth Congress (GYC) was formed at the end of 1985 to defend the youth from the repressive activities of the authorities.

In the "non-independent" homelands, the extension of the state of emergency to these areas in 1986 increased the repressive powers of homeland authorities. The authorities were given powers to restrict meetings, ban organisations, censor publications, prohibit "actions furthering the aims of a banned organisation", and to remove and restrict people.⁴⁷ However, resistance in these rural homelands provoked the development of grass-roots organisations and resistance to homeland authorities.

In KwaNdebele, for example, resistance to the proposed "independence" of the homeland in 1986 provoked widespread resistance and mass mobilisation. Opposition to "independence" increased support for the UDF in this area, particularly through structures such as the KwaNdebele Youth Congress (KWAYCO). Concerted resistance, involving the militant youth in co-operation with sympathetic traditional leaders, forced the Pretoria government to postpone plans for "independence" in 1986.⁴⁸

The residents of Moutse in the Northern Transvaal vigorously opposed

⁴⁶ Naidoo, K. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.191.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.190.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.190-1. Refer to Chapter 8, pp.396-400 below.

incorporation into the homeland.⁴⁹ In the township of Ekingale, a local Residents Action Committee was formed to coordinate opposition to incorporation into Kwandebile. In Lebowa, UDF-aligned organisations led opposition to the homeland system and homeland repression during the second half of the 1980s. Widespread resistance and state repression eventually led to the outbreak of a revolt in 1986.⁵⁰

Despite this regional diversity, it is clear that for most of the period under review the UDF enjoyed widespread support throughout South Africa. It was able to penetrate virtually every part of the country, thus indicating the extent to which its influence extended throughout South Africa.

5.5. Affiliate Membership

Affiliation to the UDF depended on the geographical scope of organisation, i.e., local, regional or national. Organisations which the UDF identified as national were those with regions and branches in most parts of the country. Some UDF affiliates, SAAWU for example, had national structures. However, the union's membership was limited to certain sectors of the country. This meant that the union only had representation on local or regional structures of the Front. By contrast, COSAS had a national membership with branches throughout the country and was granted representation at the national level.

The most important national organisations were COSAS, SAYCO, AZASO (later renamed SANSCO), and the UDF Women's League. Membership of these organisations differed from region to region and from area to area.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Refer to Chapter 8, pp.395-6 below.

⁵⁰ Refer to Chapter 8, pp.394-5 below.

⁵¹ Refer to Chapters 6 and 9 below for the analysis of student/youth and women's organisations.

At the time of the banning of COSAS in August 1985, journalists estimated that the organisation represented more than half of the six million black students in the country.⁵² At the end of 1986 there were some 600 youth congresses countrywide and, at the time of its formation in March 1987, SAYCO claimed a membership of between 500,000 and 700,000 (and a support base of two million).⁵³ AZASO members were present in all universities in South Africa except for Afrikaans ones. At the end of 1986 AZASO claimed that it had 67 branches. The formation of the UDF's Women's League in April 1987 brought together eight regional women's organisations, which drew together numerous urban and rural women's groups. Other significant national organisations include the Release Mandela Committee, NUSAS, the Black Sash, the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA), the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), the Detainees Parents Support Committee (DPSC), and the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). At the regional level were regional trade associations such as the Western Cape African Traders' Association, political organisations such as the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses, and women, youth and civic organisations such as the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW), the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), the Northern Transvaal Youth Congress (NOTYCO), and the Northern Transvaal Peoples Organisation (NOTPECO).

At the local level the organisational impetus provided by popular struggles during the mid-1980s led to the growth of civic organisations in every major city and in almost every small and medium-sized town in the country.⁵⁴ These ranged from the large, mass-based civics of Port Elizabeth to the

⁵² Detainees' Parents' Support Committee (1986); Abantwana Bazabalaza: A memorandum on children under repression, (Johannesburg, DPSC), p.8.

⁵³ Davies, R. et al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.467.

⁵⁴ Refer to Chapter 8 below for the analysis of civic associations.

small rural village committees. By the end of 1987 the UDF had some 200 urban and rural civic organisations. The emergence of civic associations was often preceded or accompanied by the development of student/youth and women's organisations. In addition, COSATU's increasing political involvement as well as joint campaigns of COSATU and UDF affiliates generated trade union membership of the UDF. Finally, local church, political and other local organisations encouraged the mobilisation of "non-mainline" support.

The affiliate membership of the UDF included some of the most important sector-based organisations in the country in terms of their membership and support base, as well as their activities. In addition, the majority of mass-based and highly active civic associations in the country were UDF affiliates. Organisational links and cooperation with COSATU extended the Front's political influence into organised labour.⁵⁵ Finally, the non-mainline affiliates of the UDF brought into the front a wide variety of organisations with varying degrees of membership and interests. These demonstrate the significant organisational leadership of the UDF in South African civil society.

5.6. Race and Class

The UDF drew into its structures members from virtually every class and every race group in South Africa. Some of the central issues in South African resistance politics related to questions of race and class. The differences in approach to these issues were the main disagreements between the Black Consciousness-oriented National Forum (NF) and the UDF. The UDF views on race and class are reflected in a number of areas. The UDF aimed at uniting the widest possible coalition of disparate groups in opposition to the new constitutional dispensation and the "Koornhof Bills". This meant that the Front did not restrict itself to a narrow set of beliefs but

⁵⁵ Refer to Chapter 7, pp.273-6 below.

opened membership to all organisations opposed to apartheid.⁵⁶

The UDF had one of its objectives the creation of a nonracial South Africa. This implied that membership of the organisation was open to all, regardless of race. According to Terror Lekota, publicity secretary of the UDF:

In political struggle...the means must always be the same as the ends...How else can one expect a racialistic movement to imbue our society with a non-racial character on the dawn of our freedom day? A political movement cannot bequeath to society a characteristic it does not itself possess. To expect it to do so is like asking a heathen to convert a person to Christianity. The principles of that religion are unknown to the heathen, let alone the practice.⁵⁷

A relatively small number of whites joined the UDF, as members of predominantly black organisations, e.g. the Federation of Transvaal Women (FedTraw), or as members of white organisations, e.g. NUSAS. Most whites who participated in the UDF were drawn from petit bourgeois, English-speaking university backgrounds and brought into the organisation their skills for research and their access to funds, transport, printing facilities, and so forth. In large part, white members of the UDF tended to organise along racial lines, for example, the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC) and NUSAS.⁵⁸ This was largely due to residential segregation and the Front's call on whites (and other race groups) to organise in their own communities. In addition, mobilisation was based on local community concerns and problems which differed from one race group to another.

The UDF acknowledged the reality of state imposed racial distinctions and local structures were developed along racial lines according to segregated residential areas. In addition, social realities in South Africa justified the

⁵⁶ Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.121.

⁵⁷ Cited in Marx,A. (1992); *op.cit.*, p.124.

⁵⁸ Murray,M. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.217.

continued existence of "ethnic" organisations such as the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses. The revival of the TIC was justified in the following terms:

Methods had to be adopted that would successfully mobilise the people within the Indian community and thus facilitate the possibility of them uniting in a common national struggle.... The reality of political struggle is such that one cannot mobilise the people politically on the basis of some abstract notion of politics. Organisation begins from where the people themselves are - from their perceptions of the burning issues of the movement, and proceeds from there. Organisations can only successfully mobilise the broad masses of people if they take these realities into account. The reality of South African racism is that it has succeeded in dividing the oppressed people "racially" - by imposing separation and a hierarchy of racial oppression.⁵⁹

The UDF pointed to the historical reality of four separate "national" groups and referred to itself as "non-racial". The NF rejected this conception of "multi-national" and/or "multi-ethnic" by arguing that this implied an acceptance of apartheid ideology and the terms in which the state has divided and ruled the oppressed people. The NF saw the UDF as a "multi-racial" rather than a "non-racial" organisation.⁶⁰ Despite this criticism, the UDF did draw into its ranks a large number of people from the white, Indian and coloured communities, while the overwhelming bulk of its membership were drawn from the African townships.

The UDF was also a multi-class organisation, consisting of affiliates which ranged from petit bourgeois to worker organisations. Many of the organisations affiliated to the UDF were far from working class in their make-up and included several middle-class business groups. The UDF identified the black working-class as the largest single bloc amongst the millions who suffer from apartheid. Nevertheless, the UDF in practice clearly rejected distinct class mobilisation. Indeed, the UDF was extremely unsuccessful in mobilising

⁵⁹ "The Transvaal Indian Congress", in Work in Progress, (28, August 1983), p.18. Quoted in Murray, M. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.235-6.

⁶⁰ Murray, M. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.236-7.

support from organised labour. However, this did not imply that the working class rejected the Front.

The overwhelming bulk of the rank-and-file membership of UDF affiliates was drawn from the African working class. This was indicated by the capacity of the UDF to call on large numbers of workers to support its campaigns and to participate in its affiliate organisations and their activities, the focus on bread-and-butter issues which concerned the working class and the large number of working class organisations affiliated to the UDF.

5.7. Appeal of the UDF

There are a number of reasons why the UDF emerged as the major extra-parliamentary opposition organisation in South Africa during the 1980s. Among others, the re-emergence of the ANC as a leading force in the liberation struggle⁶¹, and the close identification of UDF and ANC policy, objectives and leadership are the most significant.⁶² For many people, the formation of the UDF was seen as the revival of the tradition of resistance established by the ANC during the 1950s and early 1960s.

In striving to promote a broad coalition against apartheid, the UDF tended to de-emphasize class and to promote the multi-class and non-racial nature of the liberation struggle. While this gave rise to criticism of the Front and to conflict within the broad anti-apartheid movement, it also boosted the membership of affiliate organisations. The UDF's criteria for membership were so broad that its affiliates included such organisations as the Black Sash, and JODAC, a white-led, left-liberal body.

⁶¹ Refer to Chapter 3 above for an analysis of the political realignment towards the ANC.

⁶² Refer to Chapter 4 above for an analysis of the links between the two organisations.

However, the multi-class nature of the Front, and the large number of middle-class people in leadership positions, led to criticisms that the UDF was furthering middle class interests. In answer to such charges, UDF publicity secretary Terror Lekota argued that there were common problems which confronted both the working and middle classes, such as the lack of political rights, lack of housing and lack of educational facilities. In addition, many middle class leaders of both the UDF and unions had working class backgrounds. According to Lekota, such leaders abandoned their class positions and adopted the consciousness of a different class.⁶³

Another factor which accounted for widespread support for the UDF was its focus on bread-and-butter issues. The ability of UDF affiliates to give support to the struggles of their communities on socio-economic issues increased support for the Front. In Port Elizabeth, for example, the overwhelming majority of African and coloured residents considered the local affiliates and the UDF itself as the most helpful organisations in solving their problems.⁶⁴ The UDF consciously organised communities around concrete local issues and problems. The existence of the UDF gave rise to the emergence of a large number of new organisations as UDF activists engaged in an organisational drive during UDF campaigns and other community actions. Successful campaigns initiated by local affiliates of the UDF, e.g. the Eastern Cape consumer boycotts, promoted the organisational drive and added large numbers to the Front.

The UDF faced a number of challenges in its struggle to dominate the

⁶³ Interview with Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, publicity secretary of the UDF, at Khotso House, Johannesburg on the 13th October 1983 (1983); "The UDF on the Unions", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.9, No.2, November), p.6.

⁶⁴ Price, R.M. (1991); The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa, 1975-1990, (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp.271-2.

internal resistance political scene in South Africa. Firstly, the state employed repression and economic reform to limit the support for, and activities of, the UDF and its affiliates. The widespread detention of activists, security force activity, vigilante actions, and upgrading programmes eroded UDF support and activity. Secondly, government "collaborators" in the urban areas and the tribal homelands were used to suppress the UDF. Thirdly, the initial reluctance of organised labour to participate in the Front and its programmes inhibited attempts to draw trade unions into the UDF. Finally, UDF dominance was undermined by the existence of other mass organisations, in particular, Inkatha, the BC-oriented organisations and the New Unity Movement, which were also struggling to acquire support in the black townships.

In conclusion, it is clear that for most of the period under review the UDF enjoyed widespread support throughout South Africa. It was able to penetrate virtually every part of the country, thus indicating the extent to which its influence extended throughout South Africa. Furthermore, it drew into its structures people from every race group and virtually every class group. By the end of 1987, the UDF had close to 700 affiliates with a total membership of over two million and a wider support base. UDF affiliates were mainly student and youth organisations, civic associations, trade unions, women's organisations, political organisations, religious organisations, and sports and cultural organisations.

Many of the affiliates of the UDF existed before its formation. The leaders and members of the Front were drawn from affiliate organisations. Membership of the UDF was based on the membership of affiliate organisations and differed from organisation to organisation and from region to region. Some organisations were national in scope with a large constituency while many more were local with small numbers of activists. Some regions drew in large numbers of people while others had relatively small UDF constituencies. The

leadership of the UDF at all levels was also drawn from the ranks of its affiliates. Finally, the UDF drew together thousands of people from differing racial and social groups. The overwhelming majority of UDF members were working class and were drawn from the African population.

The most important affiliates of the UDF in terms of membership were the student/youth organisations, trade unions, civic associations and women's organisations. These organisations were dominant in terms of numbers and the support they were able to galvanize for campaigns of the UDF. It was through these organisations that the Front was able to extend its influence to virtually every part of the country.

It is argued in this study that the period of the 1980s represents a discernible shift in the balance of social and cultural forces towards the UDF. It becomes important, then, to examine how this shift occurred. One way of approaching this is to look at the history of selected affiliates of the UDF by focusing on their formation and structures, principles and objectives, and membership and activities, and changes in these in order to demonstrate the shift towards the UDF. Another aspect of this approach is to look at the role they played in achieving both mass mobilisation and organisation, and the spread of revolutionary consciousness (including the mobilisation of people to actively resist apartheid). It is here that the analysis of the history of these organisations demonstrates the manner in which the masses were mobilised and organised to actively resist apartheid, resulting in a universalistic political challenge of the apartheid system.

It is argued, firstly, that some community organisations experienced significant changes in their structures, leadership and membership, aims and objectives, and in their strategies and activities. These changes demonstrated a marked shift towards, and led to their affiliation to, the UDF. They subsequently

adopted the strategies and tactics of the UDF political tradition, leading to the transformation of their activities into a universalistic political challenge of the apartheid system. The shift towards the UDF was also apparent in the mobilisation and organisation of people in many parts of the country through newly-formed organisations. Secondly, these organisations played a hegemony-building role by promoting mass mobilisation and organisation, and developing and facilitating the spread of a national political culture based on the rejection of, and opposition to, apartheid structures and the development of alternative structures and practices by the mass-based organisations to govern their own daily living; the adoption of a strategy based on "unity-in-action" and the mobilisation of grass-roots organisations formed around local issues; an ideological system expressed in such documents as the Freedom Charter; and the articulation of a set of common demands such as the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of organisations and the establishment of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and unitary South Africa. Thus, it is through these organisations that the particular, often economic, demands of interest groups were transformed into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant apartheid system and which aimed at national liberation.

Although it is difficult to estimate the extent of politicisation achieved through these organisations, the aim is to demonstrate that these organisations mobilised and organised large sectors of black civil society and were able to draw people into a highly politicised challenge against the dominant apartheid system which was directed at the goal of national liberation. Finally, this analysis reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the struggle: their structures, practices and membership. The following four chapters provide an historical analysis of selected student and youth organisations, trade unions, civic associations and women's organisations. The focus is on their formation, principles and objectives, structures and membership, and practices.

Chapter 6

STUDENT AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The 1976 Soweto uprising propelled the black youth to the forefront of the South African liberation struggle during the late 1970s. School-related grievances which initiated the revolt grew to include support for striking workers, township struggles and the broad struggle for liberation from white minority rule. At the same time there was a progressive development of socialist consciousness and a greater understanding of class struggle among the black youth. These developments gave rise to a number of student and youth organisations and an increasing number of committed young political activists.

The focus of this chapter is the role of student and youth organisations in the political and ideological struggle to promote and expand revolutionary consciousness within the country and to increase participation in the national liberation struggle. These organisations developed (or incorporated) certain features of a revolutionary consciousness and focused on particular sectors of civil society, drawing them into the struggle for national liberation resulting in the spread of revolutionary consciousness inside South Africa. The emphasis here is on their role in mass mobilisation and organisation (with a focus on their organisational tactics, membership and political leadership) and their principles and objectives in order to illustrate the extent of their penetration of civil society and the main features of the revolutionary consciousness developed or incorporated by the student and youth organisations.

Here the emphasis is on: mobilising and organising the youth around the

issues which immediately affect them; uniting the separate currents of protest into a single stream; and, most importantly, transforming the particular demands of students and the youth into a universalistic political challenge of the apartheid system. This results in the spread of a revolutionary consciousness. Underlying this was the central role the student and youth organisations played in expanding the political and ideological leadership of the UDF in civil society. Finally, this analysis reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the struggle: their structures, practices and membership.

6.2. Overview

The African youth in general were tied by the circumstances of apartheid to two features of domination. As students they were faced with an inferior education system that confined them to the poorly-paying, unskilled sectors of employment (inadequately-trained and unqualified teachers, overcrowded and poorly constructed classrooms, age restrictions, lack of textbooks, high school fees, bush colleges, etc.). As Africans they were faced with the effects of apartheid domination and exploitation (structural unemployment, forced removals, overcrowded townships, repression, bantustans, etc.). These were the main factors which influenced the political attitude of the African youth.

According to Bundy, there are three principal reasons for student/youth militancy in South Africa. Firstly, militancy among the youth stems from the "notion of a self-conscious 'generation unit'". Young militants in the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, the radicals who formed the Independent ANC, and the young intellectuals of the ANC Youth League all chafed against the restraint of their elders and were the precursors of the Black Consciousness ideologues, the enraged of 1976, and the township comrades

of the 1980s.¹ Secondly, there are the social and political pressures which arise from the demographic predominance of the young. These are related to the third factor, the underlying causes of political opposition and resistance on the part of the youth. These are: (i) the glaring defects of black education; (ii) the very substantial expansion of black schooling over the past couple of decades; and, (iii) the issue of unemployment among black school-leavers.²

The short-term demands of student organisations indicated the shortcomings of the education system: ill-qualified teachers, high drop-out and failure rates, shortages of textbooks and classrooms, the widespread practice of corporal punishment and sexual harassment, the lack of democratically elected Student Representative Councils (SRCs), age-restrictions that disqualified older students, and the victimisation of student leaders.³ The growth of black enrolment at high schools and tertiary institutions resulted in the decline in the overall quality of black education. The number of African students at secondary schools increased from 45,598 in 1960 to 1,001,249 in 1984. Student enrolment at tertiary institutions increased from 1,871 to 36,604. Finally, increases in the number of school leavers during a period of mounting unemployment also generated radicalism among black school students and school leavers. In 1985, unemployment was somewhere between 15 percent and 30 percent while almost two out of every three unemployed blacks were under the age of 30.⁴ During the second half of the eighties, unemployment

¹ Bundy, C. (1987); "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of youth and student resistance in Cape Town, 1985", in Journal of Southern African Studies, (Vol.13, No.3, April), p.310.

² *Ibid.*, p.311.

³ *Loc.cit.*

⁴ *Loc.cit.*

among the youth between the ages of 18 and 26 years was 80 percent.⁵

School boycotts have been a major feature of resistance to apartheid since 1976. Since the initial outburst of student resistance in Soweto, the "education struggle" has been a central component of the struggle for national liberation. Schools and tertiary institutions for blacks became "sites of struggle as increasingly politicised students" challenged "the state's authority and" contested "discriminatory education".⁶

Monica Bot depicted the education struggle during the ten year period which followed the Soweto revolt in the following terms:

Pupil demands have shifted over the past ten years from an initial rejection of Afrikaans and Bantu education to a demand for equal, 'free and compulsory education' in 1980; from the slogan 'liberation now, education later' in 1985 to this year's [1986 - G.H.] rallying cry of 'people's education for people's power'. Prior to the (select) state of emergency of 1985, pupils' short term demands centred around education-related issues such as democratically-elected SRCs, grievances regarding corporal punishment and age limit restrictions. Once the state of emergency was imposed, however, issues generally focused nationally on the release of detainees, the removal of troops from the townships, and the unbanning of political groups.⁷

One of the central aspects of the student struggle was the Education Charter which clearly spelt out the demands of the disenfranchised majority and the need for a unified and democratic system of education.⁸ During late 1985 and early 1986 students boycotted classes in support of the struggle for People's Education. People's Education was to be an alternative education,

⁵ Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of agony, time of destiny, (London, Verso).

⁶ Labour Monitoring Group (1987); "The November 1984 Stayaway", in Maree, J. (ed.); The Independent Trade Unions, 1974-1984: Ten years of the South African Labour Bulletin, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.264.

⁷ Bot, M. (1985); "The future of African Education: Two opposing strategies", in Indicator SA, (Vol.4, No.2, Spring), p.47.

⁸ Bigras, P. (1986); "Aspects of the struggle: Youth", in Monthly Review, (Vol.37, No.11, April), pp.78-9.

preparing students for political rule in post-apartheid South Africa. People's Education calls for alternative curricula, democratic SRCs, student participation in the management of schools, and grassroots participation by students and youth groups, and civic and street committees.⁹

From 1980 students forged a close working relationship with workers, providing support for striking workers and calling on workers to support political campaigns. The African youth in particular identified the working class as the leading element in the struggle for liberation. The nature of Bantu Education and high levels of unemployment taught the African youth that they have a common struggle with the working class. Youth congresses, which drew their membership from the unemployed youth, students and young workers, sprang up in the major urban centres and spread to the rural areas during the second half of the eighties.

Student/youth organisations were the most militant and active organisations in the mass democratic movement. According to one commentator,

Dominant in terms of demographic importance, dominant also in terms of political and social activity within the townships, African youth are and will remain one of the single most important and radical factors within the broad-based coalition opposing the apartheid regime.¹⁰

About 50 per cent of the black population of South Africa is less than twenty-five years old.¹¹ The participation of organisations of the youth in the mass democratic movement, their concern with democratic practices and socialist objectives, and their militancy, all contributed to the participation of the mass democratic movement in grassroots political action. Young blacks were a critical factor in galvanizing township resistance to all forms of

⁹ See Muller, J. (1987); "People's Education and the National Education Crisis Committee", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 4, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), pp.18-32.

¹⁰ Bigras, P. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.79.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.77.

apartheid oppression and exploitation.¹² Young activists played a leading role in township mobilisation and organisation. They constituted the largest number of activists that popularised campaigns, mobilised support for organisations and monitored and enforced political action.

Student/youth organisations played a prominent role in local structures of the UDF. In most regions, these organisations were strongly represented at area, zonal and regional levels and often acted as reinforcing mechanisms in the Front's organisational structures. The elaborate organisational networks they established and their ability to adapt to underground conditions made these organisations more readily able to respond to emergency conditions. In addition, 18 of the 62 leaders of the UDF regions in 1985 were drawn from student or youth organisations. Student/youth organisations were also prominent in the numerous *ad hoc* inter-organisational structures which coordinated local campaigns such as consumer boycotts and mass stayaways.

These organisations also played a role in assisting other sectors of the UDF, in particular women and civic organisations. Because students and unemployed youths are relatively unconstrained by responsibility, they are more able to respond to political issues than other sectors. Student/youth organisations also emphasized political education in their programmes. Newsletters, such as the COSAS National Newsletter, SANSCO Newsletter, and Mahlangu Detachment (SAYCO) dealt with issues of importance to members of the organisations, with the anti-apartheid struggle in general and with other popular struggles abroad. In addition, student/youth organisations held educational workshops and forums which dealt with politically relevant issues, campaigns and strategies.

¹² Helliker, K. et al. (1987); "'Asithengi!' Recent consumer boycotts", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 4, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.43.

The significance of student/youth organisations lay, however, in the ideological contribution they made in producing a generation of people who rejected apartheid society and were prepared to make sacrifices to destroy it. The commitment to non-racialism, democracy, unity-in-action with other progressive organisations, and a commitment to the ideals of the Freedom Charter were introduced by these organisations. These principles soon spread to a large number of organisations which proliferated during the first half of the 1980s.

The South African youth component is made up of young workers, professionals, students, pupils and unemployed people alike. In its broad sense, the category includes children of pre-school age through to young adults.¹³ The shared experience of apartheid domination and exploitation generated a sense of unity in struggle against the common enemy. This resulted in their total rejection of apartheid education and society as a whole. What follows is an analysis of three national student and youth organisations, COSAS, the Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO) - which was later renamed the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO) - and the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO).

6.3. The Congress of South African Students (COSAS)

6.3.1. Formation

COSAS was formed in May 1979 as a national organisation to represent the interests of black school students. In the wake of the Soweto uprising the South African Student Movement (SASM), together with a number of other organisations of the BCM, was banned. COSAS was formed to replace the banned student movement and soon had branches in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal. COSAS organised

¹³ Johnson, S. (1989); "The soldiers of Luthuli: Youth in the Politics of Resistance in South Africa", in Johnson, S. (ed.); South Africa: No Turning Back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press), p.95.

black students at secondary and night schools, and technical, teacher training and correspondence colleges.¹⁴

The inaugural meeting of COSAS in Roodeport was attended by delegates from the East and West Rand, Soweto, Pretoria, the Northern Transvaal, Qwa Qwa, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Natal.¹⁵ Immediately after the formation of COSAS, two members of the executive committee were sent to the Eastern Cape, two to the Western Cape, two to the Free State and one to Natal.¹⁶ These were charged with establishing branches in these areas and popularising the new organisation.

Other progressive organisations in certain areas, such as the SRC of Natal University's Medical School in Durban, the Port Elizabeth Students' Organisation and the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO), the Soweto Student's League, and the Warmbaths Students Organisation, assisted in the formation of COSAS branches in their areas.¹⁷

6.3.2. Policies and Objectives

Initially, COSAS was a BC-oriented organisation (its predecessor, SASM, was originally formed by the BCM). However, in 1980 the student organisation declared its support for the Freedom Charter, becoming the first mass organisation since the crushing of internal resistance in the 1960s to do so. Although COSAS's convenors were products of Black Consciousness, by styling itself a "Congress" it was self-consciously identifying itself with the

¹⁴ Davies,R., O'Meara,D. and Dlamini,S. (1988); The struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, (Vol.2, London and New Jersey, Zed Books), p.371.

¹⁵ South African Institute of Race Relations; Survey of Race Relations, (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations), 1979, p.500. (Hereafter Survey of Race Relations).

¹⁶ 'Interview of COSAS leaders', in New Era, pp.5-6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6.

Congress tradition of the 1950s. Its first president, Ephraim Mogale, was actually a clandestine ANC member and was eventually convicted of furthering the aims of the ANC.¹⁸

COSAS's guiding principle was that the ANC was the "authentic liberation movement" of South Africa, and that the youth militants should plan their future activities as a continuation of that tradition.¹⁹ In its first two years COSAS took up two commemorative campaigns that the authorities saw as ANC-supporting: the 1979 hanging of MK guerrilla Solomon Mahlangu, and the centenary of the Zulu victory over British troops at Isandhlwana.²⁰ In 1980, COSAS, together with NUSAS, played a central role in the ANC's Freedom Charter campaign. Copies of the Freedom Charter were distributed by both high school and university students to the masses of South Africans.

Underlying the Congress tradition was the principle of non-racialism. COSAS argued that the forces which oppress black students are "not colour as such but rather economic forces".²¹ COSAS's non-racial position emerged in the context of a country-wide political realignment coupled with the resurgence of ANC activities within the country.²² The founding document of the organisation stipulated COSAS's non-racial policy. However, the constitution was subsequently amended, restricting membership to "all oppressed students",

¹⁸ Lodge, T. (1991); "Rebellion: The turning of the tide", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); All, Here, and Now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s, South Africa Update Series, (Cape Town, David Philip), p.36.

¹⁹ Johnson, S. (1989); South Africa: No turning back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press), p.106.

²⁰ Frederikse, J. (1990); The unbreakable thread: Non-racialism in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.182n.

²¹ Davies, R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.371.

²² Refer to Chapter 3, pp.111ff. above.

which effectively meant African, Indian and coloured students. According to Lulu Johnson, executive member of the organisation: "The whole question of confining COSAS to black students was a strategic one. In principle, we maintained and upheld the non-racial policy of our organisation and of the liberation movement as a whole, and we made real gains in this area".²³ In 1983 the national organiser clarified COSAS's position: while whites could not participate in COSAS because the law did not allow that in terms of the Prohibition of Political Interference Act, COSAS's aim was the achievement of a non-racial, democratic South Africa.²⁴

Before its banning in August 1985, the student organisation opened itself up to membership from all races. This was a token gesture, however, because legislation still prevented whites from becoming members.²⁵ However, COSAS had earlier displayed a commitment to non-racialism. During 1980, COSAS worked with NUSAS in the Freedom Charter campaign and again in 1981 on the Education Charter Campaign.

COSAS policy was bent towards a philosophy that: "will determine the interests of all in the education of the country; will disseminate ideas that will lead the people towards an education which will leave everyone free to think, act and live; and will, in the final analysis, lead to total liberation in South Africa". COSAS envisaged: "A society where free and compulsory education will cease to be a privilege, but be a right and one that is democratically determined to teach the people to love one another, maintain their culture and dignity and honour human brotherhood".²⁶

²³ "Interview of COSAS leaders", *op.cit.*, p.11.

²⁴ Survey of Race Relations, 1983, p.62.

²⁵ Brewer, J.D. (1987); After Soweto: An unfinished journey, (Oxford, Clarendon Press), p.271.

²⁶ Document; Policy analysis and discussion, COSAS, 4th National Council, 9th-12th, 1983.

COSAS's general aim was to fight for compulsory, free and democratic education in a democratic society. The organisation's principal aims included alerting students and the wider community of the repressive nature of schooling in South Africa, and to participate in drawing up an educational charter for a future non-racial, democratic education system.²⁷ COSAS articulated a set of short-, medium-, and long-term goals. During 1976, students sought the eradication of Bantu Education without articulating an alternative system of education. By contrast, COSAS's aims included immediate goals, such as books, better qualified teachers, better facilities, etc. The long-term objective of the student organisation was the creation of a non-racial and democratic education system in a non-racial and democratic society. COSAS held that a democratic education system could only be achieved in a democratic society based on the will of all the people; that the student struggle was but one site of struggle; and that students are part of a broader community.

Although the organisation was primarily concerned with educational issues, COSAS viewed the education struggle as part of a much larger struggle against oppression and exploitation. COSAS was aware that Bantu Education was aimed at controlling and indoctrinating the youth and that this could only be changed by transforming the country's entire political structure.²⁸ It was argued that "a non-racial democratic education" system could only be achieved in "a democratic society truly reflective of the will of all the people".

COSAS identified the relationship between educational and social transformation in its statement of beliefs:

²⁷ Labour Monitoring Group (1987); *op.cit.*, p.264.

²⁸ The New Nation, (9.4.87 - 15.4.87), p.6.

First, that students must be organised through democratically elected student representative councils (SRCs). Secondly, that students must serve the community: 'we are members of society before we are students' - and thereby demonstrate that students can play a 'progressive role in the broad democratic alliance'. Therefore, SRCs must relate the struggles in schools to the struggles in their communities. Thirdly, that in serving the community, students must recognise that they can play only a limited role in the overall struggle. That must be led by the working class; the duty of the students was to lend support to the trade union and community organisations.²⁹

This statement of beliefs reflected a concern with, firstly, the relations of authority in the schools. Schools are undemocratic institutions and are largely based on authoritarian notions of control. COSAS demanded democratically elected SRCs as a way of increasing student power. SRCs were increasingly seen by student organisations as a fundamental right and as essential to the transformation of educational institutions.

Secondly, the statement of beliefs defined COSAS's role in the broader liberation struggle. A COSAS activist had the following to say about the link between the education struggle and other struggles:

COSAS does not see the students' struggle as our isolated issue, but as part of the broader struggle against oppression and exploitation. The problem of high school fees and expensive uniforms is linked with the problem of low wages and high prices, high rents and busfares. The poor quality of language teaching is linked to cultural domination of our people. Lack of genuine representation at school and the existence of an unpopular prefect system should be seen as part of the undemocratic domination over the majority of our people in our country. It is clear then that a struggle against corporal punishment, age restriction and the lack of representation is part of the overall struggle against lower wages, high rents, bantustans, puppet town councils and lack of genuine political rights by the majority.³⁰

However, COSAS recognised the leading role of the working class in the broader struggle. COSAS's initial attitude towards the working class was dictated by its Black Consciousness origins which emphasised student vanguardism in the struggle against apartheid. However, the organisation soon

²⁹ See Wolpe, H. (1988); "Educational Resistance", in Lonsdale, J. (ed.); South Africa in Question, (Cambridge, University of Cambridge African Studies Centre), p.206.

³⁰ "United Action for Democratic Education", interview with COSAS activist, in Africa Perspective, (No.24, 1984), pp.77-8.

recognised that:

students are a specific group and that they have to play a limited role in the broader struggle. Their role is to support the struggle of the workers ... especially in the trade union and community fronts.³¹

Thus: "The working class, as the oppressed and most exploited class in society, therefore must first emancipate themselves, since the emancipation of the working class will ensure the emancipation of society as a whole".³² This realization led to increasing cooperation with trade unions and community organisations. COSAS provided essential support to striking workers and community struggles around issues such as transport increases, rent hikes, etc. In 1982 COSAS adopted the theme "Student-Worker Action" for the year. This entailed organising students as "the workers of tomorrow" with an "obligation to serve the community".³³ With this in mind COSAS promoted the formation of youth organisations to serve the interests of the unemployed and young workers.

The youth congresses, which were first established in 1983, facilitated cooperation between school students and young workers and the unemployed. In the first place, most of the members of the new organisations were former COSAS activists who had left school or finished their schooling. Secondly, a large number of the youth congresses drew their membership from school students who were also active in COSAS. This had the dual effect of drawing COSAS into issues which affected young workers and the unemployed youth and drew the congresses into school-related struggles.

³¹ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.371.

³² "Apartheid Education: The challenge facing students", a retrospective overview of COSAS policy issued by the National Executive Committee, 1984. Cited in Frederickse,J. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.168.

³³ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.371.

COSAS policy also extended to the fight against sexism and the building of women's leadership.³⁴ The NEC included a women's organiser who was responsible for ensuring that every branch had a women's structure to facilitate the growth of women's leadership. COSAS also emphasized disciplinary action against harassment of women by its male members. In addition, the first national executive of COSAS included two women - Khumutso Mogase and Mpho Masetla. Finally, the student organisation took up the campaign to end sexual harassment in schools.

After Dr. Boesak proposed the formation of the UDF, COSAS welcomed the proposal and participated in the Front from the beginning. COSAS participated in meetings which led to the formation of regional UDFs in the Transvaal, Western Cape, Natal and other regions. The student organisation identified the UDF as a common platform for "all organisations that are committed to fighting against the new undemocratic constitution, the Koornhof laws, the Group Areas Act, bantustans, etc". According to a COSAS activist, the UDF was "a platform to fight for a free and democratic South Africa".³⁵

From 1983 up to its banning, COSAS was able to play a pre-eminent role in the educational struggle.³⁶ The school boycotts led to a growth in the organisation's membership and support among black students. During this period, COSAS evolved a composite strategy of educational and political demands, the former enshrined in the Education Charter and the latter were integrated with the demands of other sectors of resistance.³⁷ In its early

³⁴ "Interview of COSAS leaders", *op.cit.*, p.13.

³⁵ "United Action for Democratic Education", *op.cit.*, p.80.

³⁶ Refer to Chap.3, pp.105-111 above for a periodisation of the education struggle and COSAS's role in this struggle.

³⁷ Johnson,S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.113.

years the organisation initially focused on educational issues. However, by the end of 1984 striking students were making demands around educational as well as political issues. Thus, the particular interests of students were transformed into a political challenge of the dominant apartheid system: a democratic education system could only be achieved in a democratic society. This could only be achieved through revolutionary struggle, which was the combined struggle of all groups and social forces opposed to the ruling bloc.

At the end of 1984 COSAS succeeded in drawing community support for the students' struggle when it successfully called on the community to participate in the Transvaal regional stayaway. This marked a significant departure in that it demonstrated increasing awareness of the links between the various elements of the struggle - i.e. that the education struggle was a community issue as well. Demands made included the withdrawal of the SADF and police from the townships; cessation of rent and busfare increases; resignation of all community councillors; unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees; reinstatement of dismissed workers; educational reform; and the termination of unfair taxation. During 1985, school boycotts rendered "the schools unworkable and ungovernable, a process which mirrored that occurring in the townships following the collapse of the BLAs. This shift of objectives of the education struggle from reform to control reflected, according to Wolpe, a transformation of school boycotts from a tactic to a strategy.³⁸

In 1985, the school crisis had assumed such proportions, with students supporting the slogan "Liberation Now, Education Later!", that community involvement in educational issues became necessary. The national response to the educational crisis culminated in the formation of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in 1986. The government also addressed some of

³⁸ Wolpe, H. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.207.

COSAS's demands. In 1984, the new minister responsible for African education, Dr. Gerrit Viljoen, agreed to the formation of SRCs from the beginning of 1985. This was rejected by the student movement on the grounds that the constitutions of the SRCs had not been drawn up by students. COSAS also insisted that SRCs should be allowed to affiliate with outside organisations. In addition, the removal of age limits in particular standards, which students saw as a way of getting rid of political activists, was also addressed, and refusal to readmission was restricted in its application to educational grounds.³⁹

6.3.3. Structure and Membership

COSAS had structures at the national, regional and local level.⁴⁰ At the local level branches were formed at the schools or the particular institution concerned. A branch consisted of four or more students and had representation at Regional and National Committees. The National Congress (NC) was the supreme policy-making body of COSAS and met at least once a year. It consisted of the National Executive Committee (NEC), and five delegates from each branch. The NEC, which met at least four times a year, was responsible for carrying out the decisions and purposes of the NC and the NEC.

The NEC consisted of the members of the National Executive Council, two delegates from each regional committee, two representatives of the Executive, and any two members of every branch not included in a regional committee. Regional committees were formed in areas where three or more COSAS branches existed. The constitution also provided for SRCs, which could affiliate to COSAS.

³⁹ Davenport, T.R.H. (1987); "Unrest, reform and the challenge to law, 1976 to 1987", in Acta Juridica, p.23.

⁴⁰ Document; Congress of South African Students: Constitution, n.d.

From the very beginning of its existence, COSAS expressed its dissatisfaction with, and rejection of, the following aspects of "inferior education"⁴¹: overcrowded classrooms, unhealthy study conditions, bad food at boarding schools, enforced brutal discipline, inadequate and poorly qualified teachers, shortages of textbooks, leakage of examination papers, high school fees, etc. A spokesman claimed that COSAS aimed to build organisations around issues affecting students, rather than concentrate on issues affecting the community. In consequence, most of the early activities of the organisation were focused on educational issues, demonstrating an early commitment to mobilising around issues which immediately affect students.

During this period COSAS focused attention on the organisation of students at high schools, particularly in the Eastern Cape, around such issues as the limits of compulsory education, unfair matric results, and the prohibition of students over 18 in standard eight and standard ten from attending schools. In 1981, both COSAS and AZASO mobilised students around the campaign to draw up an Education Charter. The envisaged Education Charter would contain students' demands and present a view of a viable alternative to the apartheid system of education. The campaign was also seen as a means of developing COSAS into a mass organisation by mobilising the support of students during the campaign.

Tensions between parents and students during the 1980 school boycott resulted in a change of emphasis from mobilising purely around educational issues. Students realised that they needed the support of their parents and between 1980 and 1983 COSAS began organising students in various actions around community issues, often in collaboration with community organisations.

⁴¹ Survey of Race Relations, 1983, p.62.

In April 1981 the organisation led a protest march against rent increases in the Vaal, and mobilised support for a national consumer boycott of Wilson-Rowntree Sweets to support the members of SAAWU who had been dismissed from an East London factory. Thus, the activities of the student organisation in its early years were twofold: firstly, the mobilisation and organisation of students around educational issues and, secondly, cooperation with community organisations and workers in an attempt to establish unity-in-action and to gain the support and cooperation of the broader community in student struggles.

In 1983 COSAS claimed 44 branches nationally, with the Western Cape having the largest number.⁴² The following COSAS branches were represented at the UDF inaugural conference in August 1983: Transvaal (Soweto, Pretoria, and Alexandra); the Western Cape (18 branches); Natal (Durban); COSAS Eastern Cape and COSAS Bloemfontein.⁴³ By 1984 COSAS had developed a well-organised structure with branches in nearly fifty centres concentrated in the southern Transvaal and the Eastern Cape.⁴⁴

During 1984 COSAS expanded from an activist group to a mass movement and the number of COSAS branches increased dramatically. This was largely due to the organisation's role in educational struggles during the year.⁴⁵ The organisation "was able to generalise student demands from one area of the country to another". However, although thousands of students responded to COSAS campaigns, and many supported COSAS demands, "that did not necessarily mean that more than a limited leadership fraction were actually

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁴³ Refer to Appendix A below.

⁴⁴ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.36.

⁴⁵ Refer to Chapter 3, pp.108ff. above.

organised into structures with regular and disciplined activity".⁴⁶

African secondary school students increased in numbers from 774,000 in 1980 to over 1,192,900 in 1985. Primary school enrolment increased from 4,063,900 in 1980 to 4,820,100 in 1985 bringing the total number of African students to 6,012,900.⁴⁷ At the time of the banning of COSAS in mid-1985, journalists estimated that the organisation represented more than half of the six million African students in the country.⁴⁸ COSAS's support and level of organisation differed from region to region. This was largely a result of differing local conditions and political traditions.

The mobilisation of "progressive" school students in Natal was both hindered and stimulated by the dominance of Inkatha in the region's politics. Inkatha's Youth Brigade claimed a membership of half a million in 1986, with many young members recruited in KwaZulu schools.⁴⁹ The KwaZulu Department of Education encouraged recruitment for Inkatha in KwaZulu schools. Patterns of mobilisation in Natal's African schools were determined by the degree of authority and/or support the KwaZulu government and Inkatha enjoyed in the townships.⁵⁰ For instance, in KwaZulu-administered schools in Umlazi and KwaMashu, mobilisation for COSAS was relatively weak. By contrast, in

⁴⁶ Hyslop, J. (1988); "School student movements and state education policy: 1972-87", in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds.); Popular struggles in South Africa, (New Jersey, Africa World Press), pp.192-3.

⁴⁷ Unterhalter, E. (1991); "Changing aspects of reformism, 1953-1989", in Unterhalter, E. et al. (eds.); Apartheid education and popular struggles, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), Table 1, p.37.

⁴⁸ Detainees Parents Support Committee (1986); Abantwana Bazabalaza: A memorandum on children under repression, (Johannesburg, DPSC), p.8.

⁴⁹ McCaul, C. (1988); "The Wild Card: Inkatha and Contemporary black politics", in Frankel, P., Pines, N. and Swilling, M. (eds.); State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, (Kent, Croom Helm), p.150.

⁵⁰ Refer to Bot, M. (1985B); "Natal/KwaZulu schools, 1984: Pupils in the Middle", in Indicator SA, (Vol.2, No.4, January).

townships such as Lamontville, Hambanathi, Chesterville, and Klaarwater, which were administered by the Port Natal Administration Board (PNAB), and where schools were run by the Department of Education and Training (DET), support for COSAS was relatively high. Opposition to Inkatha in these townships (against repression of UDF activists and the threat of incorporation into KwaZulu) politicised the students, and promoted mass mobilisation in the schools.

The 1980-81 school boycotts in the coloured and African schools in the Western Cape politicised scores of school students. In the course of the boycotts, school students became involved in community issues, provided support for striking workers, mobilised support for the Western Cape rent campaign and became involved in the Release Mandela Campaign. The boycotts and politicisation of students encouraged the formation of COSAS branches in the region and, by the end of 1983, the Western Cape had 18 COSAS branches.

COSAS in the Western Cape remained relatively inactive between 1981 and 1985. However, the organisational foundation laid by COSAS was evident during the school boycotts which began after the declaration of the state of emergency in mid-1985 and the banning of COSAS.⁵¹ In particular, student groups involved in the boycott displayed a strong pro-ANC sentiment.⁵²

In the Eastern Cape, the militant political tradition of the region, the emergence of powerful community and youth organisations, and the intolerable educational conditions found in the region promoted the widespread mobilisation of school students. African and coloured schools in the region

⁵¹ See Bundy, C. (1987); *op.cit.*, and Bundy, C.; (1986); "Schools and revolution", in New Society, (10 January).

⁵² Hyslop, J. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.196.

also participated in the 1980-81 boycotts which lasted until January 1981 in the Eastern Cape. In addition, SAAWU in East London, and the Port Elizabeth Student's Organisation and PEBCO in Port Elizabeth, provided assistance in setting up COSAS branches in the region. COSAS branches rapidly grew up in the major urban centres and soon spread to rural townships in the region. Coloured students in the region were drawn into COSAS at the beginning of 1985 when they joined the nationwide boycott in support of democratic SRCs.⁵³

COSAS enjoyed widespread support in the PWV region as a whole. COSAS had strong branches in the West Rand, Pretoria (particularly in Atteridgeville-Saulsville), Soweto and Alexandra before the formation of the UDF. However, in 1984, the Transvaal Region acknowledged that branches were experiencing problems which contributed towards weakening organisation in the region. These were the lack of direction and coordination on issues to be taken by branches, and the lack of constant communication between the branches and the regional executive.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, by 1985 COSAS had spread to all major centres in the region. The country-wide school boycotts during the first half of the year also saw the spread of COSAS influence to the Northern and Eastern Transvaal regions.

At the end of 1983 COSAS had only one branch in the Orange Free State as a whole.⁵⁵ By the beginning of 1985, however, COSAS had taken root in the province. The expansion of COSAS membership was evident during the 1985 COSAS-initiated school boycotts in demand for democratic SRCs.

⁵³ "East Cape schools are out to get SRCs", in SASPU National, (Vol.6, No.1, March 1985), p.4.

⁵⁴ COSAS; Transvaal Regional Meeting Report, 6 April 1984, (Exhibit AB32, in State vs. Baleka and others).

⁵⁵ "COSAS-linked group starts in Thabong", in SASPU National, (Vol.4, No.4, October 1983).

Free State towns (Welkom, Kroonstad, Bultfontein, Wesselbron, Bothaville, Virginia, Odendaalrus and Bloemfontein) resembled battlegrounds with frequent clashes between police and students.⁵⁶

COSAS was not without limitations or weaknesses. In assessing COSAS's activities during the period, Hyslop⁵⁷ found a number of flaws. First, was the relationship between students and other sectors of the community, in particular, their relationship with organised labour. Students were often accused of calling stayaways without consulting the trade unions. These stayaways were often badly advertised and physical force was often used to enforce stayaways. Student actions also led to the alienation of teachers who students saw as working for "the system". There was also a lack of adequate links between students and parents leading to a fragmentation of unity in the community.

Second, the student movement was open to infiltration by unemployed young people because of organisational weaknesses which arose from weak or non-existent political education and the lack of leadership after the COSAS banning. This led to a high level of politically destructive violence, and to clashes between students supporting opposing organisations.

Nevertheless, education struggles during the first half of the 1980s built the foundation upon which a long-term strategy emerged. The enduring school crisis which continued after the banning of the student organisation led to a national response and the formation of the NECC. With the increasing involvement of the community, the educational struggle was transformed to a search for alternative education - "people's education".

⁵⁶ "Free State townships rage", in SASPU National, (Vol.6, No.1, March 1985), p.4.

⁵⁷ Hyslop, J. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.197-8.

In sum, COSAS, one of the founding organisations of the UDF, was a mass organisation by the time of its banning and had established branches in every province in the country. It had thus played a very significant role in mass mobilisation and organisation and was able to draw this large constituency into the ambit of revolutionary activity.

The early commitment to the Freedom Charter and the ANC, and COSAS's activities in this regard, meant the student organisation played a significant role in the political and ideological struggle to promote and expand revolutionary consciousness. This, coupled with COSAS's large constituency, provided the UDF with one of the most significant means of mobilising and organising the youth around its political programmes and ideology.

6.4. The Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO)/South African National Students Congress (SANSCO)

6.4.1. Formation

In the late 1970s Black students at tertiary institutions organised themselves into the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO). College and university students were initially organised into AZASO, which was formed in November 1979 by students from Fort Hare, Zululand, Natal, Turfloop and Durban-Westville universities, and Mapumulo college. AZASO was the student wing of AZAPO. At the inaugural conference, organised by AZAPO, a preamble was adopted endorsing the philosophy of Black Consciousness and an interim executive elected to establish branches at the various campuses and to draft a constitution.⁵⁸

The formation of AZASO was not representative of the black student community in South Africa. Only representatives of Turfloop were present at

⁵⁸ "Anyone who fights racism, exploitation is on our side", Interview of Joe Phaahla, President of AZASO, in SASPU National, (Vol.2, No.7, September 1981), p.9.

the AZAPO meeting which suggested the formation of the student organisation. However, students at other universities decided to heed the call for the new organisation and participated at AZASO's inaugural conference in Pietermaritzburg.

6.4.2. Policies and objectives

From the outset AZASO was involved in an ideological debate as leaders sought to extract and codify a political philosophy from the short history of BC. Their major concerns were the role of whites in the national liberation struggle and the question of socialism in a future South Africa.⁵⁹ These debates occurred in the context of a national ideological debate as the ANC reasserted its primacy in the liberation struggle.

At an annual General Council conference held at Wilgespruit in 1981 the issues of non-racialism and socialism dominated the discussions. The BC component was defeated and the organisation committed itself to the Freedom Charter and co-operation with COSAS, and confirmed the dominance of "united front", non-racial politics among organised youth.⁶⁰ It was argued that BC "has served its purpose. We must move on".⁶¹

Like its counterpart in the schools, AZASO adopted a non-racial stance. Although whites were not permitted to become members of AZASO it was willing to cooperate with white student organisations. In 1981 AZASO bridged the distance that had existed between black student organisations and NUSAS by developing a working alliance with the latter on the Education Charter Campaign. One factor which strengthened cooperation between black and

⁵⁹ Johnson,S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.106.

⁶⁰ *Loc.cit.*

⁶¹ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.370.

white student organisations was the growth in numbers of black students on liberal campuses after 1976. Black students changed the nature of student politics on liberal campuses by taking township struggles into these institutions.

AZASO moved early to demonstrate its attitude towards workers and the notion of unity-in-action. At its 1981 conference, AZASO invited a number of representatives of community and labour organisations. According to an AZASO leader: "The presence of community and labour union leaders underlined the importance which AZASO attaches to [the] unity of all progressives. It is also significant that the activities of the students' movement are in line with the aspirations of the mass of the exploited workers".⁶² In support of this statement the student organisation involved itself in a number of community struggles and trade union support campaigns.

AZASO saw the working class as the key instrument to "bring about a redistribution of power" in South Africa.⁶³ The organisation pledged to "seek a working policy relating directly to the struggle of the workers as conducted by the progressive trade union movement".⁶⁴ Students could contribute to the workers' struggle, according to an AZASO leader, in a number of ways.⁶⁵ Because students are relatively unconstrained by responsibility, they are more able to respond to political issues than workers, who "usually react more readily to matters directly affecting their livelihood such as working conditions and wages". Students could also play a supportive role because they "have

⁶² "Anyone who fights racism, exploitation is on our side", *op.cit.*, p.9.

⁶³ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.370.

⁶⁴ Document; AZASO: Constitution and Policy, 1983.

⁶⁵ "Strengthen students-worker ties - Phaahla", in SASPU National, (Vol.3, No.1, Feb/March 1982), p.3.

more time to research, collect data, analyze and compile information which can be used to strengthen the workers' theoretical understanding of their situation". In addition, the supportive role of students "extends to producing pamphlets, stickers, collecting funds and arranging meetings".

In 1986, AZASO placed itself firmly in the tradition of organisations supporting the Freedom Charter when it changed its name to SANSCO. In a policy statement on the Freedom Charter, SANSCO National Coordinator, Jabi Skhosana, had the following to say:

Socialism is a democracy for the majority of the people, the working people and instead of democratic rights being made formal, the material basis for realizing those rights are guaranteed. ... It is important if the democratic organisations struggling for the demands develop a working class leadership and convince themselves and other classes that there is a place for all under socialism, then it will become clearer that the establishment of democracy will deepen into socialism and this is exactly what the Charter is and is striving for.⁶⁶

This is a clear recognition that the ultimate goal of the struggle is socialism, which can be achieved by developing a working class leadership and convincing other classes that there is a place for all under socialism. Thus, the national democratic revolution, if these conditions are met, can deepen into socialism by implementing the political and economic aspirations found in the Freedom Charter. This statement indicates a process, which begins with the destruction of apartheid, leading to the implementation of the Freedom Charter which then deepens into socialism. For AZASO, then, the immediate political challenge was to destroy apartheid.

Black students at tertiary institutions constitute a social category distinct from the majority of black people, who are predominantly working class. However, they share, alongside workers and other black dominated classes, a common experience of national oppression. In addition, the number of students from

⁶⁶ SANSCO National Newsletter, p.6.

working class families began to expand during the 1980s. For this category of students, "low wages for parents, unemployment, inadequate housing and services and poverty were lived experiences".⁶⁷

AZASO held the same view as COSAS with regard to the relationship between educational and other struggles. According to an AZASO activist:

The problems and conflicts in South Africa are not narrowly found in political and economic factors. Factors such as consciousness, understanding society, perceptions of the work situation, etc., are all points of conflict in society. While education continues to perpetuate the oppression and exploitation of the majority in this country it will continue to be a focal point in the struggle for liberation. The 1953 Anti-Bantu Education campaign, Soweto '76, the 1980 Schools Boycott all attest to the fact that education struggles have contributed to our proud history of struggle. Similarly present and future struggles on education must link up to the broad national struggle for democracy. Otherwise they would be wasted energy.⁶⁸

AZASO identified its guiding principle to be the struggle for the "creation of a democratic South Africa free of racist oppression and exploitation".⁶⁹ And, in the view of the organisation: "Since the success of our struggle depends upon effective mobilisation of all people committed to democracy, we call for genuine unity of the oppressed against the oppressive system".⁷⁰

From the outset, AZASO was preoccupied with the question of student representation. When AZASO was formed in 1979, Fort Hare was the only black campus with an SRC. According to Badat: "At most universities, and particularly at technikons, teacher training colleges, and bantustan-based institutions, the democratic right of students to autonomous student organisation continued to be denied". At Vista University, for example, no

⁶⁷ Badat, S. (1991); "Reformist strategies in tertiary education since 1976", in Unterhalter, E. et al. (eds.); Apartheid education and popular struggles, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.80.

⁶⁸ "Forward with the education charter", interview with AZASO activist, in Africa Perspective, (No.24, 1984), pp.73-4.

⁶⁹ "Anyone who fights racism, exploitation is on our side", *op.cit.*, p.9.

⁷⁰ Document; AZASO: Constitution and Policy, 1983.

student organisation could be formed without the permission of the university council, while students were barred from contacting or joining any organisations not recognised by the council.⁷¹ According to an AZASO activist:

Democratic student representation in the form of SRCs and COSAS and AZASO branches has been stifled by the racist education authorities. Instead of democratic representation, university students have been forced to accept 'dummy' SRCs. At school level, any form of student representation has been firmly crushed and as an alternative, prefect systems, etc., have been implemented. Students and scholars have neglected such representation from the top and today continue to strive for better and more grassroots representation.⁷²

In 1987, the campaign for SRCs shifted towards a call by the student organisation for the transformation of tertiary institutions into "People's Campuses".⁷³ Its Programme of Action for the year included a call for the formation of committees of people's power at all levels - from the SRC down to hostel committees and floor committees, faculty councils, class committees, sports and cultural committees. These structures, which had their parallels in the street committees, people's courts, etc., were seen as the foundations of people's power and democratic control of campuses. This marked a change from reform to control, from democratic representation in SRCs to People's Campuses, and presented a challenge to the authority of the apartheid regime.

AZASO also focused on the Education Charter Campaign in 1981. According to AZASO activists, the campaign was important because there was a need for students to formulate a common set of educational demands. In addition, the campaign was important as a rallying point to mobilise students and make student structures more mass based. Furthermore: "The Education

⁷¹ Badat, S. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.91.

⁷² "Forward with the education charter", *op.cit.*, p.74.

⁷³ "Peoples' Campuses", in SANSCO Newsletter, (Transvaal Region, No.1, 1987).

Charter is important because it will be democratically formulated and so will embody the minimum education demands of the people".⁷⁴ The idea of an alternative education system marked the outright rejection of apartheid education and a vision of a democratically-based education system. This represented a desire to wrest political and ideological control of black education from the apartheid regime and to place it in the hands of the "people".

AZASO welcomed the call for the formation of the UDF and participated in meetings which preceded the formation of the Front. AZASO members formed an important component of the foot-soldiers who popularised the UDF, promoted the anti-elections campaign, and collected signatures during the Million Signature Campaign.

Nkosinathi Gwala perceives four common features of educational struggles at black universities during the 1980s.⁷⁵ First, student struggles and the radicalisation of black students were shaped by the broader political struggle in spite of the geographical isolation of the universities. Second, the educational struggle was led and shaped by school students with most university boycotts occurring in response to the activities and issues raised by school students. Third, other struggles at black universities have been highly localised and isolated from each other. Fourth, university students failed to develop a programme of action directed at challenging the "bush character" of black universities.

Opposition to the tri-cameral parliament and the BLAs, the formation of the UDF, and the declaration of a state of emergency and state repression

⁷⁴ "Students launch blueprint", in SASPU National, (Vol.3, No.2, August 1982), p.3.

⁷⁵ Gwala,N. (1988); "State control, student politics and the crisis in black universities", in Cobbett,W. and Cohen,R. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.177.

shaped student struggles in the first half of the 1980s. Student struggles were largely shaped by the events in the schools and communities around them. Thus, the most significant events of this period - the 1980s school boycott, the introduction of the tri-cameral parliament and BLAs, the 1984 Vaal Triangle uprising and the 1985 school boycotts - involved widespread participation by black tertiary students. These national and regional struggles were punctuated by local struggles which led to sustained boycotts over the expulsion of student leaders, racist lecturers, and poor conditions on campuses.

The ethnic universities were some of the focal points of resistance to apartheid since their establishment. By the mid-1980s, the "bush character" of these universities began to play a central role in student resistance. Unequal facilities, racist lecturers, control of the universities by conservative elements, police invasions of campuses were among the major grievances of black students.

Black universities lacked legitimacy among black students for a number of reasons.⁷⁶ Facilities at black universities are not equal to those at white universities. The racial separation of university education also fostered suspicions about the academic quality and status of ethnic universities. These universities also had a large complement of white South African staff at both the senior administrative and professorial levels. Resentment and unrest were also generated by the unsympathetic response of white-dominated administrations to the demands of black students. The expulsions, arrests or bannings of politically active students and student organisations, and police intervention on campuses caused black students to view the university administrations with hostility.

⁷⁶ Bot, M. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.15.

6.4.3. Structure and Membership

AZASO had structures at the national, regional and local levels.⁷⁷ The supreme policy-making organ of AZASO, the Annual Congress, consisted of 3 delegates from each branch. The General Students Council (GSC), which consisted of members of the NEC and 3 delegates from each branch, ran the affairs of AZASO between Congresses. The NEC, which was responsible for running the day-to-day activities of the organisation, consisted of a president, vice-president, and secretariat.

Regionally, AZASO divided the country into four - Transvaal/Orange Free State, Natal, Eastern Cape, and Western Cape. In each region branches elected a Regional Council, which was responsible for coordinating the activities of the regions. The regions were further divided into subregions. For example, the Transvaal/OFS region had a northern subregion which included branches from the Universities of the North and Venda and a western subregion which included the University of Bophuthatswana, Medunsa and Mabopane Technikon. Constitutionally, branches consisted of at least ten members or any such number that the GSC decided upon. In addition to supervising all aspects and activities of the organisation within the area of its jurisdiction, each branch could submit to the GSC for consideration any recommendations concerning the principles, aims, objectives and goals of the organisation.

Within a few years AZASO had established itself at black technical and teacher training colleges and all universities in South Africa except for Afrikaans ones. At the end of 1982, the organisation claimed that it had branches on 14 campuses and seven colleges.⁷⁸ AZASO branch reports

⁷⁷ Document; AZASO: Constitution and Policy, 1983, pp.1-3.

⁷⁸ Survey of Race Relations, 1983, p.62.

during the early years of its existence indicate a relatively low level of active participation in the organisation. However, at the level of identifying with, and supporting AZASO, a greater percentage of the black student population was attracted to the organisation.

Black enrolment in tertiary institutions expanded rapidly from 1977. Among the reasons given for this expansion were the government and business's response to the skilled labour shortage and a politically-motivated initiative for the expansion of the black middle class.⁷⁹ After 1977, both capital and the government promoted black tertiary education in a number of ways.⁸⁰ The state embarked on the construction of technikons and teacher training colleges for Africans in the "white areas", and provided financial assistance for the establishment of tertiary institutions in the homelands. South African capital provided funds to increase facilities at tertiary institutions and support for particular faculties. Finally, substantial increases were made in state-funded and private bursaries and loans to black students.

Between 1977 and 1985, the total number of black university students increased three-fold from 25,140 to 78,017. The numbers increased most dramatically in black universities while a significant number of blacks began attending the English-medium universities.⁸¹ Black student enrolment at tertiary technical training institutions increased less dramatically between 1977 and 1987. In 1987, out of a total of 54,316 students at technical college, only 13,794 were black.⁸² In 1987, black enrolment at teacher training

⁷⁹ Badat, S. (1991); "The expansion of black tertiary education 1977-90: Reform and contradiction", in Unterhalter, E. et al. (eds.); Apartheid education and popular struggles, *op.cit.*, pp.75-7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.77-79.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Table 1, pp.80-1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, Table 2, p.83.

colleges was as follows: 33,572 Africans at forty-one colleges run by the DET and the non-independent homelands; 9,209 Africans at eighteen colleges in the "independent" homelands (excluding Ciskei); 8,064 coloureds at thirteen colleges; and 1,174 Indians at two institutions which offered teacher training.⁸³

Black student mobilisation at the institutions was very uneven. This was largely a result of the different opportunities and constraints for organisation which were found in the different institutions. In addition, the advent of ideological differences on campuses led to splits in the black student body. Finally, state repression, expulsions of student leaders and closing of campuses adversely affected student mobilisation.

During the late 1970s black students at the white English-medium universities organised themselves into Black Student Societies (BSSs). These BSSs formed the initial branches of AZASO on these campuses. Conditions on the English-medium campuses were more conducive to student mobilisation than the black campuses.⁸⁴ The liberal administrations of the English-medium campuses provided student structures with greater space for their activities. In addition, the existence of SRCs, NUSAS, and other left-wing groups opened channels for student organisation. By contrast, conditions at black universities, technikons and colleges constrained organisation.⁸⁵ Many black tertiary institutions lacked democratic SRCs while conservative educational and state administrations placed constraints on student structures.

The rival BC-oriented student organisation, the Azanian Students Movement

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Table 3, p.84.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.91-2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.86.

(AZASM), formed in 1983, split the black student body at all tertiary institutions. The ideological divisions amongst black students were exacerbated by the formation of the National Forum and the UDF. Students became involved in competition for political domination of the BSSs and SRCs, where they existed.

The following branches of AZASO were represented at the UDF inaugural conference in August 1983: Transvaal (Turfloop, University of the Witwatersrand Black Students Society, Medunsa, Soweto Teacher Training College, Soweto College of Education, Student Tuition Society); the Western Cape (University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape); Natal (University of Durban-Westville, University of Natal [Pietermaritzburg], University of Natal [Durban], Durban Medical School, University of Zululand, Natal Technikon SRC); Eastern Cape (Rhodes University Black Students Society).⁸⁶

AZASO's membership differed from campus to campus. In some cases the entire student body of an institution was affiliated to AZASO through the SRC, e.g., the University of Durban-Westville in 1983. In 1983, AZASO was banned in KwaZulu, restricting its activities at the University of Zululand. In the same year, intense repression by the Medunsa administration forced the AZASO branch to operate off-campus. At Fort Hare, in addition to facing a history of repression, the organisation was effectively banned by the Ciskei authorities.⁸⁷

Tiego Moseneke, AZASO president in 1983, categorised the level of organisation as follows:

There are those campuses where AZASO has been active since about 1981 where we have been accepted as the sole representative body of black students in the country

⁸⁶ Refer to Appendix A below.

⁸⁷ "Stormy year for AZASO campuses", in SASPU National, (Vol.4, No.5, November 1983), p.8.

today.... The other campuses have grown significantly in the last year or so, and the majority of students support AZASO. But some branches have not taken full root, especially those where students are hampered by repression. Some like Ngoye have managed to overcome this by good organisation but others are hampered by not being there, but not at the rate we would like, and AZASO cannot be said to be mass based there. But at Wits, Turfloop, Rhodes, Mongasotho Technikon and in Natal [University - G.H.], AZASO is to a large extent accepted by students willing to work within the structures.⁸⁸

In 1983, AZASO had affiliates at 13 institutions: University of Durban-Westville - mass affiliation (5,000 students); University of Natal Medical School - mass affiliation (800 students); University of Turfloop - branch; University of the Witwatersrand - branch; University of Fort Hare - working group; University of Cape Town - branch; University of the Western Cape - branch; University of Zululand - working group; University of South Africa - branch; Mongosuthu Technikon - working group; Mapumulo Seminary College - working group; University of Natal - branch; and L.L. Sebe College - working group.⁸⁹ In 1985 AZASO claimed a presence on more than 50 campuses, colleges, and technikons.⁹⁰ This figure grew to 67 in 1986.

AZASO structures experienced a number of setbacks during the various emergencies. In 1988, the organisation stated that although it had been in a fairly strong position between 1983 and 1985,

...the state of emergency has had a material effect on our organisation...Our structures have been weakened by a systematic state onslaught: branches at Turfloop, Fort Hare, and Ngoye have been systematically destroyed.⁹¹

During its early years, however, AZASO was the dominant student organisation in most tertiary institutions for blacks and the leading organisation

⁸⁸ "Talking Heads", Interview of Tiego Moseneke, President of AZASO, in SASPU National, (Vol.4, No.5, November 1983), p.10.

⁸⁹ Document; AZASO: Education Towards Democracy, (Published by AZASO UCT, 1983).

⁹⁰ "AZASO - For student Unity", in AZASO National Student Newsletter, (Published by the Black Student Society, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985).

⁹¹ SANSCO National Newsletter, (First Quarter, 1988). Quoted in Badat, S. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.91.

for black students at white institutions. This occurred through the increasing mobilisation of black students at these institutions resulting in an increase in the number of AZASO branches.

In sum, student activities were responses to a mix of educational and other local issues, and political issues. From the outset, however, the student struggle at tertiary institutions presented a challenge to the dominant apartheid system. This was a reflection of their early commitment to the Freedom Charter and the goal of national liberation, and the links they identified between educational issues and other forms of national oppression.

6.5. The South African Youth Congress (SAYCO)

6.5.1. Formation

By far the most significant youth organisation in South Africa during the eighties was the South African Youth Congress. At the COSAS founding conference in 1979, attention was focused on the need to organise non-student youths and to forge unity with students and pupils.

COSAS leaders noted that many activists who had operated from the schools had dropped out either because of financial pressure, or hostility from the school authorities and the state. At the same time, over the years, many COSAS activists had completed school and were left with no organisational base in the community. Then there were the unemployed youths, as well as young workers, young married couples... people who shared the interests and aspirations of COSAS but could not belong to it.⁹²

This gave rise to a COSAS commission in 1982 to investigate the formation of a national youth organisation. The commission decided that individual townships and regions establish their own youth congresses which would work in close cooperation with COSAS and AZASO.⁹³ These youth organisations would cater for young workers and the unemployed, most of these being

⁹² Interview with Daniel Montsisi, (UDF Youth Officer and Executive member, Soweto Youth Congress), Johannesburg, May 1986, June 1986. Quoted in Johnson, S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.108.

⁹³ Johnson, S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.109.

former COSAS members who had finished or left school. In 1983, twenty new youth organisations were launched.⁹⁴

In January 1984 a number of local and regional youth organisations came together to discuss the United Nations' International Year of the Youth (IYY) and the feasibility of creating a national youth coordinating body. Another meeting of five regional structures in November of the same year discussed the issue. At the beginning of 1985 a meeting of youth organisations in Durban agreed on a federal structure for the national organisation, and appointed a National Interim Committee.

It was felt that local youth congresses were not fully prepared and leaders were told to go back and canvass their constituents in anticipation of a future launch. The July 1985 state of emergency "brought activities to a standstill" but attempts were made to revive the initiative at a meeting in the Western Cape in April 1986. In November, the Interim Committee announced that a "national youth organisation,...the voice of the young men and women of our country, channelling the militancy of the youth in a progressive political direction", would soon be launched.⁹⁵

At the end of 1986 there were some 600 youth congresses countrywide, and secretly-formed regional structures were in operation in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, northern Transvaal and southern Transvaal, and preparations were advanced in Natal, the northern Cape, and Orange Free State. On 28 March 1987, SAYCO was launched in great secrecy and representatives of

⁹⁴ Survey of Race Relations, 1983, p.62.

⁹⁵ Johnson,S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.136. See also "Turning youth energy into a powerful unified force", in SASPU National, (Vol.6, No.1, March 1985), p.13.

the nine regional structures elected the National Executive.⁹⁶ SAYCO adopted the Freedom Charter, pledged itself to work closely with COSATU and the NECC, and affiliated to the UDF. It claimed a membership of between 500,000 and 700,000 (and a support base of two million) and had about 1,000 local youth group affiliates.⁹⁷

6.5.2. Policies and Objectives

The organisation's principal objectives included unifying and politicising all "progressive" youth, irrespective of race; encouraging the youth to join trade unions; and ensuring that women participated fully in the activities of the youth movement.

Resolutions at the inaugural conference included demands for the lifting of the state of emergency, the withdrawal of troops from the townships, the unconditional release of Mandela and other political prisoners, and the unbanning of the ANC. These demands were similar to those made by virtually every organisation within the UDF at the time. They represented a challenge to apartheid, particularly with regard to the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of the ANC since these were calls for the leadership of the ANC in a democratic South Africa.

SAYCO pledged to be part of a "class alliance...of organisational unity led by the working class [involving] a principled working relationship with all progressive workers, community, women and student organisations with principles similar to ours".⁹⁸ From the outset SAYCO adopted a class

⁹⁶ Johnson,S. (1989); *op.cit.*, pp.137-8.

⁹⁷ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.467.

⁹⁸ Speeches and resolutions of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), Cape Town, March 1987, in State of the Nation, (Johannesburg, April 1987). Quoted in Johnson,S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.139.

analysis of the South African struggle. Thus:

Our constitution's preamble depicts the current era as capitalist, in which the means of production are owned by a white minority and by foreign capitalists, with our people selling their only asset, their labour, for next to nothing. And it depicts a stage beyond capitalism, socialism. But the way to reach that stage is through the national-democratic revolution.⁹⁹

This statement provides an insight into the ultimate aim of the organisation, and the means to attain this goal. Socialism could only be achieved through the national democratic-revolution, which involved alliances with other organisations under the leadership of the working class.

The aims and objectives adopted at the SAYCO launch reflected a growing identification with the working class. The congress resolved to: channel the militancy and resourcefulness of the youth to the benefit of the whole national and class struggle; to promote and deepen amongst the youth the outlook of the most progressive class, the working class; and encourage the working youth to join progressive trade unions which form part and parcel of the struggle for total political and economic liberation.¹⁰⁰ An alliance with COSATU was high on the agenda of the youth organisation. For instance, the keynote address at the SAYCO launch was given by a COSATU official. SAYCO's first president stressed the need for an alliance with workers in the following terms:

The struggles of the past three years have clearly demonstrated the dynamic role...of the youth ...[but] a clear understanding flows from the realities of national oppression and exploitation that while the youth continues to play a dynamic and energetic role in our struggle, it must accept ... working class leadership of the...struggle.... We have come together as the youth detachment of the democratic movement at a time of unprecedented state attacks.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ "Learning to live in the shadows", Interview of SAYCO leaders, in Work in Progress, (53, April/May, 1988), p.14.

¹⁰⁰ Niddrie,D. (1987); "Emergency forces new forms of organisation", in Work in Progress, (Vol.47, April), p.7.

¹⁰¹ Speeches and resolutions of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), Cape Town, March 1987, in State of the Nation, (Johannesburg, April 1987). Quoted in Johnson,S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.139.

The youth had been at the forefront of the struggle since the Soweto revolt "in so far as they stimulated action and invariably shouldered the bulk of the practical work in implementing various campaigns". However, the youth acknowledged that:

this should not be mistaken with the view that we are the vanguard of the struggle. That role belongs to our own working parents. The youth can be in the forefront of the confrontation between the state and the people, but working parents are the vanguard as they have the power to break the economy of the country...they are the decisive force in the liberation struggle.¹⁰²

The central role given to the working class in the national-democratic struggle and the recognition of the supportive role of the youth by SAYCO mirrors the views held by the student organisations. This is a clear recognition of the centrality of class war in the "struggle".

6.5.3. Structure and Membership

SAYCO had a federal structure with leadership at the national, regional and local levels. At the national level, the National Congress elected the Central Executive Committee (CEC) out of whose ranks a National Executive Committee (NEC) was elected. Under the constitution, the NEC was to meet every fortnight and the CEC every two months. The supreme organ of SAYCO was the Congress, which met once a year.

Regional congresses were established in the Southern, Northern and Eastern Transvaal, the Southern, Western and Northern Cape, Border, the Eastern Cape, Natal and the Orange Free State.¹⁰³ These regional congresses linked up local youth congresses. All branches in the region were represented in Regional conferences which elected a Regional Executive Committee (REC). The regions were further demarcated into sub-regions, zones and units.

¹⁰² Interview with members of the National Interim Committee of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), in *State of the Nation*, (South African Students' Press Union (SASPU), Johannesburg, April 1987). Quoted in Johnson, S. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.134.

¹⁰³ Niddrie, D. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.4.

SAYCO emerged nine months into the 1986 state of emergency and was forced to operate under emergency conditions. It was no longer possible to hold mass rallies, openly hold meetings, and maintain an identifiable leadership. "These restrictions certainly weakened us", Simon Ntombela, publicity secretary said, "because of the state of emergency we were not able to undertake rallies, put out publications and generate support for our campaigns".¹⁰⁴

Born during a period of severe restrictions, SAYCO streamlined its operations to adapt to underground activity.¹⁰⁵ The basic decision-making and executive structures remained unchanged but revisions were required in the face of increasing pressure from the state and the possibility of the detention of the national leadership. In order to expand decision-making structures and provide replacements for leaders lost through detention or death, eight departments were created to perform the functions once done by the officials charged with running the organisation's day-to-day activities. In addition, meetings of the NEC and CEC were not held as regularly as required under the constitution.

At the national level, publicity and propaganda, education and training, sports and culture, women, secretariat, finance, religious and student liaison departments or sub-committees were established. However, although these departments were supposed to be set up at the regional, zonal and local levels, none existed by the end of 1987.¹⁰⁶

At the regional and local levels, leaders operated clandestinely during the

¹⁰⁴ "Learning to live in the shadows", *op.cit.*, p.12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹⁰⁶ Document; SAYCO Executive report presented at 3rd CEC meeting, 22/12/87.

state of emergency. According to Niddrie:

The major thrust of local youth congress activity switched from high-profile, mass recruitment rallies to a system comparable to street committees. Living permanently underground, organisers established communication channels sufficiently strong, despite the emergency crackdown, to hold regional structures together.¹⁰⁷

At the local level, youth congresses displayed a wide diversity in their membership, functioning and activities. In general, the youth congresses consisted of a ten-member executive committee, an elected general council which was subdivided into coordinating committees representing zones. The zones were further divided into branches which were the lowest tier of the structure of youth congresses.¹⁰⁸ It was typical for the youth congresses to have seven sub-committees: Education and Cultural; Projects; Sports; Religion; Fund Raising; News gathering and distribution; and Young Women's committees.

The general aims of the early youth congresses were: to normalise the relationship between youth and parents; to create a spirit of trust, responsibility and understanding among the youth; to directly involve the youth in community projects; to instil a spirit of health and determination in disillusioned young people; and to encourage the youth to strive for a better system of education and complete their academic education full-time or part-time.

The first youth congresses to emerge in 1983 focused on the organisation of all youth (workers, the unemployed, and teenagers) in order to tackle their problems through united and collective action, and to develop a role for young people in their communities and in the broader democratic struggle.

¹⁰⁷ Niddrie, D. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.4.

¹⁰⁸ Mufson, S. (1990); Fighting Years: Black resistance and the struggle for a new South Africa, (Boston, Beacon Press), p.118.

Thus, from the outset the youth congresses had identified their political role in organising youth for participation in the broader democratic struggle.

The first youth congress was formed in the Western Cape. The 1980-81 school boycotts politicised students in the coloured schools and led to the formation of a number of youth groups in the coloured suburbs. During this wave of school boycotts, which included African schools in the area, student demands were integrated more explicitly with political demands. In addition, students became active in trade union struggles, in organising strikes and in support of the Free Mandela Campaign.¹⁰⁹ The Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO) was formed in 1983 bringing together 35 youth groups.¹¹⁰

In the Western Cape, the youth increasingly identified with the country-wide growth in popular support for the ANC. Although historically the ANC was weak in the region, by 1985 a pro-ANC stance was widely evident in overt allegiance to the emblems, leaders and programme of the ANC. This was largely due to the existence of CAYCO and other UDF-affiliates in the region.¹¹¹

In the Eastern Cape, opposition to the new BLAs and proposed rent increases resulted in the revival of PEBCO and the formation of the Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (PEYCO) in June 1983 and the Uitenhage Youth Congress (UYCO) at the end of 1984. PEYCO was formed after "a small group of highly politicized educated unemployed youths, aged between 20 and 26, and drawn from working class families, began to meet to discuss their

¹⁰⁹ Bundy, C. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.52.

¹¹⁰ "The growing power of youth", in SASPU National, (Vol.4, No.5, November 1983), p.9.

¹¹¹ Bundy, C. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.323-4.

political role in the community".¹¹² UYCO, on the other hand, emerged to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Uitenhage Black People's Organisation (UBCO) in 1983.

PEYCO and UYCO rapidly established elaborate networks of organisation by the end of 1984. Leaders were drawn from the ranks of leaders of the 1976 revolt and the 1980 school boycotts as well as from COSAS and were usually better educated than their followers. The primary constituents of these youth congresses were unemployed school-leavers with a tendency to concentrate on political campaigns. Both PEYCO and UYCO claimed a membership of one thousand card-carrying members in 1985.¹¹³

PEYCO dominated community organisation in Port Elizabeth: "militant and increasingly engaged in physical confrontation with security forces, but lacking the tradition of democratic organisation of the unions".¹¹⁴ PEYCO organised the youth primarily around political issues as opposed to civic- or factory-based issues. PEYCO's major objective was to provide the unemployed youth with a political home. Thus, in addition to mass meetings, PEYCO organised workshops to teach young people about the Freedom Charter, the meaning of the national liberation struggle, the causes of oppression and class exploitation, and methods of organisation.¹¹⁵

PEYCO played a key role in coordinating township struggles and was a prominent member of structures in the area. For instance, the congress often played the role of the local UDF area committee and acted as a reinforcing

¹¹² Labour Monitoring Group (1985); *op.cit.*, p.99.

¹¹³ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.71-2 and Labour Monitoring Group (1985); *op.cit.*, p.100.

¹¹⁴ Hyslop, J. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.194.

¹¹⁵ Labour Monitoring Group (1985); *op.cit.*, p.100.

mechanism in local UDF structures. In addition, PEYCO assisted other organisations in the townships, particularly women, the local UDF and defence committees.

According to Swilling, UYCO, despite its name, became a civic, with support in the employed and the unemployed working class.¹¹⁶ In addition, unlike other youth congresses, UYCO drew its membership from all age groups, thus making it the main community organisation in the city.¹¹⁷ The congress was strongest in Langa, where most of its members were squatters and others who resisted relocation to Kwanobuhle. It developed a sophisticated democratic grassroots structure based on street and area committees. At the apex of this structure was a township committee empowered to call meetings, formulate strategy and enter into negotiations.

The Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO) was formed in July 1983, becoming the third youth congress to be formed after the resolution taken by COSAS in 1982. SOYCO was initiated by former COSAS members when COSAS leaders appointed a core group of five people to organise the youth congress. This core group quietly recruited young people in church groups, dance groups, and soccer clubs.¹¹⁸ The youth organisation transformed the nature of black resistance politics in Soweto by playing a significant role in marches, consumer boycotts, stayaways, and defiance campaigns.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Swilling, M. (1986); "Stayaways, urban protest and the State", in South African Research Services (eds.); South African Review 3, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.35.

¹¹⁷ Labour Monitoring Group (1985); *op.cit.*, p.100.

¹¹⁸ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.34.

¹¹⁹ Shubane, K. et.al. (1991); "Soweto", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.263.

The Alexandra Youth Congress (AYCO) was launched on 25 September 1983.¹²⁰ At the official launch, attended by approximately 200-300 people, a committee of eleven people was elected after the adoption of the constitution. Membership of AYCO was open to "all who fall within the accepted definition of youth", i.e., all young people between the ages of twelve and thirty-six years. The ages of founding members of the youth congress ranged from sixteen to twenty-four years old in 1984, and in 1986 the membership ranged in age from early teens to mid-thirties. Many of those involved in AYCO were former members of COSAS, as well as active COSAS members still in school. Many AYCO activists were children of working-class parents, and a number came from single-parent households. In 1985 many AYCO activists were in their early teens, and included young workers and the unemployed.

The first AYCO General Council meeting, held at Wilgespruit in June 1984, was attended by approximately fifty people. In 1985, the organisation had approximately 100 paid-up and active members but it commanded much wider support in the township. In the wake of the "Six Day War" in 1986, the numbers of active AYCO supporters swelled into several hundred, and the number of young people engaged in "resistance" activity in the township into at least a thousand more.

AYCO was also involved in a number of internal organisational activities, such as seminars, debates and workshops on political issues; sports events and symposiums with other youth congresses; and other contacts with like-minded organisations and activists. In addition, AYCO was involved in political activity which was largely rooted in struggles taking place within Alexandra's

¹²⁰ This analysis is taken from Carter, C. (1991); "'We are the Progressives': Alexandra Youth Congress Activists and the Freedom Charter, 1983-1985", in Journal of Southern African Studies, (Vol.17, No.2, June), pp.197-220.

schools. Finally, AYCO activists promoted a symbolic link with the banned ANC, while a number of AYCO activists were actively involved in underground work.¹²¹ By the end of 1985, AYCO had become a significant political actor in the township. It had made a concerted effort to organise and educate its youth constituency by organising youth street-by-street and emphasizing the responsibility of youth activists in conscientising parents.¹²²

The Northern Transvaal UDF regional committee included 16 youth congress affiliates. These congresses, according to Lodge, had the most extensive and elaborate networks of all the region's affiliates. The Steelpoort Youth Congress (STEYCO), for instance, claimed to have five branches located in the mining and cotton-farming communities on the eastern border of Sekhukhuneland. The congress played a central role in organising mine and farm workers in the area and in the Lebowa revolt of 1986. The congress also involved itself in more communal issues. For example, STEYCO members joined trade unionists to lead a campaign against a chrome mining firm that administered a company township.¹²³

At its launch SAYCO claimed just over half-a-million members in 1,000 local youth groupings. However,

These figures are, by the nature of the organisation, virtually impossible to verify. The more efficient an organisation's adaptation to clandestinity, the more difficult it is to verify its claims - making exaggeration virtually compulsory for the few representatives out in the open.¹²⁴

In addition, SAYCO did not formally agree to sign up its membership with the result that it could only provide estimates.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.209-218.

¹²² Jochelson, K. (1988); "People's power and state reform in Alexandra", in Work in Progress, (56/7, November/December), p.10.

¹²³ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.119-120.

¹²⁴ "Learning to live in the shadows", *op.cit.*, p.13.

Furthermore, although SAYCO set out to establish ten regions, only five were formally launched and established full RECs. In these regions, SAYCO identified a number of highly populated areas which were unorganised.¹²⁵ In the Southern Transvaal region, the national organiser identified 12 unorganised residential areas. Thirty-nine unorganised areas were in the Eastern Transvaal while there were 46 unorganised residential areas in the Western Cape.

Most of SAYCO youth congresses and branches were situated around cities and towns. The organisation acknowledged that very little organising was conducted in the rural areas of the Western Cape and the Southern Transvaal. This was largely due to the failure of regional structures to establish rural departments which were charged with organising rural areas. In addition, about 40 to 50 percent of SAYCO's local structures were interim.¹²⁶

The youth congresses which came together to form SAYCO differed vastly in their membership, ranging from small activist organisations, such as the Tumahole Youth Congress (TUYCO), to federations of several youth congresses, such as CAYCO and STEYCO. Within the organisation, there was no common understanding of what a branch should look like or what area it should cover. The Phalaborwa branch, for example, brought together youth in 40 residential areas and covered an area which should have been a zone.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Document; SAYCO: Special National Central Executive Committee - Reports, 30 July - 1 August 1990, p.14.

¹²⁶ *Loc.cit.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.12.

The definition of youth is so broad that it included any person between the ages of thirteen and thirty six years of age. The membership of the youth congresses consisted of young workers, school students and unemployed youth. In addition, SAYCO brought together members of trade unions, student, community and political organisations.¹²⁸ Since 1976, most young workers had experienced more than a decade of unprecedented militant resistance. Many of these workers came from the ranks of COSAS and identified the activities of youth congresses as an extension of their student political activities. In addition, school students also participated in youth congresses, many of them combining membership in COSAS. Finally, high failure and drop-out rates at schools, age-limit regulations at schools, and economic recession during the 1980s swelled the ranks of unemployed youth, which formed the major constituency of the youth congresses.

According to Lodge, most of the leadership of the youth congresses came from the ranks of the former COSAS activists, including a small number of veterans of the Soweto uprising. The leadership was also drawn from among the young, retrenched workers, sometimes with trade union experience. A few better-educated people also served in leadership roles. Mkuseli Jack, PEYCO president, was a hardware salesman; and in the Cape - according to Brenda Adams, a CAYCO activist - the leaders were "essentially middle class".¹²⁹ In most cases, youth congresses were led by fairly well-educated unemployed youths or young employed skilled workers.¹³⁰

During the first year of its existence, SAYCO took up the Save the Patriots

¹²⁸ The New Nation, (2.4.87 - 8.4.87), p.1.

¹²⁹ Brenda Adams; "Building Working Class Power", Inqaba ya basebenzi (London), September 1986, 32. Cited in Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.37.

¹³⁰ Lodge, T. and Swilling, M. (1986); "The year of the Amabutho", in Africa Report, (March-April).

Campaign (directed towards saving political prisoners on Death Row), a campaign to popularize the Freedom Charter, the unbanning of the ANC campaign, the unemployment campaign, and a literacy campaign. The youth organisation set out to assist COSATU in its efforts to organise "unemployed workers' associations". Such associations were also aimed at strengthening the alliance between the community organisations, including the youth, and COSATU. SAYCO also gave top priority to the struggle for a living wage and jobs for all in its programme of action for 1987. These campaigns were a mix of national political issues and issues which directly affected the organisation's core constituency. However, an Executive report submitted to a CEC meeting at the end of 1987 acknowledged the organisation's lack of success in these campaigns.¹³¹ Most of the campaigns were not seriously taken up by regional and local structures of the organisation.

Delegates at the inaugural conference in 1987 gave special attention to the intense repression in most regions of the country. The organisation gave top priority to the anti-vigilante campaign. It committed itself to initiating a campaign to counter the state indoctrination programmes at "education camps" and to resist attempts by the JMCs to co-opt youth leaders into government structures.¹³²

SAYCO identified the lack of political education among the youth and widespread unemployment as major causes of the escalation of vigilante attacks on popular organisations. In order to overcome this problem, SAYCO structures set up a programme of political education at local, zonal, regional and national levels. According to a SAYCO activist, education departments were set up to engage members in political education on matters such as

¹³¹ Document; SAYCO Executive report presented at the 3rd CEC meeting, 22/12/87.

¹³² The New Nation, (2.4.87 - 8.4.87), p.1.

the Freedom Charter, "exchanging views about the youth's understanding of the nature of South African society, the causes of exploitation and oppression and how the oppressed and exploited can change this society".¹³³

In addition to these national campaigns, regional and local affiliates of SAYCO participated in their own campaigns. For instance, the Northern Transvaal region campaigned to popularize SAYCO and the regional congress, engaged in anti-Bantustan and anti-independence campaigns, and campaigned for land rights, the release of political prisoners and childcare facilities. The youth congresses also set out to establish self-defence units to defend their organisations against attacks by vigilantes. In areas which were plagued by vigilante attacks, such as the Eastern Transvaal and Pietermaritzburg, self-defence committees were established in major towns and villages.

SAYCO's activities were adversely affected by the emergencies, detention of leaders and members, and the lack of resources. SAYCO intended to establish ten departments to implement, co-ordinate and give all-round direction to the organisation's membership and steering SAYCO properly. Only three departments functioned with some degree of success. Many sub-committees or departments never got off the ground at regional, zonal and local levels. This was due, in large part, to the removal of layer after layer of leadership at all levels during the state of emergency. The continuous removal of the leadership meant that a number of regions were not constituted, or functioned ineffectively.

The local youth congresses bore the brunt of repression during the emergencies. About eight thousand of the twenty-five thousand people arrested during the second half of 1986 were under the age of eighteen. By the

¹³³ "Styco is working towards the people governing South Africa", in SASPU National, (Last Quarter, 1987), p.4.

beginning of September 1987, 115 UDF affiliates - mainly civic associations and youth congresses - were affected by the detentions.¹³⁴ In addition to the mass arrest of activists, the emergency led to the wholesale occupation of townships by the security forces, curfews, house-to-house searches and roadblocks. The occupation of the townships by the South African Police (SAP) and the South African Defence Force (SADF) led to daily clashes between young activists and the security forces in many parts of the country.

These features of repression placed restrictions on the ability of youth congresses to hold meetings, distribute publications and generally mobilise their members. Meetings were held clandestinely, often without the recording of minutes, and secrecy and suspicion prevailed in youth organisations. However, the most devastating effects of repression occurred as a result of the removal of youth leaders from the townships. The executive committees of many congresses were depleted by detentions. The most dedicated and consistent activists were replaced by leaders which could not reconstitute the same levels of organisation and mobilisation and provide adequate leadership to the congresses. The new leaders often lacked the organisational and political skills of their predecessors.

SAYCO acknowledged the poverty of political education amongst its membership. Very few branches or youth congresses understood what SAYCO was, let alone the basics of what an organisation was and what the struggle was all about. Most of the branch executive committees or local youth congress executive members had not seen most of the organisation's documents or had not read them at all. SAYCO members who were able "to articulate SAYCO or general debates" were "found in the NEC, RECs and

¹³⁴ See Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.87-8.

very few BECs".¹³⁵ This was a result of the absence of political education departments at regional and lower levels of the organisation, as well as the lack of resources and full-time education personnel to implement the programme on a day-to-day basis.¹³⁶

Despite these problems, the youth congresses played a central role in the struggle against apartheid. They were prominent in the education struggle, the rent, transport and consumer boycotts, campaigns against the new constitution, the Black Local Authorities, the struggles against forced removals and incorporation into the homelands, and homeland independence. They were also prominent in coordinating and sustaining popular campaigns and assisting other sectors such as women and the civics.

In conclusion, the affiliates of the UDF that played the most significant role in promoting and expanding revolutionary consciousness and mass mobilisation and organisation were the student and youth organisations. Through COSAS, SANSCO and the youth congresses a large proportion of the youth assimilated a political consciousness and popular culture based on the rejection of, and opposition to, apartheid in general. Many of the features of the national political culture which became associated with the UDF were found in these organisations before the formation of the Front. They thus influenced both the direction in which the political tradition developed within the UDF and its spread throughout black civil society through their structures.

The formation of COSAS in 1979 was perhaps one of the most significant factors in the liberation struggle during the eighties. The student organisation was a major force in the popularization of the ANC within the country; in

¹³⁵ Document; SAYCO: Special National Central Executive Committee - Reports, 30 July - 1 August 1990, p.12.

¹³⁶ Molekane, R. (1990); "NEC Report", in Mahlangu Detachment, (May 1990), p.14.

establishing "unity-in-action" with other progressive forces; and in the various popular struggles waged during the period under review. Former COSAS members became leading activists in other progressive organisations - SANSCO, youth congresses, trade unions, civic associations and women's organisations.

Student and youth organisations played a very significant role in mass mobilisation and organisation and the development of revolutionary consciousness and its spread in civil society leading to a shift in the balance of social forces towards the UDF.

In the first place, student and youth organisations played a pivotal role in the development and spread of revolutionary consciousness in South Africa and in extending the political and ideological leadership of the UDF. In many respects, the student and youth organisations, and their principles and objectives presented a challenge to the dominant system.

School boycotts have been a major feature of resistance to apartheid since 1976. In the mid-1980s this developed as a challenge to apartheid when students ultimately developed their own conception of a unified and democratic system of education. People's Education was to be an alternative education, preparing students for political rule in post-apartheid South Africa. The 1981 Education Charter Campaign was seen as important because it would lead to a Charter which would be democratically formulated and so embody the minimum education demands of the people. A sustained school boycott, led by COSAS and which began in 1983, focused on the demand for democratically elected SRCs, which was a direct challenge of the structure of control in schools. During the boycott students also began to look at strategic and tactical approaches to combat the inequalities in education. In 1985 student attitudes reflected a direct challenge to the

apartheid system after they adopted the slogan "Liberation now, Education Later!", and embarked on a wave of boycotts which led to the virtual collapse of African education.

The demands of student and youth organisations also reflect a growing challenge to the dominant system. A two-day regional stayaway suggested by COSAS took place on 5-6 November, 1984 in the Transvaal and the organising committee included in its demands the withdrawal of the SADF and police from the townships; the resignation of all community councillors; and the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees. The declaration of the partial state of emergency in 1985 shifted the focus of student demands from issues such as democratically elected SRCs, grievances regarding corporal punishment and age limit restrictions to a national focus on the release of detainees, the removal of troops from the townships, and the unbanning of political groups. In addition, school boycotts during 1985 rendered the schools ungovernable, a process that mirrored that occurring in the townships following the collapse of local authorities, and led to a shift of objectives from reform of the educational system to control. AZASO also focused on the campaign for democratically elected SRCs and by the mid-1980s was challenging the "bush" character of the black universities. In 1987, the student organisation shifted the emphasis from the demand for SRCs to a call for the transformation of tertiary institutions into "Peoples Campuses". The establishment of committees of peoples power at all levels was seen as the foundations of peoples power and democratic control of campuses.

COSAS became the first mass organisation to adopt the Freedom Charter since the crushing of internal resistance in the 1960s. In its guiding principles, COSAS declared that the ANC was the "authentic liberation movement" of South Africa, and called on the youth to plan their future

activities as a continuation of that tradition. In 1980, COSAS, together with NUSAS, played a central role in the ANC's Freedom Charter campaign. The organisation's long-term objective, the creation of a non-racial and democratic education system in a non-racial and democratic society presented a challenge to the apartheid system. Thus, the struggle for an alternative education system was identified as part of the broader struggle against oppression and exploitation. COSAS linked the struggle against corporal punishment, age restriction and the lack of democratically elected SRCs with the overall struggle against lower wages, high rents, bantustans, puppet town councils and lack of genuine political rights by the majority.

AZASO's objectives were virtually similar to those of COSAS. It also committed itself to the struggle for a democratic society, free of exploitation and national oppression. In 1981 the organisation moved away from its Black Consciousness origins and committed itself to the Freedom Charter and co-operation with COSAS. In addition, AZASO linked the education struggle to the broad national struggle for democracy.

COSAS was one of the first mass based organisations to commit itself to united action with other community organisations. Beginning in 1980, students developed a close working relationship with workers, providing support for striking workers and calling on workers to support political campaigns. COSAS was also instrumental in the formation of youth congresses and of other community organisations. The shared experiences of apartheid domination and exploitation generated a sense of unity in struggle against the common enemy. This resulted in their total rejection of apartheid education and society as a whole.

Of all the organisations reviewed here the student and youth organisations displayed the most advanced sense of class analysis and of socialist

consciousness. COSAS maintained that the emancipation of the working class, as the most exploited and oppressed class in society, will ensure the emancipation of society as a whole. The organisation recognised the limited role that students should play in the liberation struggle, a supportive role under the leadership of the working class.

AZASO identified the working class as the key instrument to bring about the redistribution of power in South Africa and recognised its leadership in the struggle for liberation. In addition, AZASO spokesmen identified the leadership of the working class as the basis for realising socialism through the establishment of the democratic system enshrined in the Freedom Charter and its eventual deepening into socialism. SAYCO was overtly socialist in its objectives. The preamble of the constitution stipulated that the way to move beyond the stage of capitalism was through the national-democratic revolution. Thus, in this view, socialism could only be achieved through the national democratic-revolution, which involved alliances with other organisations under the leadership of the working class.

Finally, student and youth organisations emphasized political education in their programmes. Their newsletters dealt with issues of importance to members of the organisations, with the anti-apartheid struggle in general and with other popular struggles abroad. In addition, student/youth organisations held educational workshops and forums which dealt with politically relevant issues, campaigns and strategies.

However, there were limitations with regard to the extent to which these organisations were able to politicize their constituencies. COSAS, for example, despite becoming a mass organisation in 1984, had only a limited leadership fraction organised into structures with regular and disciplined activity. By 1985, however, students had responded to the popular slogan "Liberation Now,

Education Later!" and in their campaigns during that year committed themselves to the national-democratic struggle for liberation. Similarly, SAYCO acknowledged the poverty of political education and the lack of understanding, except among a relatively small leadership core, of what the organisation and the struggle was all about. At the very least, however, was the commitment among the youth to involvement in all aspects of struggle against the apartheid system.

In the second place, the student and youth organisations played a vital role in mass mobilisation and organisation. Firstly, the initial basis for mass mobilisation and organisation in the schools were the glaring inequalities between the racially-based education systems and the resulting defects of African education in particular and black education in general. From the very beginning of its existence, COSAS emphasized the organisation of students around issues affecting them. In consequence, most of the early activities of the organisation were focused on educational issues, including the Education Charter Campaign. However, after tensions arose between parents and students during the 1980 school boycott COSAS began organising students in various actions around community issues. Nevertheless, the main mobilising and organising tool for the student organisation until 1983 were issues which directly affected school students.

Local structures of these organisations were also based on very small numbers, making it easy for students to establish a branch. For example, COSAS branch structures could be formed by a minimum of four students, while AZASO branches could be formed by ten or more students. In addition, COSAS regional branches were formed in areas where three or more branches existed.

The first youth congresses to emerge in 1983 focused on the organisation

of all youth in order to tackle their problems through united and collective action, and to develop a role for young people in their communities and in the broader democratic struggle. High failure and drop-out rates at schools, age-limit regulations at schools, and economic recession during the 1980s swelled the ranks of unemployed youth, which formed the major constituency of the youth congresses. Most youth congresses tended to concentrate on political campaigns which became the main organisational tool of the congresses. For instance, PEYCO organised youth around political issues as opposed to civic- or factory-based issues.

The political campaigns student and youth organisations engaged in included campaigns against the BLAs, the tri-cameral parliament, homeland independence, the threat of removals, state repression (the formation of defence committees), etc. However, youth congresses participated at the forefront of other campaigns which related to local material grievances, such as the rent boycotts (where the youth mobilised to resist evictions), and, in particular, the consumer boycotts and mass stayaways, which were largely enforced by youth congresses and (when coupled with school boycotts) student organisations. School boycotts also served as a major organisational tool where, for example, COSAS was able to generalise student demands from one area of the country to another during the sustained school boycott it led in 1984.

The student and youth organisations extended their organisational role beyond that of organising the youth into student organisations and youth congresses. They also assumed responsibility for organising and conscientising their parents. This was directed towards the formation of street and area committees in the urban townships and rural villages. For instance, towards the end of 1985 the Alexandra Youth Congress (AYCO) played a central role in the formation of the Alexandra Action Committee (AAC). One of the

primary objectives of the youth congresses in the rural areas of the Northern Transvaal was the establishment of village committees while the local branch of AZASO (based at Turfloop) played a central role in establishing community organisations in the region. It was also a COSAS suggestion which led to the formation of youth congresses.

The political leadership of these organisations is apparent in their support base and in the role they played in national, regional and local campaigns. COSAS, SANSCO, and SAYCO were the most significant student and youth structures of the internal resistance organisations. Their dominance in schools, universities and in local township and rural communities provided them with political and ideological leadership.

During 1984 COSAS expanded from an activist group to a mass movement with a well-organised structure and branches in nearly fifty centres. At the time of its banning in 1985 COSAS had an estimated 3 million supporters. At the end of 1986 there were some 600 youth congresses countrywide and, at the time of its formation in March 1987, SAYCO claimed a membership of between 500,000 and 700,000 (and a support base of two million). SANSCO members were present in 67 branches at the end of the period of review. COSAS also played a leadership role in student campaigns and in certain community campaigns. The sustained school boycott which began in 1983 was led by COSAS and resulted in the virtual collapse of African education. COSAS also responded to the national call for a boycott of the elections for the tri-cameral parliament in 1984 by organising a school boycott, which was well supported by African, Indian and coloured students. The Transvaal Regional Stayaway in November 1984 was suggested by COSAS and it was supported by an over 400,000 students.

Youth congresses were at the forefront of struggle in the urban townships

and rural villages. In Port Elizabeth, for example, PEYCO dominated community organisations and played a key role in co-ordinating township struggles until PEBCO was revived. It was also a prominent member of local structures in the area, and often played the role of the local UDF area committee and acted as a reinforcing mechanism in local UDF structures. UYCO emerged to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Uitenhage Black Civic organisation and dominated local township politics in the city. Youth organisations also transformed the nature of black resistance politics by playing a significant role in marches, consumer boycotts, stayaways, and defiance campaigns. They were prominent in the education struggle, the rent, transport and consumer boycotts, campaigns against the new constitution, the Black Local Authorities, the struggles against forced removals and incorporation into the homelands, and homeland independence. They were also prominent in coordinating and sustaining popular campaigns and assisting other sectors such as women and civics.

Student/youth organisations played a prominent role in local structures of the UDF. In most regions, these organisations were strongly represented at area, zonal and regional levels and often acted as reinforcing mechanisms in the Front's organisational structures. In addition, 18 of the 62 leaders of the UDF regions in 1985 were drawn from student or youth organisations. Student/youth organisations were also prominent in the numerous *ad hoc* inter-organisational structures which coordinated local campaigns such as consumer boycotts and mass stayaways.

The significance of student/youth organisations lay, however, in the ideological contribution they made in producing a generation of people who rejected apartheid society and were prepared to make sacrifices to destroy it. The commitment to non-racialism, democracy, unity-in-action with other progressive organisations, and a commitment to the ideals of the Freedom Charter were

introduced by these organisations. These principles soon spread to a large number of organisations which proliferated during the first half of the 1980s. Clearly, then, student and youth organisations played a central role in the political and ideological struggle to spread a revolutionary consciousness in the black suburbs and townships. These organisations played a role both in shaping the Front's ideology and spreading it in civil society through their capacity to mobilise, organise and politicize their communities.

In essence, the youth were a major force in drawing support to the UDF. The leadership role played by the youth in various forms of resistance, their role in mass mobilisation and organisation, and the ideological contribution they made were central factors in establishing the hegemonic position of the UDF in black civil society. They played a central role in shifting the balance of social and cultural forces towards the UDF and in extending the latter's organisational and political leadership. Finally, all the student/youth organisations were strongly committed to establishing links with worker organisations and with worker leadership in the struggle.

Chapter 7

DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

7.1. Introduction

An important feature of South African society during the late 1970s and early 1980s was the development of democratic¹ trade unions and the growing link of trade union struggles (for independent organisation, recognition, wages, greater control over the conditions of production) with urban conflicts concerning education, rent, transport, housing, and the struggle for political rights. Equally important was the preoccupation of the democratic trade union movement with democratic practices that emphasize participation by the entire membership and rank and file control of the unions.²

During the 1980s, organised labour was increasingly drawn into highly politicised struggles around the terms of labour reproduction and opposition to apartheid. However, this process was charged with contradictions and conflicts within the independent labour movement and was characterised by numerous debates on the political role of trade unions. In addition, the organisational and political strategies of the unions frequently clashed with the strategies of anti-apartheid and community organisations.

In the middle of the decade, however, the unions and popular organisations were drawn closer together. The unions faced numerous pressures to take a direct political role while community organisations actively sought the support of organised labour in their organisations and activities.

¹ Democratic trade unions are defined here as unions which were not affiliated to the white-led trade union federations (the so-called "parallel unions").

² Lewis, J. (1986); "Aspects of the struggle: Trade Unions", in *Monthly Review*, (Vol.37, No.11, April), p.84.

Political unionism, although not new to South Africa, reached unprecedented heights during the second half of the eighties. One factor behind this development was the re-emergence of "political" or "community" unions during the late 1970s and early 1980s. From their inception, these unions linked their workplace struggles to the struggles in the communities from which their members were drawn. During the second half of the eighties, the democratic trade union movement established formal links with community organisations and played a central role in popular struggles. This was largely due to the pressures of popular struggles in the townships, the demand for union involvement in popular struggles by union members, and the culture of community involvement established by the political unions.

The focus in this chapter is on the role of the UDF trade unions in the political and ideological struggle to promote and expand revolutionary consciousness within the country and to increase participation in the national liberation struggle. These organisations developed (or incorporated) certain features of a revolutionary consciousness and focused on particular sectors of civil society, drawing them into the struggle for national liberation resulting in the spread of revolutionary consciousness inside South Africa. The emphasis here is on their principles and objectives and their role in mass mobilisation and organisation (with a focus on their organisational tactics and membership) in order to illustrate the main features of the revolutionary consciousness developed or incorporated by these organisations and the extent of their penetration of civil society.

We begin with a brief examination of the democratic trade union movement during the period 1983-1987. Here the focus is on the differences between FOSATU and the "UDF" unions. This is followed by an analysis of the formation, structure, membership and policies of selected unions which were affiliated to the UDF during the period under study. The focus is on five

major UDF unions: the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU), the Motor Assembly and Components Workers' Union (MACWUSA), the General Workers' Union of South Africa (GWUSA), the General and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU), and the South African Railways and Harbours Workers' Union (SARHWU). Here a detailed analysis is provided of the nature and principles of these organisations to illustrate the main features of the revolutionary consciousness developed by the UDF unions. The membership of these unions illustrates their role in mass mobilisation and organisation. This analysis also reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the struggle: their structures, practices and membership. Finally, we focus on COSATU's increasing involvement in political issues.

7.2. Overview

The 1980s was a period of rapid development of the democratic trade union movement.³ In 1981 the democratic trade unions were constituted into two federations, FOSATU and CUSA, and a group of unaffiliated unions with a membership of 60,000, 49,000 and 100,000 respectively. In 1985 these unions were constituted into three federations (COSATU with a paid-up membership of 454,749, CUSA with a membership of 180,000, and the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (AZACTU) with a membership of 79,230) and the unaffiliated unions with a total membership of 7,411. By 1987 COSATU had increased its membership to 712,000 while the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), formed when CUSA merged with AZACTU, had 248,000 members. This represents an increase of 751,000 in union membership over the six year period.⁴

³ Refer to Chapter 3, pp.81-2 and pp.85-6 above for an analysis of trade union development during the 1970s.

⁴ See Davies, R. et al. (1988); The struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, (Vol.2, New Edition, London and New Jersey, Zed Books), pp.457-

FOSATU, formed in April 1979, was the first major federation of democratic unions to be established in South Africa since SACTU was forced to disappear from the trade union scene in the early 1960s. Not long after its formation FOSATU experienced differences with other unions which remained outside of the federation. These differences were essentially over registration and participation in the Industrial Council system, and the relationship between economic and political struggles. These issues gave rise to polarisation and provoked intense debate within the democratic trade union movement. The first area of disagreement emerged in response to legislation arising from the Wiehahn Commission: over union registration and participation in the Industrial Councils system.⁵

FOSATU's position on these two issues was taken in 1979 when it decided to apply for registration and to participate in the Industrial Councils system. Opposition to registration and participation in the Industrial Councils came largely from the General Workers Union (GWU) and the Black and Allied Workers Union (BAWU) and other newly emergent unions such as SAAWU.⁶ Similarly, the unions which later joined the UDF all opposed registration and participation in government created structures, particularly the Industrial Councils.

The FOSATU unions and the new trade unions also differed on the relationship between economic and political struggles. The formation of the UDF and the National Forum (NF) in 1983 added fuel to the debate

464 and Randall, E. (1986); "Directory: South Africa's independent unions", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.3, January), pp.69-89.

⁵ Refer to Chapter 3, pp.84-5 above.

⁶ See Bonner, P. (1983); "Independent trade unions since Wiehahn", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.8, No.4, February), and Fine, B. et al. (1987); "Trade Unions and the State: The question of legality", in Maree, J. (ed.); The independent trade union, 1974-1984: Ten years of the South African Labour Bulletin, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press).

following appeals by these mass-based organisations for trade union support. This debate gave rise to three stances on the issue.

Firstly, there were those union which argued that the gains made by the independent trade unions in their struggles at the point of production would be lost if they participated in the broader political struggle. Secondly, certain unions maintained that they were willing to participate in political campaigns and support political organisations, but were not prepared to affiliate with any political organisation. A third grouping within the independent trade union movement, the so-called "political unions", committed themselves to active participation in the national liberation struggle, including affiliation with political organisations.

The latter unions became increasingly involved in community struggles in the sphere of reproduction of labour while there was a reciprocal community support for striking workers. Community struggles were seen as aspects of the broader political struggle for national liberation. They contended that workers are tenants, commuters, parents, and consumers as well as the majority of the dominated and exploited classes. These unions argued that they had a common struggle with students and township residents and were therefore justified in joining the broad democratic front. In this respect, the political unions, particularly SAAWU, engaged in direct confrontation with the authorities.⁷

For the political unions, the goal of struggle was national liberation and this could be achieved by uniting their struggles with all township struggles and participating in the national democratic struggle as affiliates of the new

⁷ Webster, E. (1988); "The rise of social-movement unionism: The two faces of the Black Trade Union Movement in South Africa", in Frankel, P. et.al. (eds.); State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Southern Book Publishers), p.189.

political organisations. Thus, narrow trade union interests were subordinated to the national political challenge of the dominant system. These unions thus presented a challenge to the dominant view held by the FOSATU unions.

Although the UDF unions laid stress on the struggle for national liberation and the creation of a non-racial, democratic South Africa, they all laid emphasis on working class leadership in this struggle. Nowhere, however, do these unions explicitly state that they are struggling for the establishment of a socialist society. For the UDF unions, apartheid is seen as the central contradiction and national liberation and the establishment of a non-racial, democratic South Africa is seen as the primary and immediate objective. The older unions, by contrast, identified class as the central contradiction and viewed "racism and apartheid as a mask concealing capitalist exploitation". They thus counterposed the national democratic struggle and the class struggle for socialism. The only way to end capitalist exploitation and domination was through the struggle for socialism.⁸

The "political unions" affiliated to the UDF when it was formed in August 1983. They rejected registration and participation in the Industrial Council system and maintained strong links with other progressive organisations. The "UDF" unions were also "Charterist" in orientation and identified trade union struggles as an important component of the national liberation struggle, which included all other forms of popular struggle.

The unions which affiliated to the UDF and the other more established unions differed significantly in their internal democratic practices and in their style of organisation.

⁸ Refer to Baskin, J. (1991); Striking back: A history of Cosatu, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.96.

The resurgence of black trade unionism in the wake of the 1973 strike wave was accompanied by rigorous state repression of the independent trade union movement. Survival for these unions meant the development of strong shop-floor organisation accompanied by democratic worker control on the shop-floor. The lynch-pins of this organisational structure were the democratically-elected shop stewards and shop steward committees. These unions also placed emphasis on internal union democracy: shop steward accountability was ensured through the principles of mandates, report backs, and recall.⁹

By contrast, the "UDF" unions emerged in the late 1970s when industrial relations reforms coupled with a sharp economic upturn and an upsurge in township struggles provided uniquely favourable conditions for rapid union growth. These unions were able to make rapid increases in recruitment because of their success in winning material gains for workers during the economic upswing. In addition, support for these unions spread because they organised through strike waves and mass meetings in the townships.¹⁰ These organisational methods resulted in a number of limitations in organisational structure and democratic practices.

Firstly, the rapid gains in signed-up membership made by these unions were not accompanied by consolidation on the factory floor. Shop-floor structures and branch executives were generally weak resulting in weak linkages between the rank-and-file membership and the union leadership. The specific grievances of workers could not be adequately taken up because factory and

⁹ Maree, J. (1987); "Overview: Emergence of the independent trade unions", in Maree, J. (ed.); *op.cit.*, p.5 and Bonner, P. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.31.

¹⁰ Hindson, D. (1984); "Union Unity", in South African Research Service (eds.); South African Review 2, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.93 and Carrim, Y. (1987); "Working class politics to the fore", in Work In Progress, (47, April), p.5.

union branch meetings were open to the rest of the public.¹¹ With the onset of the recession in mid-1982, weaknesses in this method of organising workers began to show. In the face of retrenchments and mounting state attacks, all experienced a loss of factory membership and a weakening of worker participation in union activities.¹²

Secondly, a major means of recruitment were mass meetings in the townships resulting in a particular form of democratic practice: "mass participatory democracy". In practice, mass participatory democracy involved taking union decisions at mass rallies. However, mass participatory democracy gave workers few opportunities to speak, the presence of non-unionists could affect workers' willingness to raise issues which did not concern others and personality cults could develop because of the scope for powerful oratory by union officials.¹³

In addition, the officials of most of the newer unions were full-time officials: in the older unions they were workers. The older unions suspected that officials had a greater say than the workers they represented in the new unions.¹⁴ In some of the newer unions, tensions between full-time officials often led to divisions in the entire union. Both SAAWU and MACWUSA, for example, experienced internal leadership crises which led to fractures and the formation of breakaway unions.¹⁵

¹¹ Hindson, D. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.100.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.93.

¹³ See Maree, J. (1987); "SAAWU in the East London area, 1979-1981", in Maree, J. (ed.); *op.cit.*, p.37; Hindson, D. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.100 and Bonner, P. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.32.

¹⁴ Friedman, S. (1987); Building towards tomorrow: African workers in trade unions, 1970-1987, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.287.

¹⁵ Refer to pp.279-81 and p.288 below for a discussion of divisions in SAAWU and MACWUSA.

The "UDF" trade unions and the older unions differed significantly in their style of organisation. Firstly, the former unions emphasised regional organisation, while the latter group emphasised national organisation. Secondly, the UDF unions organised workers without any consideration of the economic sector while the older unions placed an emphasis on organising in a single industry.¹⁶

Most of the older unions established a national presence with some having branches in all the major industrial centres. The "UDF" unions, by contrast, were regionally based, tending to organise in a particular township or area rather than nationally. Most of these unions were small new organisations with a presence in no more than one township and an organised membership restricted to a small number of factories.

The older unions tended to organise workers within specific industrial sectors. One of the advantages of organising on an industrial basis is the opportunity it opens for industry-wide bargaining. More importantly, unions representing large numbers of workers in one industrial sector have strong bargaining positions in industrial relations structures. In addition, industrial unions have the effect of uniting workers who are racially, residentially and regionally divided but occupy similar positions within production.¹⁷

By contrast, the "UDF" unions were all general unions - that is, open to workers from all sectors of the economy. Concentrating in one area, most "UDF" unions recruited membership regardless of the industrial sector concerned. This trend towards general unionism was also promoted by the practice of recruiting at mass rallies in the townships.

¹⁶ See Hindson, D. (1984); *op.cit.*, pp.93-4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.101 and Bennet, M. (1986); "The ins and outs of COSATU: The new state of the Unions", in *Indicator SA*, (Vol.3, No.4, Autumn), p.6.

Hindson points to three weaknesses in the form of general-unionism practised by the "UDF" unions.¹⁸ Firstly, such "unions find it difficult to unite with other unions, whether industrial or general, because they are actually or potentially in competition with all unions over all workers, organised or unorganised". Secondly, "the regional-general unions have gained followings mainly in townships which are racially and ethnically homogeneous and principally it seems amongst settled urban workers". Finally, the general unions tended to fracture because of the weak links between union members and officials and between factories organised by the union.

Initially, the UDF unions were preoccupied with mass mobilisation rather than internal worker control of the unions or organisational practices that encouraged strong unions. The objective was to draw as many people as possible into these structures and/or their activities, including township residents who were not members of the unions.

The organisational and policy differences between the old (FOSATU) unions and the newer unions surfaced during the "unity" talks which preceded the formation of COSATU. The thirteen meetings held in four years of talks between August 1981 and June 1985 were characterised by "debates over issues of registration, industrial demarcation, participation in industrial councils, when the federation should be launched, its form and voting structure, financing, affiliate voting strength, the role of paid officials, relations with the international trade union movement, and the role of whites".¹⁹ The following is an analysis of the formation, structure, membership and policies of selected unions which were affiliated to the UDF.

¹⁸ Hindson, D. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.93.

¹⁹ Carrim, Y. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.6.

7.3. The South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU)

7.3.1. Formation

SAAWU was formed in March 1979 at the National Conference of BAWU held in Durban. A split developed in BAWU between supporters of BC philosophy (mainly the Johannesburg and Newcastle branches) and supporters of non-racialism (the Durban and East London branches). Differences also arose over the representation of the union overseas and charges of financial mismanagement. The National Conference decided to expel the Johannesburg and Newcastle officials and changed the name of the trade union organisation to SAAWU.

From the outset SAAWU was a general union and organised workers in the metal, building, food, motor, electrical, rubber, plastic, chemical, printing, distribution, municipal, power stations, railways, health, transport, furniture, education, services, paper, and wood sectors into 23 "sub-unions". The long-term aim of the union was to form a federation and to develop affiliates along industrial lines. In 1981 the Natal-based National Federation of Black Workers split from BAWU and joined SAAWU adding a further 26 affiliates to SAAWU.²⁰ SAAWU was originally based in Durban but moved its head office to East London in 1980. The union had affiliates in the Transvaal and in 1984 it began organising in the Western Cape. In 1984 SAAWU shifted its headquarters to Johannesburg following a split in the union.

7.3.2. Policies and Objectives

In broad terms, SAAWU's principles and policies were: a commitment to mass participatory democracy, non-racialism, and non-participation in government-instituted structures; a belief that the lines of struggle in South Africa were based on class terms; and a belief that there was no distinction

²⁰ Davies, R. et al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.337.

between the trade union economic struggle and the broader struggle for national liberation.

SAAWU was a non-racial trade union committed to mass participatory democracy. It emphasised the need for workers to directly control trade unions behind the twin principles of "mass participatory democracy" and "collective leadership".²¹ In principle, mass participatory democracy involved rank and file participation in decision-making at mass rallies in their areas. This commitment to mass participatory democracy was not restricted to the shopfloor. It included the participation of members of the community, particularly in Mdantsane, where union members and members of the community jointly participated in SAAWU-organised mass rallies. The aim here was to draw as many people as possible into trade union struggles, while drawing workers into the struggles of the community.

SAAWU also considered itself to be a part of the community and it participated overtly in community struggles. Union officials frequently appeared on public platforms with leaders of community organisations and expressed solidarity with their objectives. SAAWU officials became regular speakers at political rallies: the union's president Thozamile Gqweta addressed the meeting which revived the Transvaal Indian Congress in 1983.

In addition, SAAWU's officials played a leading role in various campaigns against apartheid. For instance, in 1981 Njikelana took part in the anti-Republic Day campaign when he visited Johannesburg to enlist support for a boycott of Wilson-Rowntree products.²² The Wilson-Rowntree boycott also gave further impetus to closer co-operation between the union and community

²¹ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.338.

²² Friedman,S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.461.

groups. Community organisations and student groups, for example, COSAS, formed support committees in response to the boycott call.²³

The organisation was also seen as a force through which to obtain political rights. As such, SAAWU committed itself to the establishment of a non-racial democracy in South Africa. As Maree pointed out: "SAAWU takes up a position on political matters more overtly and explicitly than other independent unions. It has demanded that black workers be granted political rights".²⁴ From the outset SAAWU had explicitly committed itself to linking trade union struggles with the political struggle and in 1980 became the first union to call for one-man-one-vote and the release of political prisoners.

SAAWU identified the leading role of the working class in the political struggle in the following terms:

South Africa's future is in the hands of its workers - only the workers in alliance with all other progressive-minded sections of the community can build a happy life for all South Africans. But workers should be the vanguard.²⁵

SAAWU stressed the class nature of South African politics, as well as its non-racialism, as follows:

We are aware that workers see the bosses as white and we must show them that bosses are people that are exploiting them. Quite a sizeable number of blacks are becoming employers and people must not see them as our brothers...people must not be fooled just because they are black - they are exploiters.²⁶

In principle, SAAWU claimed to be a non-racial trade union. However, the overwhelming majority of its membership was African. SAAWU failed to recruit workers from other race groups, particularly in East London. The 1981

²³ *The Star*, (26.6.86), p.21.

²⁴ Maree, J. (1987); "SAAWU in the East London area", *op.cit.*, p.35.

²⁵ Quoted in Davies, R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.338.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.388.

Wilson-Rowntree strike was crushed largely because of the failure of the union to recruit the company's coloured workers.²⁷ SAAWU began to organise coloured workers in September 1984 when it set out to establish a base in the Western Cape. A successful strike by coloured workers in 1985 at Continental China's Blackheath plant secured the recognition of the union.²⁸

In early 1979 the government presented the Wiehahn recommendations on labour laws in the Industrial Conciliation Amendment Bill to Parliament for consideration. SAAWU, which was less than two months old, joined the protest against the Bill. SAAWU secretary Samuel Kikine said the Bill would deprive a large number of blacks of their right to join trade unions because migrant workers and commuters were excluded from the definition of workers, would prevent unregistered unions from operating, and extended government control over black trade unions. The union, which drew most of its membership from the KwaZulu townships of Umlazi and KwaMashu at the time, was one of the unions which would have been affected by the exclusion of migrants and commuters.²⁹

SAAWU vigorously rejected registration as well as participation in the Industrial Council system. It saw registration as part of "all those draconian laws which amount to genocide against the working class, and the black workers in particular. We can't participate in our own exploitation and oppression".³⁰ However, as an unregistered union SAAWU could not

²⁷ Bonner,P. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.33.

²⁸ Golding,M. (1985); "SAAWU in the Western Cape: The Continental China strike", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.10, No.7, June), pp.63-4.

²⁹ Post, (30.5.79), p.5.

³⁰ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.338.

participate in the Industrial Council system.

In 1983, SAAWU was the foremost political union in the Eastern Cape and the leading progressive organisation in East London. At the launching conference of the Border region of the UDF in Grahamstown on October, 15, 1983, SAAWU affiliated to the Front. A union member, Bangumzi Sifingo, was elected vice-president of the regional executive. At its April 1984 national congress the union decided that all its branches should affiliate to regional structures of the UDF.³¹ General secretary Sisa Njikelana explained that:

this is a matter of constitutional commitment, it's not a matter of convenience. We have no fears of being "swamped" by the UDF because we feel we can work out safety catches. The most obvious of these is to develop quality leadership. If the quality of the leadership in the union is weak, then yes, it will happen. The onus is on us to develop the links between the problems of the factory floor and community problems.³²

SAAWU's principles and policies together took the form of a challenge of the dominant apartheid system. They involved a commitment to mass mobilisation and organisation through the principle of mass participatory democracy, and a rejection of government-sponsored institutions for workers, and they linked the economic struggle of workers to the political struggle for democracy. In addition, SAAWU, like the student organisations which existed before the formation of the UDF, identified the need for unity-in-action with other progressive forces in the struggle for democracy.

7.3.3. Structure and Membership

At the lowest level of the union's structure was the workers' committee. A workers' committee was established after more than sixty percent membership was achieved at a plant. Each department in the plant elected a shop steward, and the shop stewards, together with an elected CEC, made up the

³¹ The Star, (11.4.84), p.11.

³² *Loc.cit.*

workers' committee. The CEC negotiated with management while the shop stewards were the links between the workers and the CEC. The chairman and secretary of the CEC from each plant in the region, together with a Branch Executive Committee, made up the Branch Committee. The overarching authority was the NEC, consisting of a president, vice-president, general secretary, an under-secretary and treasurer.³³

SAAWU was a general union with branches in Natal, the Transvaal and East London. The organisational practices it inherited from BAWU as well as conditions in East London particularly lent themselves to this type of organisation. The organisations which developed in the area during the second half of the 1970s did so under the auspices of the Black People's Convention, with its strong community orientation. SAAWU inherited this emphasis on the community and began to organise people who were working in a variety of different factories and industries, but who lived in the same township.

SAAWU's organisational activities in East London were confined largely to workers from Mdantsane. Mdantsane served as a labour reservoir for the East London area with most of its African workforce concentrated there. "Given these circumstances, and the appallingly high level of unemployment prevalent in the area, there was an obvious logic to establishing a general union, to emphasising strong community links, and ultimately to forming an unemployed workers union."³⁴ The Natal and Transvaal branches of the union also inherited their organisational practices from BAWU and functioned as general unions as well.

³³ Maree, J. (1987); "SAAWU in the East London area", *op.cit.*, p.36.

³⁴ Bonner, P. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.25.

In principle, SAAWU intended re-constituting itself as an industrial federation by establishing regional and provincial committees that would function as intermediate structures between the branch executive committees and its national executive committee.³⁵ SAAWU's stated aim was to organise and unite workers employed in various industries and group them according to the nature of the work they were engaged in and thereby establish industrial unions, under the auspices of SAAWU as their national federation.³⁶ The union never succeeded in achieving this aim.

Local conditions in East London also influenced SAAWU's organisational practices. Firstly, its links with the community, in particularly Mdantsane, led to a reliance on mass meetings to refer decisions taken by the Branch Committee to the workers. Mass meetings appeared to be an appropriate way of communicating with the rank-and-file because of the union's participation in local community struggles. Secondly, since membership was confined largely to a single township, union organisers boarded buses and trains to and from Mdantsane, and during this journey union songs were sung, the functions of the union were explained and the union's address was distributed to commuters.³⁷ Thus, the general-union form of organisation did have some advantages for mass organisation. It made recruitment easy. In addition, it drew the local community into trade union struggles while drawing workers into community struggles.

Maree distinguishes a number of limitations in SAAWU's organisational

³⁵ Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of Agony, Time of destiny - the upsurge of popular protest, (London, Verso), p.158.

³⁶ Joffe, A. (1984); *op.cit.*, p.25.

³⁷ Maree, J. (1987); "SAAWU in the East London area", *op.cit.*, pp.36-7 and Ncube, B. (1985); The influence of apartheid and capitalism on the development of black trade unions in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Skotaville), p.137.

structure and practices. First, the highest union committees lacked worker majorities and were made up largely of union officials. The workers played a very limited role in the decision-making bodies with the shop stewards given an inferior role *vis-a-vis* the CEC. Secondly, decisions which were taken by the higher bodies passed through several layers before they were referred to the shop-floor members for ratification. Finally, mass meetings were an inadequate means of ensuring mass participatory democracy because of the limited opportunities they provided for ordinary workers to ask questions or voice their concerns.³⁸

SAAWU's initial membership was drawn largely from Durban, particularly the KwaZulu townships of Umlazi and KwaMashu. Two months after its formation in March 1979 the union claimed a membership of 12,000.³⁹ Although SAAWU originated in Natal and had a small presence in the Transvaal, it experienced its most spectacular growth in East London. By July 1981, SAAWU had a signed up membership of 20,000 and a paid-up membership of 5,000 in this area.⁴⁰ Its membership was furnished from almost every working-class occupational subdivision of East London and the surrounding areas.

In November 1980 the union won its first major victory when it signed a recognition agreement with Chloride (SA), despite its unregistered status. In the following year, SAAWU signed a recognition agreement with Johnson and Johnson, and was given informal recognition by 7 other firms. These successes were partially responsible for the rapid increase in the union's

³⁸ Maree, J. (1987); "SAAWU in the East London area", *op.cit.*, p.37.

³⁹ Post, (30.5.79), p.5.

⁴⁰ Maree, J. (1987); "SAAWU in the East London area", *op.cit.*, p.38.

membership in East London up to the end of 1981.⁴¹

SAAWU was to experience a number of setbacks in the next few years. In 1981, despite the success it achieved in some areas, its membership was eroded by the dismissal of 1,100 striking workers from Wilson-Rowntree, and the dismissal of SAAWU members after four other strikes were crushed. Simultaneously, SAAWU experienced a mounting onslaught from the Ciskeian and South African security forces in which numerous workers were arrested and officials were repeatedly detained.⁴² In 1983, a bus boycott by workers and residents of Mdantsane provoked a massive wave of repression by the Ciskeian authorities. A state of emergency was declared on 3 August, and hundreds were arrested and charged with a variety of offenses ranging from arson and public violence to breaking emergency regulations. In an effort to break the boycott the entire leadership of SAAWU was detained and in September the union was banned in the Ciskei.⁴³

At a national conference held in Soweto in April 1984 a clash between the East London branch of SAAWU on the one hand, and the Natal and Transvaal branches on the other, resulted in the expulsion of general secretary Sam Kikine, and executive members Herbert Barnabus and Isaac Ngcobo. All three had been suspended from their position by the union management committee in February and none attended the conference. The main reason for the disagreement between the two groups appears to have related to SAAWU's role in, and subsequent expulsion from, the union unity talks under way at the time. Despite denials by the new executive elected

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

⁴² Bonner, P. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.27.

⁴³ International Defence and Aid Fund (1983); "Bus boycott defiance", in *Focus*, (49, November-December), p.10.

at the conference the union resolved to commit itself to a programme geared towards the establishment of industrial unions - one of the requirements set by other unions for participation in the talks.⁴⁴

Two factions of SAAWU emerged, both laying claim to the name and to union property and records. In the wake of the expulsions, the new executive announced that it would move its head office from its East London base to Johannesburg. It also succeeded in having Kikine and Ngcobe removed from the union's Durban offices, forcing them to hand over the keys and any union property, and preventing them from acting as SAAWU members.⁴⁵ Such fractures were common to the newly formed unions, arising largely from divisions between full-time officials.

At the 1984 annual conference the union claimed a membership of about 100,000 in eighteen branches compared with 50,000 in 2 branches (East London and Durban) in 1980. These branches were spread across the Eastern Cape (4), Natal (10) and Transvaal (4).⁴⁶ However, Estelle Randall found that at the end of 1985, SAAWU's membership had declined drastically, with a total membership of 27,000 and a paid-up membership of 25,032.⁴⁷ This decline was largely due to the split in the union, as well as a country-wide recession which reached its zenith during the mid-eighties.

In November 1986 the two factions of the union settled their differences and re-united. This followed an agreement in 1985 that an order, forbidding Kikine

⁴⁴ The Star, (11.4.84), p.11 and Pretoria News, (12.4.84), p.26.

⁴⁵ City Press, (6.5.84), p.2.

⁴⁶ Joffe, A. (1984); "SAAWU Conference briefings", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, May), p.23.

⁴⁷ Randall, E. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.78.

and Ngcobe from entering SAAWU offices or acting as SAAWU members, should be scrapped. All other court action against Kikine was also withdrawn.⁴⁸ However, prior to the re-unification conference, another dissident group emerged which claimed that they were unhappy with the leadership and political direction of SAAWU.⁴⁹

SAAWU reached its organisational peak during the early years of the UDF. It thus represented the inclusion within the UDF of a mass-based trade union organisation, with extensive support particularly in the East London area. However, leadership problems and the economic situation in the country adversely affected its ability to retain its membership throughout the period of review.

The formation of COSATU in December 1985 ushered in a transformation of the independent trade union movement which particularly affected SAAWU. From the outset COSATU aimed to organise workers along industrial lines as opposed to the general form of unionisation characterised by SAAWU and most other UDF unions. As this process unfolded SAAWU lost its membership to other COSATU affiliates until its dissolution in 1987. SAAWU members were drawn into the Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), formed on 30 May 1986; the Construction and Allied Workers' Union (CAWU), formed in January/February 1987; the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), formed on 27-28 June 1987; the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), launched on 24-25 October 1987; and the TGWU.

⁴⁸ City Press, (17.6.85), p.2.

⁴⁹ The Cape Times, (23.8.86), p.7.

7.4. Motor Assembly and Components Workers' Union of South Africa (MACWUSA) and the General Workers' Union of South Africa (GWUSA)

7.4.1. Formation

MACWUSA was the only UDF union which organised workers in one industrial sector - the motor industry sector. It initially restricted its organising activities to one area - Port Elizabeth. MACWUSA subsequently established branches in Pretoria and Uitenhage. The union was formed in October 1980 in the wake of Port Elizabeth's Ford Motor Company strike. Striking workers formed a Ford Workers' Committee, which subsequently broke away from NAAWU over the latter's handling of the strike.

NAAWU was formed in 1980 by the merger of three auto workers' unions, the National Union of Automobile and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA), the United Automobile, Rubber and Allied Workers' Union (UAW), and the Western Province Motor Assembly Workers' Union (WPMAWU). NUMARWOSA was a TUCSA-affiliated union of coloured workers in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage automobile and components plants. NUMARWOSA formed UAW in September 1973 to organise the increasing number of African auto workers. By the late 1970s, the UAW had grown into a national union with branches in Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Pretoria and Durban.⁵⁰

The 1979 Ford Motor workers strike is well documented and a brief summary of the major events will suffice.⁵¹ The strike began on the 31 October 1979 at the Ford Struandale Cortina assembly plant. Seven hundred workers walked out in protest over the forced resignation of Thozamile Botha,

⁵⁰ Labour Monitoring Group (1985); "Report: The March stayaway in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.1, September), p.93 and Maree,J. (1983); "The 1979 Port Elizabeth strikes and an evaluation of the UAW", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.6, Nos.2 and 3, September), p.13.

⁵¹ See Maree,J. (1983); "The 1979 Port Elizabeth strikes", *op.cit.*

president of PEBCO. The striking workers demanded the unconditional reinstatement of Botha. The UAW played a limited role in the three-day strike which ended with the reinstatement of Botha. The union argued that it could not be involved in the strike because it was a community issue. The striking workers, on the other hand, accused the UAW leadership of siding with the management.

A second strike at the plant on the 13th November was provoked by a strike threat by white workers. Three hundred African workers downed tools and presented a list of grievances to management which they demanded be resolved by November 21. Before the ultimatum expired, however, industrial conflict in Port Elizabeth spread beyond the plant. On the 21 November, African workers in the plant walked out before the 12.00 p.m. deadline in protest against the dismissal of 9 workers a day or two earlier. Management responded by dismissing all the striking workers.

The UAW had established a strong shop floor presence at the Struandale plant but its contact with the workers was "relatively superficial and formalistic".⁵² In addition, PEBCO's role in the strike challenged the UAW's authority and representativeness in its own stronghold. Ideological and political differences added to the tension between the two organisations.⁵³ At a meeting of about 300 of the dismissed workers on November 23, the workers criticised the union for not playing a more active role during the strike. The workers also elected a PEBCO-affiliated "committee of seven" to negotiate with Ford for their reinstatement.⁵⁴ This committee, led by Botha, became

⁵² Green,P. (1986A); "The PE auto industry: The end of an era (1)", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, June-July), p.72.

⁵³ Maree,J. (1983); "The 1979 Port Elizabeth strikes", *op.cit.*, p.22.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.22.

known as the Ford Motor Committee.

The first meeting between the Ford Motor Committee and management on January 9 led to an agreement to reinstate all workers at the same rate of pay. This success increased the Committee's importance as a negotiating party for workers at the plant.⁵⁵ The increasing prestige of the Ford Workers Committee, as well as the workers' dissatisfaction with the performance of the UAW, prompted the Committee to call a mass meeting. The meeting dismissed the UAW leadership. However, only workers at the Ford plant were present because the Committee failed to inform the other factories. Consequently, the rest of the union membership rejected its decisions because it was both unrepresentative and unconstitutional. The Ford workers then split from the UAW and formed MACWUSA.⁵⁶

Soon after its formation, MACWUSA was approached by workers in various other industries in Port Elizabeth with requests for help in organising themselves. MACWUSA's links with PEBCO, and the popularity of the latter, was largely responsible for these requests. Given that its organisational activities were confined to the motor industry, MACWUSA then formed GWUSA in May 1981. GWUSA was also based mainly in the Eastern Cape.⁵⁷ The union was formed as a general union along the lines of SAAWU in East London and adopted similar organisational practices.

7.4.2. Policies and Objectives

MACWUSA and GWUSA maintained close links with PEBCO and soon established links and close working relationships with SAAWU, GWU, the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁵⁶ Bonner,P. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.33.

⁵⁷ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.347.

African Food and Canning Workers' Union (AFCWU), GAWUSA, and BMWU.⁵⁸ These relationships both influenced and symbolised the policies and objectives of the two unions. These included a commitment to the principles of mass participatory democracy and collective leadership, rejection of government-sponsored institutions for workers, a commitment to the struggle for democracy and worker leadership in this struggle, non-racialism, and a commitment to the union's involvement in political struggle in cooperation with other community organisations.

In a joint statement issued by the unions outlining their reasons for joining the UDF they stated that:

It is our standing policy that our unions will co-operate with any organisation if it is relevant to our principles and beliefs. Our workers feel that they must have a say in all progressive organisations in order to strengthen the struggle. Broad and effective unity still has a long way to go. Workers must not be isolated from the progressive movement. We must strive for a non-racial society with church, youth and community organisations, such as those found in the UDF.⁵⁹

Both unions played an important role in local UDF structures. MACWUSA officials, for instance, were key leaders of the UDF in Uitenhage, while both unions had members on the first Port Elizabeth UDF executive. MACWUSA participated in local UDF campaigns, for example, the March 1985 stayaways in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage which were opposed by local FOSATU affiliates. MACWUSA, being the most significant trade union affiliate of the UDF in both Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, often had officials at meetings of other local UDF affiliates. In addition, MACWUSA meetings were often attended by leaders of UDF-affiliated organisations.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ "Workers' Voice", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.8, No.3, December 1982), p.74.

⁵⁹ "Unions give reasons for joining the UDF", in SASPU National, (Vol.5, No.1, March 1984).

⁶⁰ The Sunday Times, (16.11.86), p.2.

Stemming from a civic organisation rooted in the African community, MACWUSA and GWUSA concentrated on mobilising on community issues such as rents and transport. This was justified by Dennis Neer, the general secretary of both unions, in the following terms: "...workers, before they are workers, are members of the community and MACWUSA sees to those needs".⁶¹ Consequently, the unions drew a direct relationship between factory-based issues and those affecting the community, and used the latter as a means of mobilising support from workers.

7.4.3. Membership and Structure

The organisational base of both unions was centred around Port Elizabeth. MACWUSA established branches in Uitenhage and Pretoria but its strongest support came from the Ford plant in Port Elizabeth. GWUSA, on the other hand, had branches in Port Elizabeth, East London and Pretoria and functioned as a general union organising in the chemical, leather, retail, building, textiles, and maintenance sectors. MACWUSA claimed a membership of 10,000 in 1983 but its membership at the end of 1985 was 3,100. GWUSA had 5,000 members at the end of 1985.⁶²

By contrast, NAAWU, a FOSATU affiliate - had a strong shopfloor presence in the Eastern Cape's motor industry. In 1982, the union had approximately 10,000 members in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage area. NAAWU conducted a sustained militant campaign for a living wage in that year. MACWUSA members scabbed on NAAWU strikers, intensifying tensions between the two unions.

In the wake of the highly successful UDF-initiated "Black Weekend" stayaway

⁶¹ Quoted in Labour Monitoring Group (1985); *op.cit.*, pp.96-7.

⁶² Randall, E. (1986); *op.cit.*

in Port Elizabeth on the 16 and 17 March 1985, MACWUSA stepped up efforts to woo workers at key NAAWU factories. However, the union had misread worker sentiment in the area. Widespread support for the stayaway by workers did not mean support for the organisations calling the action, or agreement with their general policies and practices. MACWUSA failed to make headway on the factory floor, and NAAWU members remained committed to the union during the wave of strikes which began after the stayaway.⁶³

At the beginning of 1986, NAAWU's membership was 11,581 while MACWUSA had 3,100 members in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage region. MACWUSA had 700, 650 and 250 members at the Ford Cortina plant, General Motors and Firestone respectively. MACWUSA'S workers were also scattered among seven other motor assembly or components plants in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage.⁶⁴

MACWUSA also planned to launch an Unemployment Association to cater for unemployed workers. According to the union's national organiser:

The main object of the Association will be to keep up the morale of unemployed workers and to enlighten them about the economic situation in the country, to explain that the reason why the jobs are not there is that they (employers - GH) are not keen to create them.⁶⁵

Although MACWUSA professed a strong non-racial stance, it showed little disposition to recruit motor workers from other racially segregated communities. MACWUSA objected to coloured or white leadership in its ranks and had virtually no coloured members in an industry and region where a large

⁶³ Adler,G. (1987); "Uniting a community", in Work in Progress, (Nos.50/51, October/November), pp.69-70.

⁶⁴ Green,P. (1986A); "The PE auto industry", *op.cit.*, p.72.

⁶⁵ *Loc.cit.*

number of coloured workers are employed.⁶⁶ This situation provided employers with the opportunity to divide workers along racial lines, particularly during strikes.

Both MACWUSA and GWUSA relied on workers' committees as their basic units of organisation.⁶⁷ Each workers' committee comprised a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and shop stewards. The number of shop stewards depended on the size of the factory and the number of members in each firm. These were weak shopfloor structures and accounted for the decline in membership as the economic recession took its toll on weakly organised unions.

MACWUSA also experienced a leadership crisis in 1984. Five top executive members, including top unionist Government Zini, were stripped of their membership in May. The expulsions occurred after months of speculation that the union was splitting up and that a new motor union would be established.⁶⁸

In sum, the two unions were unable to develop a strong shopfloor presence in the Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage areas during the period under review. This was due in part to their weak shop floor structures, leadership problems and their links with PEBCO and the Uitenhage Black People's Civic Organisation (UBCO) and other UDF organisations in the two towns. Recession, the threat of fracture, and mounting repression as the state cracked down on progressive organisations from mid-1985 all contributed to

⁶⁶ Bonner, P. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.33.

⁶⁷ Hamill, J.D. (1983); Black Trade unionism in South Africa: 1979-1983, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of York, Centre for Southern African Studies, p.55.

⁶⁸ City Press, (27.5.84), p.5.

the decline of these unions.

7.5. General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU)

GAWU was founded in 1980 after a split from BAWU, leading to the disintegration of the latter in the Transvaal. The union was established as a coordinating body for workers in the Transvaal. GAWU organised workers in the transport, building, engineering, services, and local government sectors. Although GAWU was a general union, it organised several industrial unions such as brush, copper, mining houses, cleaners, scooter drivers, petrol and transport.⁶⁹

In 1984 the union had branches in Johannesburg, Krugersdorp, Kuruman and Vryburg. Unions affiliated to GAWU included SARHWU, the South African Mine Workers' Union (SAMWU) and the South African Scooters Drivers Union (SASDU). In the Kuruman area, GAWU concentrated on organising the mines, furnishing and municipal workers. In Vryburg, membership of the union was drawn largely from food and municipal workers.⁷⁰

GAWU was committed to the formation of industrial unions which were seen as the form of organisation which guaranteed efficiency compared to general unionism. The union acknowledged, however, that restructuring on industrial lines was a long process. It argued that unions experience interruptions, some coming from the government, in their operations. In addition, other problems which relate to material and human resources affected the process of restructuring making it difficult for the organisation to form industrial

⁶⁹ "The exploiter is our common enemy", Interview of GAWU, in SASPU National, (Vol.2, No.7, September 1981), p.16.

⁷⁰ "GAWU's targets both political and economic", in SASPU National, (Vol.5, No.4, 1984), p.4.

unions.⁷¹

In terms of the constitution the union was non-racial, thus membership was open to all workers. The union's membership was 20,620 in 1983 but grew to 34,000 at the end of 1985.⁷² GAWU described its policy as "one of mass participatory democracy and collective leadership. The members must understand what trade unionism is, and, as members, participate in the leadership of the union". It rejected registration on the grounds that: "The state is against all progressive trade unions and still relies on the same means as it did with SACTU in the past".⁷³ Registration was thus seen as a means of controlling trade unions and, in particular, restricting them from political activities.

GAWU identified economic exploitation as the essential problem in South Africa. However, the specific form which capitalist exploitation (apartheid economic exploitation and political domination) takes establishes a link between the issues which workers organise themselves around - on the factory floor and in political oppression.⁷⁴ Consequently, the union linked the struggles on the shop floor with the political struggle for democracy. The union also emphasised involvement in community issues. GAWU contended that union issues extended beyond the factory floor because "workers are exploited from the factory to the home".⁷⁵ Issues such as high rents, bus-fares, etc., were linked to the general system of racial exploitation.

⁷¹ "Interview: Mafumadi on GAWU", in Work in Progress, (No.31, May 1984), p.20.

⁷² Lundall,P., Schroeder,I. and Young,G. (1985); Directory of South African Trade Unions: A complete guide to all SA's trade unions, SALDRU, February and Randall.E. (1986); *op.cit.*

⁷³ "The exploiter is our common enemy", *op.cit.*, p.16.

⁷⁴ "Interview: Mafumadi on GAWU", *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁷⁵ "The exploiter is our common enemy", *op.cit.*, p.16.

According to Sydney Mufamadi, general secretary of the union, GAWU held the view that it was involved in a national democratic struggle wherein it places emphasis on the leadership role which has to be played by the working class.⁷⁶ The union's policies linked it to the ANC-led alliance externally and the UDF internally.

According to Mufamadi, trade union organisation has some limitations which can be overcome by forming alliances with other community-based organisations such as the UDF. Mufamadi argued that the sphere of operation of trade unions is limited to the factory floor. However, there are people who are not working in factories who are waging a working class struggle which serves to undermine the class relations upon which the present society is built. In addition, trade unions are unable to reach people who live and work in the rural areas. Mufamadi argued that the UDF had the infrastructure to reach people in these areas, providing the means to instil working class consciousness into the rural masses.⁷⁷

At its AGM in 1984, GAWU expressed its commitment to "one powerful, united, national trade union and the leadership of the working class in the broad popular struggle for both political and economic liberation".⁷⁸ The union outlined three complementary avenues through which it would achieve its goals: full participation in the planned new national federation of independent trade unions; working in the UDF; and building GAWU.

For GAWU, affiliation to the UDF was important in the light of the union's "commitment to political and economic liberation, the leadership of the working

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁷⁷ "Interview: Mufamadi on GAWU", *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁷⁸ "GAWU's targets both political and economic", *op.cit.*

class in both these struggles, and the need of working class organisations to identify and link up with progressive allies in these struggles".⁷⁹ The union also identified the general meeting as an important development in building the union into industrial branches.

Gawu was disbanded after its membership was drawn into other COSATU affiliates in 1987. GAWU lost its membership to the Construction and Allied Workers' Union (CAWU) at the latter's launch on 6-12 February 1987; the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) on 22-4 May 1987; and the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) at its launch in June 1987.

7.6. South African Railways and Harbours Workers Union

7.6.1. Formation

SARHWU was launched in October 1986 in Grahamstown. SARHWU officials claimed, however, that the new union was a revival of the SACTU affiliate which was formed in 1936. The old SARHWU was originally affiliated to the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU). The union was officially launched in 1944. In an attempt to limit the impact of SARHWU, the South African Railways and Harbours initiated a Staff Association for its employees in 1950. It soon became apparent, however, that the Staff Association looked mainly after the interests of whites. During 1955 SARHWU was revived in Pietermaritzburg and soon gained support on a national scale. During the same year the union affiliated to SACTU and by 1962 SARHWU had become a national body.⁸⁰

The SACTU union was the first independent trade union to organise railway

⁷⁹ *Loc.cit.*

⁸⁰ Slabbert, J.A. and Bruwer, A.J. (eds.) (1990); Political ideologies and South African trade unions: A profile, (Auckland Park, Liaison), p.B7-317.

workers. According to Luckhard and Wall "it was one of the most difficult industries to penetrate...", partly because every region posed particular problems and partly because of sustained repression on the part of the railways administration. The old SARHWU claimed a membership of 4,677 in Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg in 1960. In 1963-64 several SARHWU officials (who were also key political activists) were detained, banned or jailed. Two - Caleb Mayekiso of Port Elizabeth and Laurence Ndzanga of the Western Cape - died in detention.⁸¹ The SACTU leadership went into exile after the banning of the ANC in 1960 and the suppression of trade union activities during the early 1960s.

In 1981 a number of unions once again began to organise the railway sector. In the Transvaal, GAWU and MGWUSA started to organise railway workers. Because these unions included several officials who had been members of the old SARHWU in the sixties, a decision was taken to re-launch the union. In mid-1983, one organiser was employed and an interim committee was set up. Various committees were elected in the process of organising workers from different Stations/Depots or Compounds.

SARHWU's interim committee participated in discussions with other unions in the railway sector with the aim of transferring workers from these unions to the union. The first Interim National Executive of SARHWU was set up and included the new regions which were emerging as a result of the transfer of workers from other unions. The first NEC was composed of representatives from each region, as well as various officials who were part of a National Management Committee. SARHWU adopted its final constitution at the national launch in October 1986.⁸²

⁸¹ Green,P. (1986B); "Organising Railway workers: SATS workers on track", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.12, No.1, Nov/Dec), pp.29-30.

⁸² Slabbert,J.A. and Bruwer,A.J. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.B7-317-8.

The inaugural congress of the union, held in secret in the Grahamstown area, elected Justice Langa as union president, and Ntai Sello as general secretary.⁸³ In addition to the above office-bearers, the constitution provided for two vice-presidents, an assistant secretary and an educational secretary. SARHWU adopted the Freedom Charter at its founding congress. The union soon established close links with the UDF-affiliated GAWU in the Transvaal and SAAWU in East London. Union officials took great pride in the history of the union, its SACTU traditions and its historical links with the nationalist movement. Names like Moses Mabhida, Calber Mayekiso and Laurence Ndzanga were frequently mentioned and on the steering committee of the new union were old activists like Rita Ndzanga and Catherine Mavi.⁸⁴

7.6.2. Principles and Policies

In its Declaration of Principles, SARHWU stated that its aim was "to achieve a non-racial, democratic South Africa". It felt "that the growth of democratic unions - which encourage participation and decision making - is a vital contribution to the struggle for a free and democratic South Africa". But this struggle must be led by the working class since: "Only the working class, in alliance with other progressive sections of the community, can build a happy life for all South Africans, a life free from unemployment, insecurity and poverty, free from racial hatred and oppression, a life of vast opportunities for our people".

SARHWU thus identified the national-democratic struggle under the leadership of the working class as the main focus of the 1980s, and the establishment of a democratic South Africa as the primary objective of the union. SARHWU, like the other UDF unions, did not limit its role and objectives to

⁸³ Baskin, J. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.147.

⁸⁴ Green, P. (1986B); *op.cit.*, p.30.

the purely economic interests of the working class. Included among SARHWU's aims and objectives were the following:

- To co-operate with and assist other progressive organisations in the general interest of the members and the working-class movement in bringing about change in the economic and industrial situation in South Africa.
To advance the democratic rights of all workers.⁸⁵

At its inaugural conference the union resolved:

- That the Federation [COSATU - G.H.] must strive to ensure that workers have the opportunity to participate in any organisations or campaigns that are struggling against oppression and economic exploitation.
That the Federation must do whatever it can to promote working class leadership in the struggle.
That the Federation will join hands with other democratic forces in furthering their struggle against oppression and exploitation.⁸⁶

Thus, from the very beginning SARHWU was committed to influencing COSATU to ensure that workers participate in the general struggle against apartheid and to ensure co-operation between COSATU and other organisations involved in this struggle.

SARHWU general secretary, Sello Ntai, justified affiliation to the UDF in the following terms:

The UDF was formed not as a political organisation but as an anti-apartheid front. As a union organising in SATS we have a direct interest in opposing apartheid. The most oppressed workers have an interest in full and direct leadership of the anti-apartheid front. Which other class can solve these problems? If we are not in the UDF other classes with different interest [sic] will lead it. If we are fighting for a classless society then the very people exploited must lead. And finally membership of the UDF does not mean that normal trade unionism cannot take place to the fullest.⁸⁷

SARHWU, which emerged after the formation of the UDF, adopted the same principles and objectives held by those trade union affiliates of the UDF which emerged before the formation of the latter. These principles and

⁸⁵ Slabbert, J.A. and Bruwer, A.J. (1990); *op.cit.*, p. B7-319.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. B7-330-331.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Ruiters, G. (1987); "Organising public sector transport workers", in Work in Progress, (No. 50-51, October-November), p. 57.

objectives were a challenge to the apartheid system because they involved the rejection of apartheid structures, the combining of trade union and other popular struggles, and the struggle for a democratic South Africa.

7.6.3. Structure and Membership

SARHWU's branch, regional, and national structures were patterned on the work situation found in SATS. SATS was structured into 12 different departments nationally - Road Transport, Airways, Harbours, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Signals and Telecommunications, Petroleum Products Pipelines, Stores, Publicity and Travel, Catering, and Medical Scheme. It was also structured into 9 different geographical regions - Western Cape, Cape Midlands, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Orange Free State, Natal, Southern Transvaal, Northern Transvaal, and South West Africa/Namibia.⁸⁸

The union's members were organised along departmental lines, with one shop steward for every fifteen members sitting on the central shop steward committee. Two or more central shop steward committees, representing at least 200 paid-up members, constituted a branch. The Branch Executive Committee (BEC) met once a week while branch general meetings were held at least once every three months. The BEC consisted of a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and delegates from each central shop steward committee.

Three or more branches in a region, with at least 1,500 paid-up members, made up a regional structure. Each branch in the region elected one delegate for every 100 or part of 100 members of the branch (up to a maximum of 20 delegates from a branch) to the Regional Congress. The Regional Congress, which was held at least once a year, elected a Regional

⁸⁸ Slabbert, J.A. and Bruwer, A.J. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.B7-322.

Executive Committee (REC). The REC consisted of the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer and delegates from each branch - one delegate for branches with less than 1,000 members and two delegates for branches with more.

Each branch sent one delegate for every 200 (or part of 200) members (up to a maximum of 10 delegates per branch) to the annual National Congress (NC). The NC was the highest decision-making body in the union and elected the NEC. The NEC, consisting of the National Management Committee (president, vice-president, 2nd vice-president, treasurer, general secretary, assistant general secretary) and delegates from each region, met at least once every three months. The National Management Committee, which was responsible for the national work of the union, met at least once a month.

The union also placed emphasis on the principle of worker control in its structures. All delegates to meetings at all levels of the union were required to have a mandate from the people they were representing. This means that delegates had to make sure that proper discussions take place with their fellow workers before they went to a meeting. Officials did not have a vote in union meetings and workers were required to ensure that officials did not dominate discussions. These organisational principles represented a change from the practices of earlier UDF unions.

SARHWU membership was open to all workers who were employed by SATS. SATS included railways, harbours, pipelines and the South African Airways. Although SARHWU subscribed to a non-racial policy concerning its membership, the overwhelming majority of its members were African. The union included in its ranks workers who did a variety of jobs, e.g. drivers, maintenance work, signals, etc., but the vast majority were classified as

ungraded labourers.

SARHWU's initial organising focus was in the Transvaal, where it claimed 10,000 members, as well as 4,000 members in the rest of the country at the beginning of 1986.⁸⁹ The union's relative strength in the Transvaal and its weakness in other parts of the country was the result of regional differences in SATS. In addition, some sectors of the workforce were keener to start their own union than join one which they believed was too heavily dominated by officials at the expense of railway workers. Organisational problems emerged soon after the launching of the union, particularly in East London and Port Elizabeth.⁹⁰

SATS workers in East London and Port Elizabeth began organising themselves into committees prior to the launch of SARHWU. The East London committee, which represented about 3,000 railway workers in the city, was suspicious of existing trade unions because of "a bad experience of trade unionism, especially of SAAWU, to which most of them belonged". The committee was also suspicious of SARHWU because of its close links with SAAWU. They also felt insulted because SARHWU failed to contact their committee when it first arrived in the city. In addition, SARHWU submitted copies of its constitution only one week before the launch and they objected to clauses in the constitution which did not give local branches sufficient control. Instead, the committee planned to form the National Union of Railway Workers (NURW), which would include committees from other parts of the country.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Green,P. (1986B); *op.cit.*, p.30.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.32.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.33-4.

The Port Elizabeth committee was established after SATS dismissed striking workers in the wake of a May Day strike. The committee approached the COSATU local to determine which organisation they could affiliate to. COSATU referred them to the TGWU but the committee opted instead to seek assistance from the East London committee. The committee's contact with SARHWU officials had been problematic and, following discussions with East London workers, they decided to form their own union. Not a single member of the workers' committees in both cities attended SARHWU's launch. SARHWU officials, while acknowledging its organisational problems in the area, stated that the launch in Grahamstown was the "first step to becoming a national union".⁹²

After SARHWU's first national congress in 1986, a number of discussions were held to form a united transport union.⁹³ In order to do so, SARHWU would have to merge with the TGWU. Differences between the two COSATU affiliates prevented this process from occurring. TGWU was a workerist-oriented union, while SARHWU was a "charterist" union. SARHWU realised that the larger TGWU would dominate the new union and was therefore only prepared to merge with the latter if the membership was restricted to transport workers. SARHWU also noted that it is difficult to characterise the transport sector as one industry. It characterised the TGWU as a general union and therefore opposed integration.

In 1987, one of the largest strikes the country has seen led to the rapid expansion of SARHWU's membership, particularly in the Transvaal.⁹⁴ The

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.33-5.

⁹³ SARHWU Discussion Document, 1987. Cited in Slabbert, J.A. and Bruwer, A.J. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.B7-320-324.

⁹⁴ See Baskin, J. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.181-191.

strike was provoked by the dismissal in March 1987 of a SATS worker from the City Deep railway depot. After a three month long strike an out of court settlement was reached on 5 June. The settlement was a victory for the union and included recognition of the right of workers to democratically elect their own representatives.

Throughout the strike SATS refused to negotiate with SARHWU and contended that SARHWU'S legal team represented individual strikers. Nor did SARHWU gain recognition by the corporation. After the settlement was reached the Minister of Transport said that the settlement had nothing to do with SARHWU. His claims that the agreement was between SATS and its employees was seen as an attempt to give credit to the Black Trade Union (BLATU), the SATS "in-house" union.⁹⁵ A SARHWU challenge to have a ballot to prove representivity was ignored by SATS.⁹⁶ The corporation's concern over demands for democratic union representation prevented it from negotiating with both SARHWU and COSATU. Instead, SATS negotiated with a BLATU grade steward committee, to which a number of people with SARHWU sympathies had been elected.⁹⁷

Thousands of SATS workers joined the union during the course of the strike. In July, SARHWU's membership had reached 34,411, with the total in the Transvaal reaching 22,000. By the end of the year the union's membership had grown to around 45,000 from the 15,000 at the beginning of the strike.⁹⁸ The tremendous explosion of membership during and after the strike

⁹⁵ Weekly Mail, (12.6.87 - 18.6.87), p.5.

⁹⁶ South African Labour Bulletin Correspondent (1987); "Victory for SATS workers", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.12, No.5, July), p.39.

⁹⁷ Weekly Mail, (12.6.87 - 18.6.87), p.5.

⁹⁸ The New Nation, (17.12.87 - 22.12.87), p.15.

transformed SARHWU into a national organisation with branches across the country. In most regions, workers were eagerly signing up with the union and it was only in smaller outlying areas such as the Northern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Transvaal and Northern Natal, that the union had to go out and recruit members.⁹⁹ SARHWU rapidly established branch offices in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Germiston, Springs, Kroonstad, East London, Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Pretoria and the Vaal.¹⁰⁰

However, the rapid growth of the union and its transformation into a national organisation created enormous strains. It was still in the process of building and consolidating and the union had to accommodate the different backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses of each region and distribute resources appropriately.¹⁰¹

During and after the strike, SARHWU experienced harassment arising from collusion between SATS management and the security police, and leadership problems.¹⁰² During the strike workers were detained, evicted from hostels, shot in Germiston and Johannesburg, and besieged in COSATU offices by the police. In addition, a systematic propaganda campaign against the union, the detention of the leadership, and the 150 court cases involving over 1,000 union members were designed to disorganise if not crush the union.¹⁰³ SATS' refusal to recognise SARHWU was a major limitation on the union's organisational capacity. It became difficult to consolidate structures following

⁹⁹ Roux,R. (1989); "SARHWU: Problems and advances since the 1987 strike", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.14, No.2, June), p.78.

¹⁰⁰ Ruiters,G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.57.

¹⁰¹ Roux,R. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.78.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.75.

¹⁰³ *Loc.cit.*

the rapid rise in membership and the union's resources were stretched when it was forced to collect subscriptions by hand.¹⁰⁴

The strike won the right for workers to resign from the Black Staff Association, and the *de facto* right of SARHWU members to be represented by democratically elected shop stewards. However, even these limited rights were not automatically extended to all regions. SARHWU had to fight for these rights step by step in each region. At the very least SATS appeared willing to accept SARHWU representation of the majority of workers in a particular racial category. Under these conditions the union would have to register under the Labour Regulations Act before SATS would recognise the union.¹⁰⁵ In areas where strong union structures existed, managers recognised shop stewards elected by SARHWU members. This was not the case in areas where workers were not sufficiently organised. SARHWU officials alleged that managers and the Joint Management Committees were collaborating in intimidating workers not to join the union.¹⁰⁶

In sum, the UDF was able to include workers from one of the most difficult state sectors, the railway sector, in its membership through this affiliate. Despite initial difficulties relating to the formation of other organisations in the railway sector, the union experienced a dramatic increase in membership during the course of the 1987 strike. By the end of the period of review SARHWU had established branches in almost every part of the country where SATS had workers.

¹⁰⁴ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.76-7.

¹⁰⁶ The New Nation, (17.12.87 - 22.12.87), p.15.

7.7. COSATU and the increasing political involvement of Unions

During 1984 FOSATU'S resistance to involving its affiliates in political campaigns began to dissipate in the face of the revival of militant resistance. The wave of resistance which began with the Vaal Triangle uprising stimulated the federation's support for political campaigns.¹⁰⁷ At the centre of FOSATU'S increasing political role were the federation's locals, which were created to promote cooperation between affiliates and later developed into an organising tool.¹⁰⁸

Although tensions did arise within locals, and between locals and community organisations, the pressure of events in the townships placed new stresses on the unions and one result was a blurring of the divide between the old and new unions.¹⁰⁹ A deepening recession, increasing industrial monopolisation and sophistication of management strategies, tightening state repression and the dramatic escalation of township struggles increased the pressure on industrial unions to take up political issues and on general unions to establish a strong shop-floor presence.¹¹⁰ The "unity talks" finally culminated in the launching of COSATU in December 1985, bringing together three political traditions: the well-organised industrial unions drawn from the shop-floor tradition; the general unions drawn from the national-democratic tradition; and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which broke away

¹⁰⁷ Van Niekerk,P. (1989); "The trade union movement in the politics of resistance in South Africa", in Johnson,S. (ed.); South Africa: No turning back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press), p.157.

¹⁰⁸ South African Labour Bulletin Correspondent (1987); "COSATU Locals", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.12, No.8, October), p.29.

¹⁰⁹ Friedman,S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.412.

¹¹⁰ Carrim,Y. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.6.

from CUSA to join COSATU.¹¹¹

Eighteen of the 33 unions which joined to form COSATU in December 1985 were UDF affiliates, while one trade union affiliate of the UDF remained outside the federations. These unions had a paid-up membership of 93,186 and a total membership of 141,760 in 1985.¹¹² Within COSATU they comprised 23 percent of the total membership, but occupied 49 percent of the voting delegates seats on the Central Executive Committee (CEC). The disproportionate voting power of this group, together with high levels of political confidence promoted by the UDF-dominated political upsurge, provided the UDF unions with considerable influence within COSATU's national structures. In addition, these unions were politically united both by previous loyalties and a common outlook.¹¹³

A second bloc, representing 168,907 paid-up members (37 percent of COSATU's total) and occupying only 19 percent of the voting delegate seats at CEC level, comprised the "centre" within COSATU. This group included NUM and the FCWU as well as a number of former FOSATU unions such as the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU), the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union (PWAU) and the TGWU. Although this group was dominated by an ANC/UDF political tradition, they differed from the "UDF" unions in a number of respects.

These unions were launched with narrow economic trade union perspectives, they differed on questions of style of organisation and union work,

¹¹¹ Fine, A. and Webster, E. (1989); "Transcending traditions: trade unions and political unity", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 5, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.260.

¹¹² Randall, E. (1986); *op.cit.*

¹¹³ Baskin, J. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.102.

emphasizing the importance of strong grassroots organisation and representative democracy and were often suspicious of the UDF's rhetorical and sloganeering style of politics. The UDF unions, in turn, frequently viewed this bloc as lukewarm in their support for the ANC, and accused them of making a fetish of "mandates" and "democracy".¹¹⁴

The third group comprised unions strongly located in the early FOSATU political tradition. They constituted an "independent worker" bloc, and included MAWU, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU), the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) and the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW).¹¹⁵

The pressure of events in the country and mounting pressure by COSATU's membership to participate in political campaigns led to an early recognition that the new federation must work closely with the community organisations. This was recognised in the keynote address by Cyril Ramaphosa that the "struggle on the shopfloor cannot be separated from the wider political issues". The inaugural conference adopted a resolution calling for close relations with other organisations of the mass democratic movement, including the UDF.¹¹⁶ However, no resolution was passed on COSATU's political direction. Instead, the federation formally committed itself to ideological neutrality with Cyril Ramaphosa pointing out that COSATU would take an active role in national politics in alliance with other progressive organisations.

However, COSATU's leaders soon displayed their ideological preferences in public statements and in discussions with the ANC and SACTU in Lusaka

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.102-3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹¹⁶ Friedman, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.413.

in March 1986. The Lusaka meeting led to an agreement "that lasting solutions can only emerge from the national liberation movement, headed by the ANC and the entire democratic forces of our country of which COSATU is an important and integral part".¹¹⁷

This clear identification with the ANC revived ideological divisions within the labour movement. Critics argued that the COSATU leadership had acted without a proper mandate in visiting Lusaka. In addition, by implying that Cosatu was "operating under the leadership of the ANC", a spirit of sectarianism could develop towards alternative political traditions. Some critics went further and argued that the national-democratic tradition stood in absolute contradiction to working-class politics. It was argued that the organisational style and political content of "populist" organisations must lead to the surrendering of trade union independence and failed to prepare workers for socialism.¹¹⁸

From COSATU's inception, the leadership of the federation embarked on a series of political initiatives without the sanction of the CEC.¹¹⁹ These initiatives included calling for the nationalisation of major industries, supporting the divestment/disinvestment campaign, threatening to organise mass pass burning unless pass laws were repealed within six months, and the meeting with the ANC and SACTU in Harare.

Pressure from the federation's membership to define its political direction

¹¹⁷ Document: "ANC-SACTU-COSATU Talks", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.5, April-May 1986), p.29.

¹¹⁸ Fine,A. and Webster,E. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.261.

¹¹⁹ Callinicos,A. (1986); "Marxism and Revolution in South Africa", in International Socialism, (Vol.2, No.3, Spring), p.40.

mounted in the first half of 1987.¹²⁰ In March 1987, NUM adopted the Freedom Charter at its annual congress. Two months later, COSATU's National Union of Metal Workers (NUMSA) adopted a political resolution at its founding congress which endorsed the Freedom Charter as "a good foundation stone on which to start building our working-class programme". At COSATU's second national conference, held in July 1987, a resolution put forward by NUM was adopted, endorsing the Charter as "a guiding document which reflects the views and aspirations of the majority of the oppressed and exploited in our struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation".¹²¹

The political resolution represented a "firm decision to adopt a higher political profile, and to strengthen alliances with organisations within the national democratic tradition". COSATU affirmed its ties with the ANC-SACTU-SACP alliance in exile and the UDF internally. It called for the building of alliances with "progressive organisations", defined as having "a proven record of struggle and history of mass mobilisation and action in our struggles". These organisations should have "principles and policies compatible with those of organised workers in COSATU and the working class in general". The federation resolved to build permanent structures with such organisations at all levels to strengthen "disciplined alliances" and "to promote the role of the working class in the united front alliance".¹²²

COSATU's political resolution called for the building of worker leadership, both in the struggle for national liberation and in the struggle against capitalist

¹²⁰ See Baskin, J. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.215-7 for the Freedom Charter "Debate".

¹²¹ Fine, A. and Webster, E. (1989); *op.cit.*, pp.261-2.

¹²² COSATU Resolutions, document. Cited in "COSATU Second National Congress", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.12, Nos.6/7, August/September 1987), pp.3-4.

exploitation, with both processes given equal priority. The resolution noted that the federation saw these struggles as "complementary to each other and part of an uninterrupted struggle for total liberation". There is thus "no conflict between the struggle for national liberation and socialism. The struggle against national oppression and the struggle against capitalist exploitation are complementary to each other and part of an uninterrupted struggle for total liberation".¹²³

However, the following features of the political resolution are significant. In the first place, while COSATU endorsed the ANC's Freedom Charter, it identified its demands as a minimum set of demands signalling the federation's continuing commitment to look beyond the Charterist focus on national liberation to economic transformation.¹²⁴ In the second place, by arguing that there is no conflict between the struggle against national oppression and the struggle against capitalist exploitation, COSATU rejected the two-stage theory of revolutionary change in favour of a view that the struggle for national liberation was part of the struggle for socialism.¹²⁵ Finally, COSATU maintained its independence by rejecting affiliation with other organisations.

What was significant, however, was the increasing involvement of COSATU in political struggles, the adoption of the Freedom Charter, the affirmation of ties with the ANC-SACTU-SACP alliance in exile, and the formation of alliances with internal progressive organisations, in particular, the UDF. This represents the spread of the revolutionary consciousness underlying the

¹²³ Fine, A. and Webster, E. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.263.

¹²⁴ Marx, A. (1989); "South African black trade unions as an emerging working class movement", in Journal of Modern African Studies, (Vol.27, No.3), p.389.

¹²⁵ Fine, A. and Webster, E. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.263.

"political unions" and the UDF into the leading worker organisation in the country.

In conclusion, the trade unions affiliated to the UDF played an important role in the development of revolutionary consciousness and its spread amongst the organised working class and other sectors of the community and mass mobilisation and organisation leading to a shift in the balance of social forces towards the UDF. A number of factors demonstrate this point.

In the first place, the UDF unions played a significant role in the development and expansion of a revolutionary consciousness in South Africa. The common principles and objectives, and practices of these unions arose before the formation of the UDF and COSATU and some of these became important in both organisations after their formation.

These unions did not limit their role and objectives to the purely economic interests of the working class. From the outset, the unions which later affiliated to the UDF linked trade union struggles with urban conflicts. In addition, the UDF unions were united in their rejection of reforms in labour legislation and their commitment to the struggle for national liberation. They were essentially non-racial in terms of their principles and stressed the leadership of the working class in the struggle for national liberation. They recognised the importance of trade union participation in the broad struggle for liberation and affiliation to national political organisations. Finally, all were "Charterist" in terms of ideological affiliation, thus recognising an alternative political leadership and system in South Africa. All of these represented a political challenge to the dominant socio-political system in South Africa. They also represent some of the most important elements of the national political culture which developed within the UDF tradition and which eventually influenced the direction taken by COSATU.

For the UDF unions, the goal of struggle was national liberation and this could be achieved by uniting their struggles with all township struggles and participating in the national democratic struggle as affiliates of the new political organisations. Thus, narrow trade union interests were subordinated to the national political challenge of the dominant system. However, although the UDF unions laid stress on the struggle for national liberation and the creation of a non-racial, democratic South Africa, they all laid emphasis on working class leadership in this struggle.

SARHWU, for instance, stated that the struggle for national liberation must be led by the working class because only "the working class, in alliance with other progressive sections of the community, can build a happy life for all South Africans". In addition, at its inaugural conference SARHWU resolved to call on COSATU to promote working class leadership in the struggle. Likewise, GAWU held the view that it was involved in a national democratic struggle wherein it places emphasis on the leadership role which has to be played by the working class. Nowhere, however, do these unions explicitly state that they were struggling for the establishment of a socialist society. For the UDF unions, apartheid was seen as the central contradiction and national liberation and the establishment of a non-racial, democratic South Africa were seen as the primary and immediate objectives.

The activities of the UDF unions also constituted a direct challenge to the apartheid system. SAAWU, for example, was the first union to call for one-man-one-vote and its participation in community struggles as well as its other activities (e.g. the 1983 Mdantsane bus boycott, assistance in the formation of community organisations, and affiliation to the UDF) made it a target for state repression. MACWUSA played a central role in local campaigns of the UDF, including the March 1985 stayaway. SARHWU, on the other hand, conducted one of the largest strikes of the 1980s against a state-run

corporation. The 1987 SATS workers strike constituted a challenge of the industrial relations policies of state-run corporations and resulted in the rapid increase in membership of the union and its influence in the transport sector.

In the second place, the UDF unions played an important role in mass mobilisation and organisation. Firstly, the general internal structure and style of organisation of the UDF unions as well as the creation of alliances with other organisations in order to create a convergence of workplace and township struggles demonstrated an early commitment to mass mobilisation and organisation.

Initially, the UDF unions were preoccupied with mass mobilisation rather than internal worker control of the unions or organisational practices that encouraged strong unions. The objective was to draw as many people as possible into these structures and/or their activities, including township residents who were not members of the unions. From their inception many of the UDF unions adopted mass participatory democracy as their internal form of organisation. These included SAAWU and GAWU which both emphasized the importance of workers directly controlling their unions behind the twin principles of "mass participatory democracy" and "collective leadership". Mass meetings, which served as the main fora to refer decisions taken by Branch Committees to the workers, were often held in the townships and were also attended by non-unionists. This had the effect of drawing the broader community into trade union struggles while trade union members were drawn into community struggles.

Most of the UDF unions were general unions and concentrated on organising in one area. SAAWU, for example, concentrated its organisational activities in Mdantsane, and organised the township residents working in numerous factories and industries. This method of organising promoted mass

organisation because membership was confined largely to a single township and union organisers were able to recruit members on the buses and trains to and from Mdantsane. Similarly, GAWU organised workers in the transport, building, engineering, services, and local government sectors who were living in the townships of Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. The trend towards general unionism was also promoted by the practice of recruiting at mass rallies in the townships.

Finally, the commitment of the UDF unions to linking their struggles (for independent organisation, recognition, higher wages, greater control over the conditions of production) with urban conflicts concerning education, rent, transport, housing, and the struggle for political rights led to the establishment of alliances with other community organisations. The unity-in-action practised by the UDF unions was another factor which promoted community support for (and involvement in) trade union struggles and the support and involvement of trade unions in community struggles. The resulting convergence of trade union and community struggles promoted mass mobilisation and organisation with the trade unions playing a leading role in township struggles and organisations, for example SAAWU in East London. In turn, the strong links between unions and community structures expanded trade union membership. For example, MACWUSA was approached by workers in various industries in Port Elizabeth for help in organising them because of its links with PEBCO, and in particular, the popularity of the latter.

The re-emergence of political unionism in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a profound impact on subsequent developments in the independent trade union movement. The disproportionate voting power of this group, together with high levels of political confidence arising from the UDF-dominated political upsurge, provided the UDF unions with considerable influence within COSATU's national structures. The trade union movement was also influenced

by the formation of the UDF and the upsurge of popular resistance during the eighties. Organised labour was increasingly drawn into popular struggles and by the middle of the decade the unions and popular organisations were drawn together. In 1987 formal links were established between the UDF and South Africa's largest trade union federation - COSATU.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the 1980s was the role of trade unions in securing the spread of revolutionary consciousness within the trade union movement. This is best indicated by COSATU's increasing involvement in political struggles, adoption of the Freedom Charter, affirmation of ties with the ANC-SACTU-SACP alliance in exile, and formation of alliances with internal progressive organisations, in particular, the UDF. This represents the spread of the revolutionary consciousness underlying the "political unions" and the UDF into the leading worker Federation in the country.

The UDF trade unions were thus an important component of the political and ideological struggle to raise the revolutionary consciousness of the working class and were partially responsible for drawing not only trade union members into political struggles, but the broader community into their struggles as well. In the process, the objectives of the UDF were increasingly spread in black civil society. The UDF unions were "community organisations", with close links with other organisations in the townships. They also played an important role both in the formation of other organisations and participated in their campaigns. The following chapter traces the history of various civic associations which were affiliated to the UDF.

Chapter 8**CIVIC ORGANISATIONS****8.1. Introduction**

The emergence and proliferation of civic associations in the late 1970s and early 1980s occurred in response to a wide variety of political, material and social grievances and, in some cases, as a result of the conscious organisational efforts of activists. These organisations formed the main organisational base of the UDF when it was formed in 1983 and in its activities thereafter.

The people's war strategy of the ANC-led revolutionary alliance also focused attention on the formation of civic organisations. The primary objective of mass mobilisation and organisation was to increase participation in the national liberation struggle. This strategic objective has its parallel in the Leninist/Gramscian strategic emphasis on mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc. However, in the Leninist/Gramscian model, mass mobilisation and organisation are also directed at raising the revolutionary consciousness of the masses until their particular demands are transformed into a universalistic political challenge to the dominant system.

This chapter focuses specifically on the role these civic associations played in mass mobilisation and organisation and the spread of revolutionary consciousness leading to a shift in the balance of social forces towards the UDF. This is done in two ways. First, a focus on the general factors leading to the formation of civic associations, the effects of struggle, state repression and counter-mobilisation on civics, the general nature and strategies of these organisations, and the general role and aims of civic associations. Second,

an analysis is made of the formation, structure and membership, aims and objectives and activities of selected civic associations.

Here the emphasis is on the role the civic associations played in mobilising and organising people around the concrete particulars of their everyday lives (rent increases, bus-fare increases, etc.) and transforming their particular interests into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system. Underlying these processes was the central role played by civic associations in promoting and expanding the ideological leadership of the UDF in civil society. In order to demonstrate the latter, we must look at the reasons for the formation of the civic associations, their structures, aims and objectives, membership, and activities as well as changes to these. In the latter sense, changes to these factors demonstrate a shift in the balance of social forces towards the UDF. The shift towards the UDF is also demonstrated by the revival of various community organisations and the proliferation of new community organisations after the formation of the Front.

It is argued, firstly, that these organisations played a hegemonic-building role by promoting mass mobilisation and organisation, and developing and facilitating the spread of a common national political culture. The former is demonstrated by the mobilisation and organisation of people by civic associations around the concrete particulars of their every-day lives, and the revival of certain civics and proliferation of new civic associations after the formation of the UDF. The latter is demonstrated by the manner in which civic associations incorporated a common set of principles and objectives, and strategies and tactics which eventually transformed the particular demands of their communities into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant apartheid system.

Secondly, some community organisations experienced significant changes in

their structures, leadership and membership, aims and objectives, and in their strategies and activities. These changes demonstrated a marked shift towards, and led to their affiliation to, the UDF, and their incorporation of the UDF political tradition of struggle, leading to the transformation of their activities into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant apartheid system. Finally, this analysis reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the struggle: their structures, practices and membership.

8.2. Overview

Three broad periods can be seen in the emergence and development of civic associations during the period under review. These periods are differentiated in terms of the nature and role of civics, and the scale, intensity and form of their activities. Between 1979 and mid-1984, a number of civic associations were formed in response to local struggles over a wide range of grievances. From mid-1984 to the middle of 1986, township resistance intensified and spread throughout the country leading to the establishment and entrenchment of "people's power" in certain parts of the country. From mid-1986 to the end of the period under review, the government employed repression to destroy the civics while simultaneously upgrading the townships in an attempt to eliminate some of the causes of resistance.

The numerous civic associations, which sprang up in townships near all the major cities and many rural towns and villages during the 1980s, emerged in response to a variety of different factors. Some were developed to oppose the various government-sponsored local government systems. Others were stimulated by the virtual collapse of the town council system during the mid-1980s. Many emerged and expanded in the context of popular struggles around local issues, such as increases in rent and transport costs, resistance to state repression and forced removals, and squatter struggles. A number

found their origin in campaigns around local issues combined with national or regional campaigns. State repression during the various emergencies resulted in the emergence of a number of civics and the expansion of the support base of many existing ones. Finally, civic associations emerged as a result of the conscious organisational efforts of activists.

In many areas, civic organisations and other community organisations emerged prior to the formation of the UDF and provided the Front's initial support base. In some areas popular mobilisation and organisation emerged in response to local, regional, or national political initiatives of the UDF. In others, the emergence and organisation of resistance were locally-inspired. Some civics affiliated to the UDF only after they had emerged within their particular local sites of struggle. Finally, strong grass-roots organisations emerged without affiliating to any of the major political organisations, including the UDF.¹

Between 1979 and mid-1984 a number of civic organisations emerged in response to struggles against rent and bus fare increases, evictions, influx control, the housing shortage, inadequate township infrastructure, and corrupt or unaccountable local township councillors.² These organisations were generally small (with the exception of PEBCO between 1979 and 1980). By the end of 1983, those formed at the beginning of the period had moved into decline and relative insignificance while others formed during 1982-3 expanded their support base after the formation of the UDF. From 1985 onward the situation changed when the former group of civics underwent a

¹ See Keenan, J. (1988); "Counter-revolution as reform: Struggle in the Bantustans", in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds.); Popular struggles in South Africa, (New Jersey, Africa World Press, Inc.), p.138.

² Seekings, J. (1991); "Township resistance in the 1980s", in Swilling, M., Humphries, R. and Shubane, K. (eds.); Apartheid city in transition, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), p.291.

revival while the latter group went into decline.

The Vaal Triangle uprising in September 1984 transformed township struggles from protest to confrontation, which often took a violent form. Opposition to the new constitutional dispensation and the BLAs provided another impetus to mass mobilisation. Between mid-1984 and the middle of 1986, rent, consumer and school boycotts, as well as mass stayaways intensified township resistance and promoted mass organisation on an unprecedented scale. Township resistance focused on regional and national, rather than local issues, indicating the significance of the existence of national political organisations, particularly the UDF.

In 1985, local activists and UDF organisers stepped up their efforts to establish civic associations in unorganised areas. A number of existing organisations were revived, in particular those in the Eastern Cape. That year also saw the development of the street committee system which was adopted by most existing civics by the end of 1986. In addition, the collapse of the urban councils by mid-1985 created an administrative and political vacuum in the townships. Many civics stepped into this vacuum, performing limited administrative and judicial duties. Furthermore, in certain areas the authorities were forced to enter into negotiations with civics on a wide range of issues.

From mid-1986, severe repression under the state of emergency constrained the activities of all community organisations and a number of civics were destroyed. The declaration of the second state of emergency on June 12, 1986, introduced a sustained crackdown on community organisations and political activists. In 1986 alone, over 20,000 people, mostly members of the UDF, were detained. This was followed by a number of criminal and political trials. The banning of meetings, curfews, door-to-door searches and the occupation of townships by the security forces curtailed the activities of most

civic associations and resulted in the destruction of people's power.

During 1987, the government embarked on a programme to upgrade the townships in an attempt to revive local authorities and to win the hearts and minds of township residents. According to Boraïne³, the attempts "to improve some of the material conditions under which oppressed people live is a direct response to the nationwide popular uprising" of the previous years. In addition, it was part of the government's "Total Strategy" - using economic reforms to win the population over. At the centre of this aspect of government strategy were the JMCs.⁴

Programmes for "urban renewal" were introduced in selected townships identified as "oilspots" or "strategic bases" from which the security forces believed they could "regain control" over the African population.⁵ Control could then be extended to other parts of the country by expanding the programme to include other townships. Underlying this programme was a policy of "eliminating" activists and crushing community organisations.⁶ JMCs were made responsible for the redevelopment of urban townships and the revival of town councils.⁷

State repression and township redevelopment from mid-1986 paralysed the majority of civic associations and civics were increasingly marginalised in

³ Boraïne,A. (1989); "Security management upgrading in the Black townships", in Transformation, (8), p.48.

⁴ Refer to Chapter 2, p.70 above for an analysis of the NSMS.

⁵ Boraïne,A. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁷ Jochelson,K. (1990); "Reform, repression and resistance in South Africa: A case study of Alexandra township, 1979-1989", in Journal of Southern African Studies, (Vol.16, No.1, March), p.22.

township politics as local administrations refused to negotiate with them. The removal of experienced leaders and constant harassment of communities by the security forces curtailed the activities of most civic associations in 1987. By the end of the year, most civics were led by inexperienced leaders who lacked political and organisational skills.

In broad terms, civic associations have been identified as alternative organs of people's power. For example, Sisa Majola described civic associations in the following terms:

The true antithesis to the community councils and the bantustan administrations are the people's communes that are already springing up out of the mass uprising. ... Between the period of apartheid rule and the creation of a people's republic in South Africa, there lies the period of bitter struggle between the oppressor and the people, which will be won in each area by the destruction of the enemy's organs of administration and the setting up of revolutionary people's communes in every victorious district. ... The creation of people's communes will achieve for our people the immediate tactical advantage of consolidating our achievements, and will also provide a practical school for our people in the long-term strategic objective of building a democratic people's state.⁸

However, a closer look at these organisations indicates a wide diversity in their nature and role. Factors such as regional location, resistance history and the availability of skilled leadership, the existence of well-organised, community-based organisations, relationship with other progressive organisations, and relationship with other local black political organisations were responsible for different levels of development. Some civic associations were led by a small elite (the SCA during the early 1980s), while others were more broadly based (PEBCO during 1979-1980). A number consisted of a small band of activists (SCA), while others included the vast majority of township residents (CRADORA and DVRA). Some civic associations had branches in more than one township (PEBCO, JORAC, CAHAC and NOTPECO), while others had branches in one township only (the AAC, MCA,

⁸ Majola, S. (1986); "The beginnings of people's power: Discussion of the theory of state and revolution in South Africa", in *The African Communist*, (No.106, Third Quarter), p.57. This was part of a wider debate on the nature and role of these organisations.

UBCO, DVRA and CRADORA).

These factors contributed to the diversity in structure found among the civic associations which affiliated to the UDF. Some had committees at the street, block, area, branch, and organisation level. Smaller civic associations found such a structure unnecessary or were unable to create them. Differences were also evident in the linkages between the leadership and membership with some maintaining links through the use of pamphlets and infrequent mass meetings while others held regular branch meetings with their constituencies.

From mid-1985 the commitment to direct democracy took root in many townships. This resulted in the utilisation of the street committee system by many civics. By early 1986 these rudimentary organs of "peoples' power" had taken root in townships in the Eastern Cape and the PWV area. In May 1987, Murphy Morobe, acting publicity secretary of the UDF, spelt out the organisation's view of democracy.⁹

The "rudimentary organs of people's power" - such as street committees, shop-steward structures, parent, teacher and student associations - were the beginnings of the kind of democracy for which the UDF was striving. The street committees... comprised an executive of 10 to 12 people elected by all the people on a street. These sent representatives to area committees who in turn chose a township civic executive which was ratified in a rally.

The tasks of such structures included political representation; the communication of ideas from mass base to leadership and vice versa; debate over the tactics and strategies of stayaways, rent and consumer boycotts; the resolving of social disputes through people's courts, while actively opposing "kangaroo" justice; and intervention in the running of the townships through building parks, clearing rubble, fighting crime, and "even collecting rent to build new houses and facilities for township residents". ...the UDF's idea of democracy was evolved and practised by people in the face of enormous repression. It grew from the grass-roots organisations in the townships.¹⁰

⁹ Murphy Morobe became acting publicity secretary of the UDF after the arrest of Patrick Lekota in 1986.

¹⁰ Sunday Tribune, May 1987.

The formation of local-level grassroots organisations marked an important departure in resistance politics. In the past, the "national" or "regional" areas were arenas in which organisations sought to establish themselves. However, these areas "are fairly dispersed and therefore stretch the resources any organisation may possess".¹¹ Seekings pointed out that "national and regional organisation should be constructed from strong grassroots organisation". The street and area committees which arose in the process of struggle provided this base.¹² Street and area committees also helped to bridge the generation gap, a serious problem which became evident during campaigns in the first half of the 1980s. According to Swilling:

Significantly, street and area committees have helped activists bring the militant youths under control, by dividing youth squads into smaller more disciplined units attachable to a street or area committee....¹³

In addition, since membership included workers, women and youth, they provided an organisational link between specific local organisations of these groups. Street and area committees also proved reasonably effective in countering state repression. "Tight local-level organisation has helped to lessen the damaging effect which detention, disappearance or death of leaders might otherwise have had".¹⁴ These new structures also "constituted a challenge to the authority of the local state because they enhanced the authority of the radical extra-state opposition".¹⁵ The total collapse of the local authorities

¹¹ Shubane,K. (1989); "Change at the local level", in Fourie,S. (ed.); Strategies for change, (Cape Town, IDASA), p.51.

¹² Seekings,J. (1986); "Workers and the politics of consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, June), p.23.

¹³ Swilling,M. (1988); "The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt", in Cobbett,W. and Cohen,R. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.104.

¹⁴ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁵ Chaskalson,M. and Seekings,J. (1988); "The Challenge: From protest to people's power", in Howe,G. (ed.); Political Conflict in South Africa, (Durban, Indicator SA Issue Focus), pp.43-4.

in 1985 provided an opportunity to establish people's power in the townships.¹⁶ Beginning in the Eastern Cape townships of Cradock and Uitenhage in 1985, and spreading to the PWV townships and other parts of the country thereafter, townships became "liberated zones" in which no civil authority existed.

Figure 1 below provides an example of a street committee structure. In the hypothetical example given, each street committee represents 40 households. Block committees are made up of two representatives from each of the ten street committees in the block. At the apex of the structure is the five member township Executive Committee elected from among four representatives of each of the four block committees in the township and ratified at a mass rally. Figure 2 below sets out in schematic form the structure of the Alexandra Action Committee.¹⁷ Table 3 below provides an outline of the street committees of some of the civic associations under review.

¹⁶ Majola, S. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.57.

¹⁷ Mufson, S. (1990); Fighting years: Black resistance and the struggle for a new South Africa, (Boston, Beacon Press), p.127 and Jochelson, K. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.7.

Figure 1: Street Committee Structure

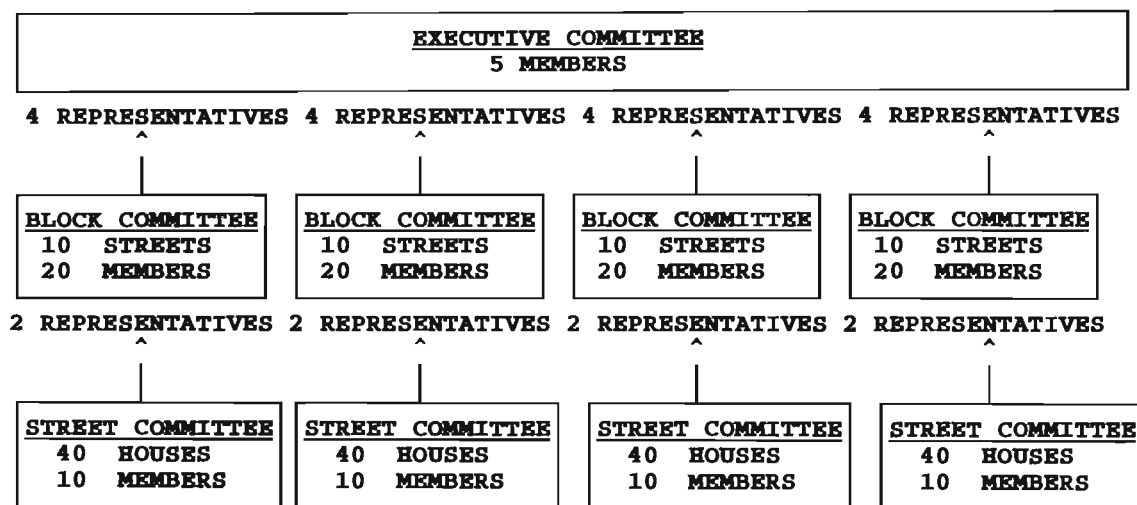


Figure 2: Proposed Structure of the Alexandria Action Committee (AAC)

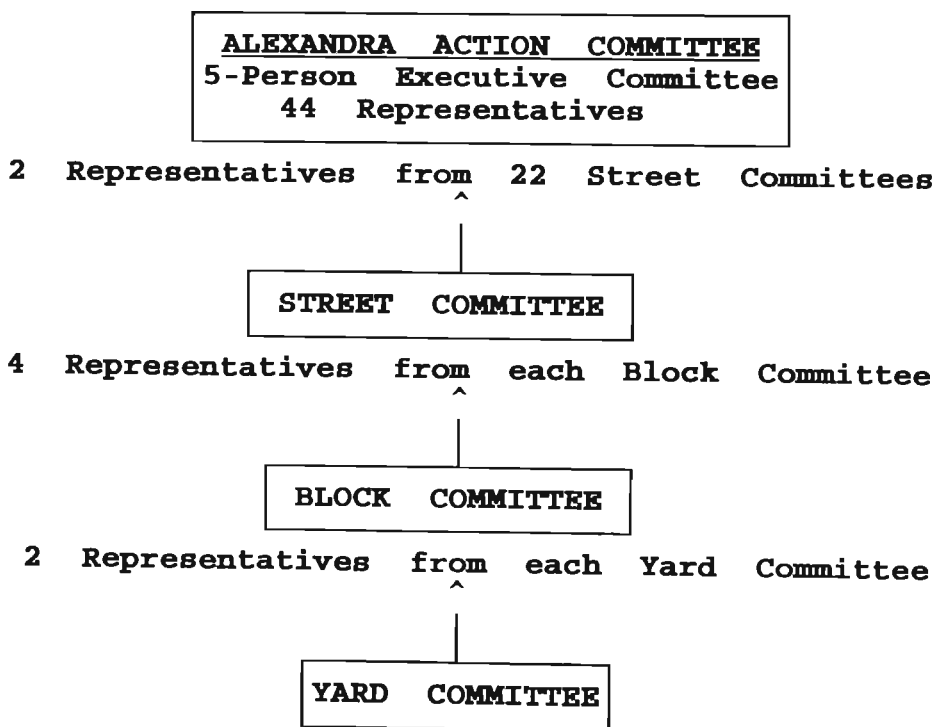


Table 3: Street Committee Structure of Civic Associations under review

Civic	Street Committee Structure
SCA	The SCA formed street committees of between 20 and 40 households. Each street elected leaders (consisting of four parents - two men and two women - and two youths - one student, and one working or unemployed) which were represented in a block committee consisting of six or eight adjoining streets. The block committees in turn elected the next tier of leaders to their township "branch". Each of Soweto's 26 townships had a branch and the branches between them elected the fourth tier, which was the "interbranch". The inter-branch, consisting of two members from each of the 26 townships, was accountable to the executive committee of the SCA.(1)
MCA	The basic units of organisation were the street and hostel committees. The executives of street committees came together to form a section committee and the section committees and five delegates of all other progressive organisations operating in the township together formed an area committee. Each of the sections elected two representatives to sit on the central committee, which had seventy members. This committee met every fortnight and represented Mamelodi's top decision making forum. Ten central committee members, and four representatives elected by the Mamelodi Youth Organisation, the student committee, the Zakheni Women's Organisation and the newly formed Mamelodi Teachers Union (MATU), formed the executive.(2)
UBCO	UBCO had an Executive Committee of 12 members from the Langa and KwaNobuhle townships. Represented on the Executive Committee were the trade unions, the Uitenhage Youth Congress, Uitenhage Women's Organisation, Uitenhage Students' Committee, Uitenhage Parents' Committee, Uitenhage Traders' Association, the Consumer Boycott Committee, the Langa Advisory Committee and the Langa Coordinating Committee. In Langa the street committees consisted of between four and ten members which sent representatives to one of five area committees consisting of 10 members. The area committees sent three representatives each to the Langa Advisory Committee, which consisted of these 15 representatives plus 10 other members. The Langa Co-ordinating Committee had 12 representatives: four clergymen, 3 Uitenhage Youth Congress representatives, 3 trade union representatives and 2 area committee representatives.(3)
DVRA	The DVRA consisted of nine branches, each divided into area and street committees. Two representatives from each branch committee sat on the General Council (GC), along with two or three people from the Central Executive Committee, 21 people altogether. The nine-member CEC was elected at a mass meeting. Local youth, student and trade union organisations existed independently of the DVRA.(4)
CRADORA	Cradock's single township was divided into seven zones. Within each of these zones, forty young activists were assigned the task of mobilising people to attend public meetings to elect zonal representatives. The zones were sub-divided into streets with representatives from each street sitting on street committees. The committees fell under the residents' association.(5)

Sources: (1) 'The rocky rise of people's power', in *Frontline*, (December 1986), p.13.

(2) 'Mamelodi: Back to the roots', in *SASPU National*, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec 1986), p.13.

(3) Watson,V.; 'Towards new forms of local government in a future South Africa', in Heymens,C. and Totemeyer,G. (eds.); *Government by the People: The politics of local government in South Africa*, (Kenwyn, Juta), Figure 7, p.173.

- (4) 'Building from the bottom up', in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec 1986), p.15.
 (5) 'Street-style democracy', in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec, 1986), p.13.

The strategies employed by the various civic associations in their campaigns also took a number of different forms. They included marches, demonstrations, transport, rent, and consumer boycotts, and mass stayaways from work.¹⁸ The civic associations also played a leading role in providing political direction at the local level. The rent boycott, which began in the Vaal Triangle at the end of 1984, was initiated by a UDF affiliate and taken up by UDF affiliates in other parts of the country. In the process, the rent boycott was transformed from a tactic to oppose rent increases to a strategy to challenge the government. Consumer boycotts were introduced in the Eastern Cape townships by UDF affiliates and were soon taken up in other parts of the country by other affiliates. Activists soon realised the potential uses of the consumer boycott and began to link local demands with national political demands.

Civic associations played a central role in co-ordinating these struggles. They spearheaded township struggles around issues such as increasing rent and service charges, increases in bus-fares and food prices, etc. Such struggles facilitated the growth of civic associations in townships which were previously insulated from political activity, while existing associations were often at the centre of mobilisation of the campaigns. In addition, civic associations often formed the foundation of many regional and national political campaigns.

A significant tactical change began to emerge during the second half of the 1980s particularly in the Eastern Cape townships (in Uitenhage, Port Alfred and Cradock) and Tumahole (near Parys). Civic associations engaged in negotiations either with the local development board or with businessmen and

¹⁸ Refer to Chapter 3, pp.100-105 and chapter 4, pp.157-8 above.

white municipalities on administering or upgrading the townships.

By the middle of the 1980s most civic organisations had a broad mandate from their constituencies. This mandate came to include opposition to all forms of apartheid oppression and exploitation which township residents were experiencing. From 1984 civic associations increasingly recognised and asserted a political role in their campaigns. Civics began to link local concerns with demands for the resignation of town councillors, the release of detainees and political prisoners, the withdrawal of the army/police from townships, and the unbanning of political organisations. This represented the transformation of the particular demands of township residents into a universalistic challenge of the dominant system.

A number of major weaknesses and deficiencies were evident in the practices of civic associations. Firstly, the exclusive use of pamphlets and infrequent mass rallies by some civics resulted in weak links between the leadership and rank-and-file members and limited the opportunities for mass participation in decision-making. Secondly, many campaigns which included the widespread use of intimidation, more particularly the consumer boycotts in the Eastern Cape and the "people's courts", led to a drop of community support for the campaigns as well as for the specific civic association concerned.¹⁹

The civic associations were also affected by their relationship with regional and national structures of the UDF. Many organisers and leaders of civic associations were drawn into national campaigns and national and regional structures at the expense of local organisations. For example, JORAC and CAHAC "were once extremely successful at the local level, but their influence declined sharply as their leaders were drawn into national

¹⁹ Seekings, J. (1986); "Workers and the politics of consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, June), pp.25-6.

campaigns and were encouraged by UDF leaders to ignore local issues".²⁰

State repression was perhaps the most significant factor which adversely affected the structure, membership and practices of the civic associations. During the country-wide revolt which emerged in the wake of the Vaal Triangle uprising in 1984, communities in many parts of the country responded to state repression by forming youth congresses and mass-based organisations. In towns and villages previously insulated from political activity, youth groups rapidly sprang up to defend their communities against state repression. These youth organisations played a central role in the formation of structures such as street committees and civic organisations.

From mid-1986, severe repression under the state of emergency constrained the activities of all community organisations and a number of civics were destroyed. Experienced leaders were replaced by leaders without organisational and political skills, resulting in a transformation of the practices and activities of civic associations. Under these conditions, militant youths, operating without organisational control, engaged in violent clashes with the security forces, provoking an intensification of repression.

In general, civic associations played a significant role in local, regional and national structures of the UDF. A number of members of civic associations were drawn into regional and national structures. In 1985, twenty civic leaders were included among the 62 UDF leaders on six regional UDF executives. Civic leaders on the first national executive committee of the Front included Moss Chikane, Popo Molefe, Frank Chikane, Virgil Bonhomme, Trevor Manuel and the Rev. Xundu. This is significant because it gave certain civics a direct link with regional and national UDF structures.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

In addition, with the exception of COSAS and youth congresses, civics were dominant in terms of membership and number within the Front. They were thus strongly represented at Regional and National General Councils, as well as in local level structures, e.g. area committees. This gave civics a powerful voice in the highest regional and national decision-making organs of the UDF.

Fifty-seven civic associations were represented at the inaugural conference of the UDF in August 1983: 29 from the Transvaal; two from the Western Cape (CAHAC with 21 affiliates and the Western Cape Civic Association representing six township zones); 24 from Natal; and two from the Eastern Cape.²¹ During the second half of the 1980s, the number of civic associations affiliated to the UDF approached 200.

The following is an analysis of 10 civic associations in six UDF regions. These are, the Soweto Civic Association (SCA), the Alexandra Action Committee (AAC), the Mamelodi Civic Association (MCA), the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO), the Uitenhage Black Civic Organisation (UBCO), the Duncan Village Residents' Association (DVRA), the Cradock Residents' Association (CRADORA), the Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC), the Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC), and the Northern Transvaal People's Congress (NOTPECO).

The focus is on the formation, structures and membership, aims and objectives and activities of these organisations during the period under review. The primary aim is to illustrate the effect of conditions under which civics were organised, the factors motivating the formation of civics, their relationship with the community, their relationship with structures of the UDF, their responses to, and the effects on them, of the emergencies, and transform-

²¹ Refer to Appendix A below.

ations in their strategies, aims and structure during the period under review. The emphasis here is on the role these organisations played in promoting mass mobilisation and in raising the revolutionary consciousness of the masses.

The civics reviewed in this study have been chosen because they provide an illustration of the three broad periods in the emergence and development of civic associations. The SCA, PEBCO, JORAC, CAHAC and UBCO are examples of organisations which emerged during the first period and were transformed by popular struggles and state reaction during the subsequent periods. The DVRA, Cradora, the AAC and the MCA were established in the context of popular struggles during the period 1984-1986. These four civic organisations are examples of the establishment of "people's power" and state reaction to this phenomenon. Finally, NOTPECO illustrates the emergence of community organisations in the rural areas.

8.3. The Transvaal

8.3.1. Soweto Civic Association (SCA)

The first of the modern civic associations was formed in Soweto, a city 18 kilometres outside Johannesburg.²² Soweto's political significance originated in the 1976 student-initiated revolt against Bantu Education. Most of the political activities in the immediate aftermath of the uprising were initiated by the Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC).

In 1977, a successful rent boycott initiated by the SSRC against a rent increase imposed by the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) led to the resignation of most of Soweto's Urban Bantu Councillors. Immediately after the resignation of the councillors a suggestion was made by the Soweto

²² Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Soweto and to Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of the SCA.

branch of the Black People's Convention that "prominent people in Soweto" should establish a civic body to run the affairs of the area. This would be a properly representative organisation reflecting popular aspirations in the townships. At a meeting held on 26 June, 1977, at the offices of the World newspaper, attended by 61 Soweto notables, a Committee of Ten (COT) was elected. The official name of the COT was the Soweto Local Authority Interim Committee, and its aim was to study and formulate recommendations for the running of civic affairs in Soweto.²³

The COT comprised prominent members of Soweto's middle class with links to the BCM. Its chairman was Dr Nthato Motlana, a former ANC Youth League activist. The immediate objective of the COT was to formulate a model of local government in opposition to the government-sponsored local authorities. Its recommendations included, among other things, the creation of an autonomous city with a council of 50 elected members. This council would have a budget of R5 million to modernise the city over a five year period, to be financed by local taxation and an extensive subsidy from central government. The Committee proposed to negotiate directly with the government once the plan had been given public sanction through mass meetings.²⁴

During the first two years of its existence the COT was an undemocratic and elitist body. The Committee maintained links with the community through the liberal English press and commemorative rallies often held at Regina

²³ See Gastrow, S. (1987); Who's Who in South African Politics, Number 2, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.209; Lodge, T. (1983); Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, (London and New York, Longman), p.353; Davies, R., O'Meara, D. and Dlamini, S. (1988); The struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, Vol.2, New Edition, (London and New Jersey, Zed Books), pp.356-7.

²⁴ Gastrow, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.210; Davies, R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.357 and Lodge, T. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.354.

Mundi Cathedral. According to Lodge, it took the COT "a long time to start building a political organisation which would allow their local constituency to participate in their decisions rather than merely ratifying them at public meetings".²⁵

Towards the end of 1979, the Soweto Committee of Ten took steps to expand its popular base. In September 1979 the Committee arranged a conference with the theme, "Soweto - An Introspection", to deal with Soweto's problems and also to expand the Committee's activities. The Soweto Civic Association (SCA) was formed at this conference, with the Committee of Ten acting as an interim executive until elections could be held. The civic association immediately set out to build branches and by mid-1980 it had established 33 branches.

Structurally, the constitution allowed for an executive committee, an inter-branch and local branches. The inter-branch, consisting of two representatives from each branch and the executive committee of the SCA, met at least once a month. A minimum of 15 people could form a branch with its own five-member executive committee. The supreme decision-making body of the association was the Annual General Meeting which comprised the executive committee and ten delegates from each branch, as well as observers from local branches and invited observers.

The Interim Committee immediately began to seek links with community organisations in other regions. In November 1979 it proposed to PEBCO that a national co-ordinating body of community organisations be set up. The PEBCO leadership felt, however, that much more grassroots organisation was

²⁵ Lodge, T. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.355.

necessary before such a move could be contemplated.²⁶

The SCA had the following aims and objectives: to build an organisation that is non-racial and democratic in principle; to encourage civic, social, economic, educational, sporting, cultural, and other related activities in the interests of the community; to strive for democratic decision-making and participation at all levels; to strive towards the improvement of the living conditions of the people; to act on behalf of, and to represent, the people of Soweto; to co-operate with any organisation/committee and/or group with similar aims and objectives; and to oppose local government institutions that are not representative of the people. The civic aimed to draw people into the organisation by getting involved in popular struggles around issues like high rents and service charges, the unpopular community councils, and fighting for the recognition of Sowetans as permanent South African residents.²⁷

From the outset the SCA was strongly Black Consciousness (BC) in political orientation. However, according to Lodge, the leadership embraced and reflected a wide range of political opinion. It included a centre ground which advocated the Freedom Charter and called for a national convention; on the right V.L. Kraai of the Soweto Traders' Association and Dr Motlana promoted the cause of black capitalism; while on the left George Wauchope espoused the socialism of AZAPO.²⁸

The SCA spurned any negotiations with WRAB, opting instead to negotiate directly with the government once its demands had been met. However, the

²⁶ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.357-8.

²⁷ Shubane,K. et.al. (1991); "Soweto", in Lodge,T. and Nasson,B. (eds.); All, Here, and Now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s, South Africa Update Series, (Cape Town, David Philip), p.262.

²⁸ Lodge,T. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.355.

leadership rejected negotiating with the government to discuss community councils unless the councils were totally autonomous, freehold tenure was introduced and a large grant was made for Soweto's advancement.²⁹ The SCA also rejected participation in any government-sponsored institutions.

In 1979 the Soweto Community Council announced a 100 percent rent increase, to be implemented in three stages between September 1979 and August 1980. The SCA called for a rent boycott which was followed by a stayaway from work and mass demonstrations.³⁰ The rent boycott, which gained the support of only five per cent of Soweto's households, succeeded in delaying the implementation of the increase for over a year. Nonetheless, the rent boycott, which required a strong organisational structure and an active membership, demonstrated the inability of the SCA to sustain campaigns which involved "bread-and-butter" issues. This became more apparent towards the end of 1980 when the organisation appeared to have lost its momentum.³¹ The SCA resorted to the courts in response to the implementation of rent increases in 1980. The failure of the court case to prevent the implementation of the increases weakened the SCA's leadership position in the townships.

The leadership of the SCA realised that the organisation required a change in strategy. According to Brewer:

The ineffectiveness of the SCA in the struggle for leadership in Soweto impressed upon Black Consciousness organisations the need to change strategy. In short, it was realised that Black Consciousness organisations needed to engender a broader power-base, specifically to develop a constituency among African trade unionists, to produce more pressure on the government than peaceful non-participation creates, and, accordingly, to develop new strategies which allowed some consultation with Whites to benefit from the

²⁹ Gastrow, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.211.

³⁰ Lodge, T. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.355.

³¹ *Loc.cit.*

increased pressure.³²

One step the SCA took to expand its organisational base arose before the Black Local Authorities elections held in November and December 1983. The SCA took a leading role in forming an Anti-Community Councils Election Committee, which held meetings and rallies calling for a boycott of the elections.³³ This committee, which was composed of student, youth, women's and labour organisations, gave the SCA access to a wide range of individuals and groups.³⁴

The SCA was also represented at the launching conference of the Transvaal UDF on 21 May 1983. Three members of the SCA were elected to the Regional Executive Committee on 6 August, 1983.³⁵ However, opposition to the Charterist position by certain members of the executive prevented the SCA from affiliating until October 1984, more than a year after the UDF was formed.

The SCA was able to have its first general meeting in December 1984 at which a new executive committee of eight was elected. The new executive included the Rev. Frank Chikane, vice president of the Transvaal UDF, Isaac Mogase, former member of the ANC Youth League and founding member of the SCA, and Patrick Lephunya, a former office bearer of COSAS and administrative secretary of the Transvaal UDF. The new executive demonstrated increasing support for Charterists after the SCA affiliated to the UDF

³² Brewer, J.D. (1987); After Soweto: An unfinished journey, (Oxford, The Clarendon Press), p.252.

³³ Gastrow, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.211.

³⁴ Shubane, K. et.al. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.264.

³⁵ Seekings, J. (1990); "The United Democratic Front: Its formation, structures, and impact on township politics in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Region, 1983-84", Southern African Seminar, in Work in Progress, (October), p.81.

in October, marking a shift in the balance of social forces towards the UDF.

No elections were held in 1985 and 1986 because meetings were banned and many of the organisation's members detained.³⁶ During the height of the township revolt in 1984 and 1985 Soweto remained relatively inactive. According to Shubane³⁷, Soweto failed to participate in the country-wide revolt because of the withdrawal of Soweto's best organisers and leaders away from the townships and into the UDF's national and regional structures; the absence of well-organised, community-based organisations that characterised many smaller townships which participated in the revolt; the growth of Soweto's middle class containing sections which opposed radical actions and the absence of radical trade unions; and internecine struggles between different organisations which led to a mis-direction of political activity.

The total membership of the SCA in 1984 was 177.³⁸ In 1985, however, Soweto, and in particular the SCA, experienced a "political renaissance". This was brought about by the declaration of the first state of emergency in July 1985 which included Soweto in its list of "affected areas". Under emergency conditions activists could no longer use mass rallies, meetings, and other overt forms of mobilisation. "The focus shifted to building street committees, a process that started slowly in some Soweto townships in 1985 but gained momentum in 1986".³⁹ A new leadership style emerged which was opposed to the elitist methods which characterised the SCA up to 1985. The stress

³⁶ "The rocky rise of people's power: street committees", in *Frontline*, (December 1986), p.15, and Gastrow, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.211.

³⁷ Shubane, K. et.al. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.264-6.

³⁸ "Branch update", in *Civic*, Newsletter of the Soweto Civic Association, Issue on the Annual General Meeting, 1 December 1984, p.10.

³⁹ Shubane, K. et.al. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.267-8. Refer to Table 3 above.

was placed on grassroots organisation and mass participation.⁴⁰

This remarkable rise in the SCA's organisational capacity was reinforced by a boycott of rent and service charges called for by the organisation on the 1 June, 1986. The street committees played a fundamental role in monitoring the progress of this popular campaign and in mobilising actions against evictions. This led to a rapid growth of the street committee system in Soweto and expanded the support base of the SCA.⁴¹ In addition, 22 Soweto town councillors fled the township in 1986 after their lives had been threatened and some of their houses burnt down resulting in a breakdown of local administration.⁴²

By the end of June, 1986, 80 percent of Soweto residents had stopped paying rent. The government tried to break the boycott: it urged people to pay secretly by mail; shut off the electricity of boycotters and; once these efforts proved futile, began evicting residents in August. In its call for the rent boycott the SCA demanded the resignation of all councillors; the ending of rent payments by pensioners; refuse collection and repair of sewerage pipes on a regular basis; the erection of street lights in the townships; and the withdrawal of soldiers from townships.⁴³ In late June 1986, the association added a number of political demands: the lifting of the state of emergency; the release of all detainees and imprisoned unionists; and the

⁴⁰ Swilling, M. and Shubane, K. (1991); "Negotiating urban transition: The Soweto experience", in Lee, R. and Schlemmer, L. (eds.); Transition to democracy: Policy perspectives 1991, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press), pp.234-7.

⁴¹ Shubane, K. et al. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.268-270.

⁴² The Cape Times, (16.2.87), p.2.

⁴³ Document: "We Won't Pay Rent From 1 June", Issued by the Soweto Civic Association, printed by Globe, n.d. Cited by Swilling, M. and Shubane, K. (1990); "Negotiating urban transition: The Soweto experience", *op.cit.*, p.233.

unbanning of organisations.⁴⁴

The inclusion of these political demands is significant because they presented a challenge to the dominant apartheid system. The initial focus on economic and other local issues were linked to demands which posed a challenge to the authority of the apartheid regime. It signified the transformation of particular demands into a political challenge of the dominant system.

In 1986, however, the SCA suffered a number of setbacks as the government clamped down on organisations in Soweto. On June 16 a number of members of the executive committee of the SCA were caught at a roadblock, bringing to seven the number of leaders in detention. The lack of leadership in Soweto led to confusion and chaos. Street committees floundered in the absence of community leaders, while the youth began to take over the meetings.⁴⁵ In addition, Soweto residents claimed that the security forces were targeting political activists following a number of attacks on activists and their homes.⁴⁶ Violent clashes between UDF-affiliated organisations and Black Consciousness groups aggravated the situation.

Under these conditions, the SCA endorsed a resolution taken by residents to form "people's militias" or self-defence units, stating that the situation "we are being forced into" may lead the organisation to review "our commitment to non-violent struggle".⁴⁷ The youth organisations and the SCA divided

⁴⁴ Document; "Asinimali Asibadali", n.d. Cited by Swilling, M. and Shubane, K. (1990); "Negotiating urban transition", *op.cit.*, p.233.

⁴⁵ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.265.

⁴⁶ The Weekly Mail, (2.5.86 - 8.5.86), p.5.

⁴⁷ *Loc.cit.*

Soweto into eight areas, each designated by an acronym.⁴⁸ In each of these areas street committees were set up which usually consisted of four parents (two men and two women) and two youths (one schooling, and one working or unemployed).

An in-depth survey of attitudes to the rent boycott in Soweto conducted by Philip Frankel provides insight into the SCA's support in the townships.⁴⁹ Frankel's survey indicates a high degree of political mobilisation in Soweto in 1987. 43,1 percent of respondents said there were street committees in their streets. 45,2 percent of those who had street committees in their streets participated in committee meetings. In addition, not one respondent was opposed to the SCA, although 79,2 percent said that they had not attended meetings of the civic. 43,1 percent of the respondents actively supported the SCA.

The rent boycott continued into the following year and the council persisted with the evictions. In response, the street and block committees called for a one-day stayaway in April 1987 and another two-day stayaway on 5 and 6 May.⁵⁰ The rent boycott also placed some pressure on the SCA to transform its tactics. The SCA used the law to challenge the eviction of rent defaulters - at least five legal actions were launched in 1986 and 1987.⁵¹ The evictions and power cuts prompted by the boycott exacted a toll on residents, and, by the beginning of 1987, the SCA faced pressure from its

⁴⁸ The Sowetan, (11.9.86), p.4.

⁴⁹ Frankel,P. (1987); Socio-economic conditions, rent boycotts, and the local government crisis: A Soweto field study, (Johannesburg, Department of Social Studies, University of the Witwatersrand). Cited in Swilling,M. and Shubane,K. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.233-4.

⁵⁰ Mufson,S. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.413-5; The Sunday Star, (22.3.87), p.2.

⁵¹ Hendler,P. (1988); Urban Policy and Housing: Case studies on negotiation in PWV townships, (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations), p.16.

constituents to settle it.⁵² This led to tentative negotiations between the SCA and the local town clerk, Mr Nico Malan.

In May negotiations were held between the council and SCA lawyers who were challenging the confiscation of the possessions of tenants who had been evicted.⁵³ However, the SCA held that it would only negotiate with the town clerk on the issue of the rent boycott. It was argued that councillors were representatives of "discredited" local authorities, while the town clerk was an official government representative. Negotiations broke down because of Malan's insistence that the SCA negotiate with the Soweto Town Council, which he saw as "the only official platform" for residents of Soweto.⁵⁴ The SCA, on the other hand, rejected talks with the council as a matter of principle and because it felt that the council was powerless to solve the problems faced by Soweto residents.⁵⁵ By the end of 1987 the majority of Soweto residents were still withholding rent while the council continued evicting rent defaulters.

8.3.2. Alexandra Action Committee (AAC)

At the end of 1985, three organisations dominated politics in Alexandra township⁵⁶: the Alexandra Residents' Association (ARA), the Alexandra Civic Association (ACA), and the Alexandra Youth Congress (AYCO). ARA was formed to criticise and delay the implementation of a redevelopment scheme

⁵² Friedman, S. (1991); "Soweto: Managing the transition?", in Politikon, (Vol.18, No.1, January), p.101.

⁵³ Hendler, P. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.16.

⁵⁴ The Sowetan, (16.4.87), p.2.

⁵⁵ Hendler, P. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.16-23.

⁵⁶ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Alexandra township and Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of the AAC.

introduced by the government in 1979. Alexandra was to be "replanned for the accommodation of landowners and other families" and a masterplan to upgrade the township was unveiled in 1980.⁵⁷ ACA grew out of an opposition party which had contested and lost the 1981 council elections. It then decided against participating in the election, believing this would lend credibility to government structures and affiliated to the UDF in 1983.⁵⁸

ARA saw itself as the representative of working class interests and emphasised the role of the activist as facilitator rather than "line-giver", and careful, slow, house-by-house organisation.⁵⁹ By contrast, AYCO and ACA were inclined to rely on pamphlets and press statements rather than slow grassroots organisation. AYCO tended to emphasise nationally co-ordinated political campaigns and underplayed local grievances.⁶⁰ ARA, by contrast, focused on local issues such as opposition to the development scheme and rent increases.

ARA's domination of opposition politics in Alexandra was eroded in late 1985 when AYCO became a significant actor in township politics. AYCO began organising and educating its youth constituency by holding weekly discussions on the education crisis, township social problems, apartheid and capitalism, and organising youth street-by-street. The youth congress also charged its membership with the responsibility for conscientising their parents. However, before it could implement its programme, AYCO suffered a blow during the

⁵⁷ Jochelson, K. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.2-3.

⁵⁸ Interview with Mike Beea, Chairman of Alexandra Civic Association, 20 July 1987. See Jochelson, K. (1990); *ibid.*, p.4n.

⁵⁹ Jochelson, K. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.4.

⁶⁰ *Loc.cit.*

1985 state of emergency when the entire executive was detained.⁶¹

An unruly element took over political activity as more and more experienced activists were removed through further detentions. Youth leaders who were released from detention in December attempted to reassert control and channel political activity in a positive direction by forming groups for each of the four sections into which they had divided Alexandra. These groups, they believed, could promote grassroots rather than centralised organisation.⁶²

Between December 1985 and February 1986, activists in the township held a series of meetings leading to the formation of the AAC. On the 17 February, an acting executive was elected with Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union, as chairman. The acting executive was mandated to:

1. organise the community into yard, block and street committees;
2. help the people to solve their own community problems;
3. represent the community to other organisations and the authorities;
4. unite people regardless of their race, colour, belief, creed or tribe.⁶³

Mayekiso's trade union background had a strong influence on practices within the AAC.⁶⁴ Officials and representatives had to be accountable to the membership and were obliged to obtain a mandate from members. This was best indicated by the workshops and regular report back meetings held in 1986 where members of yard committees were consulted and kept informed on issues.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁶³ State vs Moses Mayekiso and others. Judgement, pp.44-5. Refer to Table 3 above for the structure of the AAC.

⁶⁴ State vs Moses Mayekiso and others. Judgement, p.37.

Resistance politics in Alexandra was transformed at the beginning of 1986 in what has been termed the "Six Day War" by residents. At a funeral of an unemployed youth, attended by over 11,000 people on 15 February, police fired on the mourners and four people were killed and 27 injured.⁶⁵ Over the following days the youth clashed with the police and army and a virtual civil war raged in the township. Tension in the township mounted when soldiers in armoured personnel carriers swarmed into Alexandra to disperse about 30,000 people marching to the police station on February 18.

A mood of anger set in and over the next few months a radical consciousness took root in the township. Flags of the ANC and SACP were displayed at a funeral for 17 victims of clashes with the security forces on 5 March; calls were made for the formation of street committees as forms of people's government; demands for affordable rent and electrification of the township were linked to political demands such as the dissolution of the council and municipal police, withdrawal of troops and police from the township, and unbanning of the ANC.⁶⁶

During April consumer and rent boycotts were launched in Alexandra as part of a national programme intended to isolate all collaborators socially and effect the collapse of local administration. On 22 April, Alexandra's mayor, Rev. Buti, and three remaining councillors resigned in the wake of petrol-bomb attacks and gutting of their homes, boycotts of their businesses and general ostracism.⁶⁷

The collapse of local administration and diminishing support for ARA placed

⁶⁵ The Star, (17.5.86), p.6.

⁶⁶ Jochelson, K. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.8-9.

⁶⁷ The Star, (17.5.86), p.6; Business Day, (12.5.86), p.6.

the Youth Congress and the Action Committee at the forefront of the township's politics. A day after the councillors resigned residents stayed away from work and students boycotted schools. Leaders called for the establishment of self defence units and claimed that "people's power" had been established. This confident outlook was dashed in mid-May when the security forces cordoned off the township, set up checkpoints at every exit and carried out a house-to-house search.⁶⁸

On 25 May, block representatives met to elect an executive committee to serve the AAC until its inaugural meeting in August. On the same day, the AAC was unanimously elected sole representative of Alexandra during a mass meeting of all organisations in the township. The ARA was unilaterally disbanded while the ACA was dissolved and incorporated into AAC structures. The Youth Congress, it was decided, would continue to organise its constituencies under the auspices of the AAC.⁶⁹

The AAC was primarily concerned with issues which immediately affected the residents of Alexandra. These included unemployment, police harassment, informers, high taxi and bus fares, low wages, high rents, poor education, poor housing, the demolition of shacks by police, the presence of troops in the township, and the "bucket system" of sewerage.⁷⁰

Street committees also operated as "people's courts". At least five of these courts were established in the township. According to Seekings, the courts seem to have begun as advice offices, with residents helping others trace relatives who were missing after the "Six-Day War". These advice offices

⁶⁸ Jochelson, K. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.10.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.10-11.

⁷⁰ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.128.

grew, as people brought a wider range of problems until a number of courts were established, partly in connection with the anti-crime campaigns.⁷¹ The AAC thus performed certain administrative and judicial functions normally reserved for the authorities and residents in the township subsequently declared that they had established "people's power".

The government's response to the establishment of "people's power" in Alexandra was a combination of repression and economic reform. On May 23 the government appointed Steve Burger as township administrator. When Burger assumed this position, control of the township was divided between the security forces and the AAC through its network of street and area committees.

The declaration of another state of emergency in mid-1986, and widespread detentions and the occupation of the township by the security forces crushed popular resistance.⁷² The township was invaded by security forces the night before the emergency was declared and thousands were detained, including the entire AAC leadership. This was followed by 24-hour roadblocks as the SADF cordoned off the township. In addition, numerous residents were charged with public violence, sedition, treason, subversion, arson and murder in an attempt to counter the ideology of "people's power".⁷³ Four members of the executive committee, including Mayekiso, were arrested and subsequently charged with treason.

According to the security forces, "the unrest situation" was contained "as a

⁷¹ Seekings, J. (1989); "People's courts and popular politics", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 5, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.125.

⁷² See Jochelson, K. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.14.

⁷³ *Loc.cit.*

first phase of the rehabilitation process to enable the second phase of urban and social renewal to get under way".⁷⁴ They claimed that:

The entire leadership of the three major revolutionary front organisations in the township...were in detention, or had fled, or in one case, was dead (allegedly murdered by AZAPO supporters).⁷⁵

Most of Alexandra's political activists were in detention, prison or hiding by the end of 1986. In addition, by the beginning of 1987, the rent boycott had virtually disappeared (87,82 percent of residents were paying their rent), along with the school boycott.⁷⁶ However, according to an activist: "Although organisations operate under great pressure, they are carrying on very, very well. They hold meetings underground, nobody knows where or how. They are in fact carrying out the struggle in spite of the difficulties".⁷⁷

Yard committees and people's courts continued to operate, but were "not so effective because of the clampdown". However, according to an activist: "Our support is still strong. People were mobilised and conscientised and the next step was to organise them, to get them into structures. Now we're having to talk to people about the clampdown and how it affects the struggle". In addition, "one difference is that [organisations] are now more vigorous than they were when they were above ground. In my view, the government has taught the people more methods of avoiding the police and still carrying on".⁷⁸

⁷⁴ The Natal Witness, (18.3.87), p.8.

⁷⁵ The Star, (16.3.87), p.11.

⁷⁶ The Natal Witness, (18.3.87), p.8.

⁷⁷ The Weekly Mail, (29.8.86 - 4.9.86), p.10.

⁷⁸ *Loc.cit.*

The second aspect of the government's strategy was a programme, conducted by the Alexandra mini-JMC, to upgrade the township. The service section of the mini-JMC was charged with the task of upgrading the township in order to remove some of the causes of political resistance in the township. Furthermore, the socio-economic and information programmes of the mini-JMC were aimed at legitimising the local authority.⁷⁹ From September, 1986, Alexandra was firmly under the control of the authorities. The urban renewal programme was complemented by a crackdown on the AAC, involving the removal of its leadership and intimidation of its members. Some 40 members of the AAC were still in detention or facing trial for treason at the end of the year. In addition, vigilante attacks on activists increased in frequency from March 1987.⁸⁰

During the period from the declaration of the state of emergency to the end of 1987, the civic was marginalised from township politics by the operations of the security forces, vigilantes and the Alexandra mini-JMC, as well as the immobilisation of the leadership through political trials.

8.3.3. Mamelodi Civic Association (MCA)

On November 21, 1985, 50,000 residents of Mamelodi township near Pretoria⁸¹ marched to protest a ban on weekend funerals, the restriction against more than fifty mourners attending each funeral, high rents, and the presence of troops in the townships. The marchers, who were led by women, were fired on by the police, leading to the death of thirteen people and the injury of hundreds. The outrage over the police actions led to widespread

⁷⁹ Jochelson, K. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.29.

⁸⁰ New Nation, (16.7.87 - 22.7.87), p.1.

⁸¹ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Mamelodi and Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of the MCA.

mobilisation and the emergence of a civic organisation in the township.

Before the events of 1985, the leading mass organisations in Mamelodi were branches of COSAS, the Mamelodi Action Committee, which was formed in the wake of the 1980/81 school boycotts, the Release Mandela Campaign, the Zakheni Women's Organisation (ZWO) and the Mamelodi Youth Organisation (MAYO). All these organisations affiliated to the UDF when the latter was formed in 1983.⁸²

Political mobilisation during 1984 revolved around school boycotts, door-to-door visits during the UDF Million Signature Campaign and the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) anniversary. Political discussion in the area was also stimulated by the decisive rejection of the tri-cameral parliament and the September 3 Vaal uprising, while residents strongly supported the November 1984 regional stayaway and the Black Christmas campaign. During 1985, parents formed the Mamelodi Parents Association (MPA) following a continuing school boycott and clashes with the police.⁸³ In 1985, Mamelodi's town councillors were also subjected to popular pressure to resign and this led to the resignation of three councillors during the year.

Although Mamelodi was not included in the list of "affected areas" during the 1985-86 partial state of emergency, activists spoke of an undeclared state of emergency in the township. The authorities banned meetings while the security forces disrupted mass gatherings. Residents found it impossible to hold meetings, making communication difficult. Under these conditions, unruly elements in the township "hijacked the struggle for their own ends",

⁸² "Mamelodi: Back to the roots", in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec 1986), p.12.

⁸³ *Loc.cit.*

demanding money from businessmen in the name of COSAS.⁸⁴ Local youths and elders met in July 1985 to root out the hooliganism plaguing the township.

After this meeting youth activists in the township, particularly those belonging to COSAS and MAYO, began setting up Disciplinary Committees (DCs). The DCs soon developed into a network of organisations which crisscrossed the whole township. These committees were largely responsible for the campaign to end increasing crime committed in the name of the youth organisations and to provide political education.⁸⁵

The main activists in grassroots organisations were the youth, who dominated the DCs. This position changed on November 21, 1985, when increasing numbers were drawn into community organisations in the wake of increasing opposition to the town council and high rents, and the massacre of protesting residents. Popular resentment was sparked by inexplicable fluctuations in rent and tariff accounts between July and November.⁸⁶

On 17 November 1985, the MPA called a meeting to discuss a number of points of conflict following a stayaway organised by the youth. These included: the fluctuating rent and service tariffs; the SADF's presence in the township; police brutality during the school boycotts; and the banning of funerals for unrest victims. A march to the administration board offices was planned for the 21 November.⁸⁷ The ensuing events intensified outrage in

⁸⁴ The Weekly Mail, (9.5.86 - 15.5.86), p.9.

⁸⁵ "Mamelodi: Back to the roots", *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁸⁶ Jafee,G. (1986); "Beyond the cannon of Mamelodi", in Work in Progress, (No.41, April), p.9.

⁸⁷ Jochelson,K. (1986); "Rent boycotts: Massacre sparks rent boycott", in Work in Progress, (No.44, September-October), p.24.

the community and promoted mass mobilisation.

Heavily armed policemen and soldiers ordered the marching demonstrators to gather at the local stadium if they wanted their grievances to be heard. The chanting crowd prevented Mamelodi's mayor, Bennet Ndlazi, from speaking. Police opened fire on the demonstrators after they ignored an order to disperse.⁸⁸ In the aftermath of the massacre, residents decided to embark on a rent boycott and intensified the process of establishing a civic association in the township. An interim committee of seven people was elected towards the end of the year and the MCA was formally launched in April 1986. Thirty-five section committees, with their respective street committees, were established. Block committees were also developed in the hostels after differences between residents and hostel inmates were settled.⁸⁹

The basic units of organisation were the street and hostel committees. These were represented on the 35 section committees. Each of the sections elected two representatives to sit on the central committee, which had seventy members. This committee met every fortnight and represented Mamelodi's top decision making forum. Ten central committee members, and four representatives elected by MAYO, the Zakheni Women's Organisation and the newly formed Mamelodi Teachers Union (MATU) formed the executive.

Most elected civic members were workers - active shop stewards and members of COSATU affiliates. The MCA drew together organisations of students, youth, women, teachers and representatives of streets and hostels and ensured direct communication between the township and most Pretoria

⁸⁸ Business Day, (22.11.85), p.1.

⁸⁹ "Asikokhe: The call that changed the face of Mamelodi", in SASPU National, (Last Quarter, 1987), p.30.

factories.⁹⁰ Section committees discussed and enforced the rent boycott. The section committees also examined legal, rent or eviction problems; family and neighbour disputes; and cleaning the section. The town council, responding to the rent boycott, cut off garbage collection in the township and from December, 1985, section committees ran refuse removal and road cleaning programmes.

The MCA also set up "people's courts", as people were encouraged to boycott the police. People's courts were also responsible for political education and street meetings discussed street issues and broader political and other issues.⁹¹ The youth built people's parks to honour the massacre victims, and gave them names such as Mandela Park, Tambo Place.⁹² In the first half of 1986, Mamelodi residents regularly attended meetings of the street and section committees, participating in a wide range of discussions on conditions in Mamelodi as well as national political issues. They also boycotted the police station, and took their disputes to the people's courts.⁹³

However, the declaration of the state of emergency in mid-1986 transformed township politics in Mamelodi. The primary target of the security clampdown was the MCA as detentions and mass arrests removed the civic's leadership and scores of members. The wave of repression was followed by a programme of "township upgrading". The "welfare" committee of the Mamelodi mini-JMC co-ordinated a massive programme of upgrading of infrastructure and services, while co-ordinating the actions of government departments and

⁹⁰ "Mamelodi: Back to the roots", *op.cit.*, p.13.

⁹¹ *Loc.cit.*

⁹² *Loc.cit.* and The Weekly Mail, (9.5.86 - 15.5.86), p.9.

⁹³ Boraine,A. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.51.

actively promoting the position of the Mamelodi Town Council.⁹⁴ The security section of the mini-JMC, the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), gathered information about all organisations and kept track of where activists lived.

The JOC effectively curtailed the activities of the MCA by intimidating many residents against becoming involved with the civic association and disrupting MCA activities through its security network. In addition, the JOC enabled the authorities to regain control over the day-to-day administrative functions of the township.⁹⁵ Repression and the redevelopment programme also strengthened the position of the Mamelodi Town Council. Despite these efforts by the authorities, the MCA continued to function, albeit at a fairly low level.⁹⁶ By the second half of 1987, however, the security forces had given way to builders' lorries, road-making equipment and teams of workmen.⁹⁷

8.4. The Eastern Cape

8.4.1. The Port Elizabeth Black Civic Association (PEBCO)

The first of the modern mass-based civic organisations emerged in the Eastern Cape city of Port Elizabeth.⁹⁸ PEBCO was formed on October 10, 1979, "to represent the aspirations of the African people and to take up their grievances with the authorities".⁹⁹ The early history of PEBCO is well-

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.53.

⁹⁵ *Loc.cit.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁹⁷ The Cape Times, (25.7.87), p.2.

⁹⁸ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Port Elizabeth and Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of PEBCO.

⁹⁹ Cooper,C. and Ensor,L. (1981); PEBCO: A Black Mass Movement, (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations), p.1.

documented.¹⁰⁰

PEBCO's formation was preceded by a 100 percent increase in the cost of living for Africans in the Port Elizabeth area. A public meeting on 10 October 1979 to protest against increases in transport, fuel and lighting, township service charges, and food costs resolved to create a larger body embracing the residents of all Port Elizabeth's townships. The meeting elected a "Committee of Ten", with Thozamile Botha as convenor, to draft a constitution by October 26. A mass meeting attended by between eight and nine thousand people was held in New Brighton on the 30 October where the constitution was adopted and a new executive elected.¹⁰¹

According to the constitution, the ten-member executive committee was elected at the annual general meeting attended by four delegates from each of the branches. The council of the organisation consisted of one delegate from each of the branches and all the members of the executive. The next tier of the organisation was formed by the branches which generally dealt with local issues. Decisions of the council were conveyed to the residents through local mass meetings where the views of the people were gathered and decisions made on strategy.¹⁰² Another means of communication between the council and the people were the frequent mass rallies called by the organisation.¹⁰³

The constitution defined the aims and objectives of the organisation as

¹⁰⁰ See Cooper,C. and Ensor,L. (1981); *op.cit.*; Evans,M. (1980); "The rise and decline of a community organisation: An assessment of PEBCO", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.6, Nos.2 and 3, September) and Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.359-61.

¹⁰¹ Cooper,C. and Ensor,L. (1981); *op.cit.*, p.28 and Evans,M. (1980); *op.cit.*, p.46.

¹⁰² Cooper,C. and Ensor,L.; *op.cit.*, p.22.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.24.

follows: to fight for equal rights for all the people of Port Elizabeth; to fight all discriminatory legislation enacted by the government and local authorities; to seek participation in decision-making on all matters affecting the people of South Africa; to fight for the granting of the right to blacks to buy land under freehold title at any place of their choice; and to resist any attempt, direct or indirect, to deprive blacks of their South African citizenship.¹⁰⁴

PEBCO's aims included the creation of one municipality for the whole of Port Elizabeth, thus rejecting community councils and separate municipalities for whites and blacks. PEBCO was only prepared to negotiate with the government in an all-race national convention, which should follow the unbanning of the liberation organisations and the release of political prisoners, making it one of the first organisations inside the country to make these demands. For the achievement of its aims, the organisation utilised the strategy of pressure and demand as an alternative to both negotiation and violence, the latter being regarded as counter-productive under existing circumstances.¹⁰⁵ PEBCO rejected participation in government institutions and collaboration with organisations participating in such institutions. PEBCO justified its involvement in workplace and community issues by drawing attention to the connection between low wages and the ability to pay rent.¹⁰⁶

Membership of the organisation was open to blacks only, which included coloureds and Indians.¹⁰⁷ At the time of formation, PEBCO consisted of three branches made up of the existing residents' associations in Zwide,

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.20 and Evans,M. (1980); *op.cit.*, p.47.

¹⁰⁵ Cooper,L. and Ensor,C. (1981); *op.cit.*, p.24.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.21.

Kwaford and Tembalethu. Residents' associations were soon established in the Kwazakhele, Walmer and New Brighton townships.¹⁰⁸ In March 1980, PEBCO was joined by the Malabar Ratepayers' Association representing the Indians of Malabar. A representative of the coloured township of Gelvandale was also elected to the organisation's executive in anticipation of the formation of a branch. Membership grew rapidly with a reported 3 000 card carrying members in January 1980, rising to 5,000 when the Malabar Ratepayers' Association joined in March.¹⁰⁹ PEBCO's popularity was also augmented by the supportive role it played in the two strikes at the Ford Motor Company towards the end of 1979.¹¹⁰

PEBCO's composition and ideological base reflect the diversity of support the organisation enjoyed in its first year. The leadership was dominated by the petty bourgeoisie but the organisation's radical confrontationist line generated a great deal of support among students and workers as well as businessmen and professionals. These included both older former ANC members as well as many who had been activists in the BCM in the seventies. PEBCO's emphasis on black unity in the struggle against white domination led to a tendency to ignore the distinct class differentiation within the organisation.¹¹¹

In this period a significant change in PEBCO policy occurred. At the time of its formation in 1979 the major national political organisation was AZAPO, with which PEBCO maintained links. The dominant position of Black Consciousness among black people was eroded during this period as a political realignment towards the ANC spread throughout the country. PEBCO

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.33.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.28-32 and Brewer, J.D. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.188-189.

¹¹¹ Evans, M. (1980); *op.cit.*, p.47.

became a part of this process in 1982 when it, together with COSAS and other community organisations in Port Elizabeth, commemorated the Defiance Campaign and the foundation of the Freedom Charter, and stressed the need for different race groups to cooperate in order to achieve democracy in South Africa.¹¹²

Five PEBCO leaders, including Botha, were detained in early 1980. Botha and the others were released on February 27 and he and three other PEBCO leaders were immediately served with three-year banning orders. He subsequently left the country to join the ANC in exile.¹¹³ The loss of Botha's charismatic leadership was one of the main reasons for the subsequent decline of PEBCO. During the following four years PEBCO experienced repeated leadership crises and eventually declined in significance.¹¹⁴ By the end of 1983, the Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (PEYCO) had taken leadership of township politics.

The first concrete attempts to revitalize PEBCO came towards the end of 1984 when Edgar Ngoyi, Samuel Hashe and Henry Fazzie became involved in the civic association. Ngoyi and Fazzie were both ANC stalwarts and were elected to the PEBCO executive a month after their release in October, bringing to five the number of executive committee members who were graduates of Robben Island.¹¹⁵ The executive committee immediately committed the organisation to struggles around rent and service charges.

¹¹² Brewer, J.D. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.273.

¹¹³ Cooper, C. and Ensor, L. (1981); *op.cit.*, p.39.

¹¹⁴ This is well-documented. See Brewer, J.D. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.268; Cooper, C. and Ensor, L. (1981); *op.cit.*; Evans, M. (1980); *op.cit.*, pp.51-2.; Davies, R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.361.

¹¹⁵ Lodge, T. (1991); "Rebellion: The turning of the tide", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.70.

In 1979 PEBCO emerged from below as an umbrella body for the local residents' associations. When PEBCO re-emerged at the end of 1984, it did not have the benefit of a strong foundation in mass-based residents' associations. The revival of the civic came from above and, instead of establishing grassroots structures, the leadership retained the mass-meeting strategy which had been appropriate in the days when PEBCO was an umbrella body.¹¹⁶

The opportunity for the civic association's first campaign came in November 1984, following a proposed rent increase by the Khayamnandi Town Council. PEBCO threatened a boycott of council-owned liquor outlets, a bus boycott and a one-day stayaway. The Council backed down and the rent hikes were withdrawn leading to an increase in PEBCO's support.¹¹⁷ In March 1985 PEBCO proposed another stayaway to protest job cutbacks, the merger of Ford and General Motors companies, and a rise in the price of petrol. The stayaway was planned for March 18 and was to be preceded by a boycott of stores during the weekend of the 16 and 17 March. The stayaway was supported by 90 per cent of the African workers of Port Elizabeth.¹¹⁸

PEBCO subsequently called for a boycott of white-owned shops which began on July 15. According to White:

By early November (1985) the boycott in Port Elizabeth was coming to a head. In the first place the CB (consumer boycott) was - and had been for almost four months - still solidly in place and, within the retail sector, was having devastating economic effects. Secondly, the State of Emergency and the enormous repression unleashed against township residents, their organisations and their leaders had simply not achieved its desired effects: "unrest" and mass militancy were continuing and spreading, albeit on a rather shaky organisational basis and often in a rather directionless way. Such factors - leading,

¹¹⁶ Labour Monitoring Group (1985); "Report: The March stayaways in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, May), p.99.

¹¹⁷ Gastrow, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.92.

¹¹⁸ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.73 and Adler, G. (1987); "Uniting a community", in Work in Progress, (Nos.50/51, October-November).

it seems, to a flurry of negotiations and liaison between local business and elements within the state locally (particularly the police) - prompted authorities to release all the central Port Elizabeth leadership in mid-November.¹¹⁹

The consumer boycotts and subsequent clampdown by the state on community organisations resulted in two important developments in Port Elizabeth. Firstly, negotiations between the Port Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce and the local state resulted in a victory for the masses. Community organisations agreed to lift the boycott by December 1 after the state withdrew the SAP and SADF from the townships, permitted those in hiding to re-emerge and conceded several minor demands (e.g. concessions to black pensioners).¹²⁰

Secondly, PEBCO began an intensive re-organisation process at a mass level. During the consumer boycott it became evident that organisational infrastructure and political discipline were weak and led to mis-directed youth militancy. A criminal element emerged which used the name of progressive organisations to extort money and alcohol from residents of the townships. In addition, politically rooted inter-faction violence split Port Elizabeth's African population throughout 1985 and early 1986. This violence had its roots in the quest for regional political domination by the UDF and AZAPO.

Immediately after their release in December, the Port Elizabeth leaders set about addressing these problems and, taking the example set in Cradock, began to organise street committees.¹²¹ At a prayer meeting organised by the UDF in December 1985, attended by more than 1,000 people, the first

¹¹⁹ White, R. (1986); "A tide has risen. A breach has occurred: Towards an assessment of the strategic value of the consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.5, May), pp.89-90.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.90.

¹²¹ *Loc.cit.*

area committee members (all recognised church and civic leaders) were elected.¹²² During 1986 PEBCO was able to expand its membership because of these structures. The consumer boycott contributed to the rapid development of the street committees. The "fact that the strategy involved practically every resident in the township and that any significant change in direction required widespread support from township residents laid the basis for the development of these structures."¹²³

In 1986, another stayaway was organised by Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage community organisations to commemorate the March 1985 massacre in Uitenhage. This stay-away was supported by unions in both cities and virtually all African workers stayed at home, as well as 25 percent of all coloureds in Port Elizabeth and 79 percent in Uitenhage.¹²⁴ Subsequent stayaways on May Day and June 16 were also well supported by blacks in both cities.

The stayaways of 1986 introduced three new developments in Port Elizabeth. Firstly, the stayaways were marked by co-operation between COSATU unions and local UDF affiliates. Secondly, this co-operation brought coloured workers into the actions, extending township-generated protests beyond group area borders. Thirdly, a small, but growing, number of businessmen began to accept the legitimacy of popular demands: some accepted that May Day and June 16 should be paid holidays; and, there were no reported dismissals. In addition, PEBCO was able to continue with negotiations with the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, individual employers, and the state,

¹²² Eastern Province Herald, (17.12.85), p.1.

¹²³ White,R. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.91.

¹²⁴ Adler,G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.70.

including the SAP.¹²⁵

By the end of the year, however, PEBCO, and almost every other UDF affiliate in the Eastern Cape, was in a state of chaos. Only one regional leader remained at large, while most of the members of PEBCO's executive committee, including Henry Fazzie and Mkhuseleli Jack, were in detention. Mass meetings and funerals were banned and the consumer boycott had petered out. The absence of the leadership led to confusion at the base and street committees operated sporadically and without purpose and direction.¹²⁶ In addition, residents were subjected to a reign of terror by lawless bands of youth once the street and area committee became inoperative.

During the second half of the year, the government used emergency regulations to remove leaders, and to destroy grassroots and middle-level township groups. In the first two weeks of the emergency, as many as 200 area and street committee members were detained and by January 1987, over 1,000 township residents had been detained.¹²⁷ Port Elizabeth's townships were invaded by the security forces and, from July 19, 1986, were cut off from the rest of the world by kilometres of razorwire fence. In the first week of July, the government prohibited 52 Eastern Cape organisations from holding or advertising in-door gatherings.¹²⁸

On November 3, 1986, community organisations in Port Elizabeth initiated another consumer boycott, demanding the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners, the unbanning of political organisations, the unconditional

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.71.

¹²⁶ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, pp.266-7.

¹²⁷ Adler, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.72 and Weekly Mail, (15.1.87), p.1.

¹²⁸ The Daily Dispatch, (3.7.86), p.9.

return of all exiles, the abolition of apartheid, the lifting of the state of emergency and the release of all detainees. During the campaign, residents reported that vigilantes ("witdoeke") were operating in the townships. These vigilantes, identified by their "blue overalls", were seen helping staff security force roadblocks.¹²⁹

By the end of 1987, PEBCO was relatively weaker because of the mass arrests and widespread repression in the area. More importantly, the main problem at the time was the quality of leadership in the executive committee and the council. The removal of experienced and respected leaders from the political scene and restrictions imposed on meetings and mass mobilisation created a leadership vacuum which affected the functioning of the organisation.

Although PEBCO still functioned, meetings and attendance at meetings of the structures was erratic. The council's meetings, which had a maximum of 25 street and area representatives, had a regular attendance of 15. Constitutionally, it was required to meet twice a month but in reality met only once a month. In addition, PEBCO called campaigns but failed to use the opportunity to strengthen its street and area committees, develop new activists and generate new skills required under the emergency situation.

Port Elizabeth was also targeted by the state as an area designated for "upgrading". R43 million was ear-marked for unemployment relief, infrastructural upgrading, self-help housing and the training of municipal policemen in 35 Eastern Cape townships. These included townships in Aliwal North, Bedford, Cathcart, Cradock, Fort Beaufort, Grahamstown, King William's Town,

¹²⁹ The Weekly Mail, (7.11.86 - 13.11.86), p.4.

Kirkwood, Molteno, East London, Queenstown, and Uitenhage.¹³⁰ This demonstrated the state's desire to bring about material reforms as a means of reducing urban tensions.

8.4.2. Uitenhage Black Civic Organisation (UBCO)

The Uitenhage Black Civic Organisation was formed in October 1979, the same month PEBCO emerged on the political scene, but soon declined in significance.¹³¹ 1980 saw widespread mass action in the Eastern Cape as a whole as school students in the region joined a country-wide school boycott and workers in the automobile industry embarked on a strike for higher wages. The repression that came after the school boycott and the strike made mass organisation at a civic level difficult and contributed to the decline of UBCO.¹³² In addition, differences between trade unionists in the area finally resulted in the destruction of UBCO.

In 1980, FOSATU affiliates in Uitenhage maintained a harmonious relationship with UBCO. However, in June 1981, tensions arose in UBCO between a prominent community leader and FOSATU. Mr Thomas Kobese accused the union federation of planning to infiltrate community organisations for its own ends. He resigned from the newly elected executive on the grounds that the elections were undemocratic and rigged in favour of FOSATU supporters. Earlier in the year, Kobese had resigned as FOSATU secretary in Uitenhage to join the rival Motor Assembly and Component Workers' Union of South

¹³⁰ Eastern Province Herald, (15.11.85). Cited in Swilling, M. (1988); "'Because your yard is too big": Squatter struggles, the local state and dual power in Uitenhage, 1985-1986', paper presented to the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, p.22.

¹³¹ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Uitenhage and to Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of UBCO

¹³² Lund, S. (1986); "The battle for Kabah: Orderly urbanisation and control", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.8, Sep/Oct), p.55.

Africa (MACWUSA).¹³³

Between 1981 and 1983, UBCO experienced a decline and ultimately collapsed and community leadership passed to the UDF-aligned Uitenhage Youth Congress (UYCO) when the latter was formed at the end of 1984. Conflict between UDF affiliates and FOSATU affiliates in the town was sharp because the UDF's key leaders were also officials of MACWUSA. Many young people were leaving school without any prospect of finding a job. Some joined UYCO while others, with no links to any group, roamed the townships attacking police and assaulting or killing residents suspected of collaborating with the authorities. This served to sharpen the divide between unions and community groups.¹³⁴

UBCO's revival occurred in the wake of a massacre of residents in early 1985. The UDF-aligned community organisations, including UBCO, called a stayaway for the 18 March to protest against sales tax and price increases. FOSATU unions refused to support the stayaway, so increasing tension between FOSATU-unions and the local UDF. The community organisations decided to proceed with the stayaway which was heeded by one in three workers.¹³⁵ However, events over the next few days brought about a transformation of the relationship between the older unions and community organisations as well as a revival of UBCO.

On March 21, 1985 police fired on a crowd attending a banned funeral, killing 21 people. The following day, an estimated 17,000 students boycotted

¹³³ "UBCO leader in walk-out over allegations of Fosatu infiltration", in SASPU National, (Vol.2, No.6, August 1981), p.5.

¹³⁴ Friedman, S. (1987); Building towards tomorrow: African workers in trade unions, 1970-1987, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), pp.452-3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.452.

schools, and a number of violent clashes between students and the police occurred in the townships.¹³⁶ Popular resentment was fuelled by the occupation of the townships by the security forces and bans imposed on memorial services. A number of policemen's homes were destroyed and on the 23 March, an angry crowd murdered the only remaining town councillor, Tamsanqa Benjamin Kinikini, and three of his sons.¹³⁷

In the absence of a local council, the residents of Uitenhage's townships began to set up their own co-ordinating body, bypassing government structures to begin administering garbage collection, schools, and health care. According to one resident: "Organisations in Uitenhage feel that with the community council gone, we need street-level democracy in the townships to deal with our problems. So through mass meetings, house meetings, and sending letters to residents, we tried to popularize this idea".¹³⁸ Planact found that: "After the Langa massacre, members of all sections of the community flocked to join community organisations. During the course of the year many new organisations were formed".¹³⁹ In December, UBCO took over the function of coordinating the activities of the new specialised organisations.¹⁴⁰

During 1985, Uitenhage's African community embarked on three consumer boycotts: between April and July, late July and 27 September, and 11

¹³⁶ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.91.

¹³⁷ Badela, M. and Mufson, S. (1991); "The Eastern Cape", in Lodge, T. and Nasson, B. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.239 and Weekly Mail, (4.9.87 - 10.9.87), p.15. All the other councillors had been forced to resign in February.

¹³⁸ Cited in Klug, H. and Siedman, G. (1985); "South Africa: Amandla Ngawethu!", in Socialist Review, (No.84), p.32.

¹³⁹ The Star, (21.3.86), p.13.

¹⁴⁰ Refer to Table 3 above.

October and 14 December. In that year, tensions in Uitenhage mounted once plans were revealed for the removal of the entire Langa community to KwaNobuhle. The government declared a state of emergency on July 21 and some 85 activists in Uitenhage were immediately detained. Many others were forced underground leaving a leadership vacuum in the townships. The threat of removal and an increased security presence in the area led to the outbreak of violence as township youth squads (amabutho) attacked security patrols.

At the end of October, leaders re-emerged and re-established contact with their organisations and older residents responded to the activities of the amabutho by forming their own structures. These factors accounted for the spread of street committees and the formation of Parents Crisis Committees to end the school boycott.¹⁴¹

During the first half of 1986, membership of local affiliates of the UDF expanded while students engaged in a boycott of classes and enforced a consumer boycott of white-owned shops in Uitenhage. However, local organisation was threatened by the government's attempt to remove all the residents of Langa township to KwaNobuhle. Local UDF affiliates took the government to court to stop the removal. Notwithstanding, after the declaration of the state of emergency on 12 June 1986, police rounded up Langa's leaders, then forcefully removed the township's 20,000 residents to a collection of tents in KwaNobuhle.¹⁴²

Before the removal, tensions emerged within local affiliates of the UDF in Langa. According to Mufson, the sustained school boycott upset parents who

¹⁴¹ Swilling, M. (1988B); *op.cit.*, p.11.

¹⁴² Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.267.

wanted their children to attend school. The township had only four shops, and the consumer boycott of white-owned shops made shopping difficult. Harsh punishments were meted out by people's courts to suspected informers, people who declined to join the consumer boycott, and common criminals.¹⁴³

The declaration of the emergency, the detention of leaders and the subsequent removal effectively destroyed organisation in Langa. This was coupled with a sustained effort to upgrade KwaNobuhle in an attempt both to lure Langa's residents to the new township and to remove the material causes of resistance in the township.

In KwaNobuhle, the emergence of a vigilante group, the African Parents Concerned Committee (APCC), placed further constraints on community organisations. The APCC was able to draw on between three and four thousand men in an attack on local affiliates of the UDF on January 4, 1987, beginning a wave of conflict in the area.¹⁴⁴

By the end of 1987, civic organisations in the Eastern Cape as a whole were experiencing similar problems faced by PEBCO: the lack of skilled leadership following the removal of experienced and respected leaders from the political scene through detention and political trials; and restrictions imposed on meetings and mass mobilisation. The restrictions imposed under the state of emergency made it difficult for people to meet, resulting in the destruction of street and area communities. In Uitenhage, the leadership vacuum affected the functioning of UBCO but also had a more important negative affect. The invasion of KwaNobuhle by the security forces and the leadership vacuum led to widespread confrontation between the security forces

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.268.

¹⁴⁴ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.168. The conflict between the APCC and local UDF organisations is discussed in The Eastern Province Herald, (16.7.87), p.6.

and the youth. Barricades were set up in the township and the youth attacked security vehicles with petrol bombs.

These confrontations intensified repression and the introduction of municipal policemen and *kitskonstabels* (special policemen) curtailed the activities of many organisations and activists. Despite the destruction of community organisations and the intense level of repression, the spirit of defiance in KwaNobuhle was not destroyed. At the end of 1987, the township was one of the five Eastern Cape townships - out of a total of 45 - in which the town council had not been revived.

8.4.3. Duncan Village Residents Association (DVRA)

Organised labour in East London played a central role in popular struggles during the early 1980s.¹⁴⁵ In the absence of a mass-based community organisation trade unions emerged as the dominant form of organisation in the townships. SAAWU in particular functioned as a community organisation with its leaders playing a central role in such struggles as the 1983 bus boycott and resistance to Ciskeian independence.¹⁴⁶ The dominance of trade unions in township struggles laid the basis for linking community and workplace struggles in the area.¹⁴⁷ However, the existence of a powerful and militant trade union may also have delayed the emergence of a community organisation.

Widespread dissatisfaction with the Ciskei Transport Corporation (CTC) was

¹⁴⁵ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Duncan Village and to Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of the DVRA.

¹⁴⁶ Swilling, M. (1984); "'The buses smell of blood': The East London boycott", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.9, No.5, March), p.64.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.65.

sharpened by a bus-fare increase in July 1983. A mass meeting held on 10 July in Duncan Village elected a "Committee of Ten" to represent the community's interests to the CTC. After an unacceptable response from the CTC, residents decided to boycott the bus company. The involvement of trade union officials and the wider community in the boycott raised questions about the development of a civic association.¹⁴⁸

The formation of the DVRA in August 1985 followed the introduction of the new town council. One of the responsibilities of the Duncan Village Community Council (DVCC) was to reverse the flow of people in the township. In terms of official policy, the residents of Duncan Village were to be relocated to Mdantsane in the Ciskei and the former was to dissolve into oblivion. In early 1984, the council ordered the demolition of 400 shacks, leaving 2,000 people homeless. In addition, rents were raised, intensifying opposition to the council. The bus boycott and removals set the stage for building a civic association. An interim committee was established and the idea propagated throughout the township through discussions among residents.¹⁴⁹

The interim committee divided the township into eight geographical areas and organised an anti-removal committee (ARC) made up of adults and youths. In August, 1985, the funeral of slain Natal UDF leader Victoria Mxenge was held in Duncan Village. The funeral was followed by attacks on the homes of town councillors and school buildings as well as clashes with the security forces following the invasion of the township by the SADF. The police were

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.67.

¹⁴⁹ "Building from the bottom up", in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec 1986), p.12.

unable to enter the township for the next three weeks.¹⁵⁰

On the 15 August, DVRA was officially launched at a mass meeting, attended by 10,000 people, and a Central Executive Committee (CEC) elected. The CEC was mandated to set up branches and draw up a list of short-term, medium-term and long-term demands. The long-term demands were political, such as the demand for a non-racial municipality in a non-racial country. Medium-term demands were for creches, old age homes, and restructuring of the township with the people's participation. Short-term demands were for better streets, etc.¹⁵¹ In the following weeks, area organisers set about the establishment of nine branches, each with its own committee.¹⁵² During the next few weeks the DVRA ruled the township while the town council was forced to conduct its business from an office in the East London city centre.¹⁵³

The response of the authorities to the situation in the township consisted of a few major concessions as well as repression. In late August, the Department of Cooperation and Development announced that Duncan Village would be retained, extended 99-year leasehold rights to the township and set aside R10 million for improvements.¹⁵⁴ The authorities also moved swiftly to return order to the township by using emergency regulations to detain leaders and arrest residents.

¹⁵⁰ *Loc.cit.*; Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.115; and Atkinson, D. (1991); Cities and Citizenship: Towards a normative analysis of the urban order in South Africa, with special reference to East London, 1950-1986, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, p.509.

¹⁵¹ "Building from the bottom up", *op.cit.*, p.13.

¹⁵² *Loc.cit.* Refer to Table 3 above.

¹⁵³ Atkinson, D. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.509-510.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.510.

Duncan Village was also earmarked for up-grading as part of the government's strategy to wrest control from community organisations. The DVRA spent months negotiating with the East London City Council (ELCC) and the city's National Party Member of Parliament about plans for the upgrading of the township. The ELCC and the DVRA reached an agreement that the city council would take over the administration of Duncan Village, in consultation with the DVRA.¹⁵⁵ However, just when the talks appeared to be making progress, the government tried to resuscitate the discredited town council leading to a breakdown in the negotiations.¹⁵⁶ The government announced that elections for a new community council would be held after the completion of the upgrading project. It was hoped that the existing council would gain credit for the upgrading.

Discussions between the ELCC and the DVRA on the upgrading project floundered at the end of 1985 because of the involvement of the DVCC in the planning process. The DVRA noted with concern that the DVCC was "seen to be the prime movers behind the scenes: allocating land for the building of the temporary schools and receiving money from the government for the upgrading of Duncan Village". The association called on the government to dismantle the community council, and direct the ELCC to act as its agent in Duncan Village.¹⁵⁷

Throughout 1986, the DVRA and the DVCC fought for hegemony in the township. Rival claims to control of the upgrading process led to intervention by white authorities, namely the ELCC and the government. The ELCC was

¹⁵⁵ Kruger, F. (1987); "Community opposes new style removals", in Work in Progress, (No.46, February), p.30.

¹⁵⁶ Mufson, S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.245.

¹⁵⁷ Daily Dispatch, (14.12.85), p.1.

prepared to recognise the DVRA as a representative agency of the township. The government, on the other hand, maintained that the community councils were the official representatives of urban Africans.¹⁵⁸

After the declaration of the state of emergency in July 1986 mass arrests and detention of leaders marginalised the DVRA from township politics. An estimated 300 DVRA members and officials, including street committee members, were detained.¹⁵⁹ In July Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning Chris Heunis told a delegation of East London councillors that under no circumstances would the council be permitted to deal with the DVRA. Thus, "with representative community leadership in jail or hiding, the state could begin to implement its plans".¹⁶⁰

The absence of the community leaders was used to bring the newly styled Gompo town committee back into Duncan Village and to rebuild its credibility by handing it the credit for upgrading the township. A major area of controversy arose over the proposed removal of 37,000 people to make way for the upgrading project. Once this became known, the DVRA distanced itself from the project, stating that: "Nothing is being done in the area in consultation with the people of Duncan Village".¹⁶¹

The four phase upgrading project was disclosed to about 500 residents by the mayor of Duncan Village at a meeting in July 1987.¹⁶² This signalled

¹⁵⁸ See Atkinson, D. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.511-524.

¹⁵⁹ Kruger, F. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.31.

¹⁶⁰ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁶¹ Cited in Kruger, F. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.33.

¹⁶² Daily Dispatch, (9.7.87), p.2.

that the upgrading project was under the control of the town council. This, together with the failure of the ELCC to take over the administration of the township and the detention and harassment of the DVRA's leadership and members, strengthened the position of the town council. By mid-1987 the level of unrest in Duncan Village had fallen and students had returned to school. In addition, the council began to take action against rent defaulters.

Although the rent boycott (which began in mid-1986) continued throughout 1987, it was relatively weak. In addition, the absence of community leaders (most detainees were released towards the end of 1987 with the exception of key leaders) strengthened the position of the town council. Residents had to get the personal approval of the Mayor, Eddie Makeba, if they desired anything from a house to a burial plot. Residents who approached him had to produce rent receipts before their request was considered, thus signalling the manner in which the DVRA lost control to the town council.

8.4.4. The Cradock Residents' Association (CRADORA)

Cradora was formed on 4 October 1983 to oppose a proposed rent increase in some areas of Lingelihle township.¹⁶³ The rent hike was prompted by the development of a new section of the township, which was introduced under a new and perplexing system of "sliding rents". The residents of the new houses were required to pay R54 more than before.

The founders of the civic organisation were Mathew Goniwe, a school teacher and former political prisoner, and Fort Calata who was also a teacher and nephew of an ANC treason trialist. Goniwe, popular among the militant youth, emerged as a charismatic leader of the organisation. He introduced the street committee system to Lingelihle, which became the first township to establish

¹⁶³ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Cradock and Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of Cradora.

a network of street committees in the country.¹⁵⁴

In December 1983, the government attempted to stifle Goniwe's growing influence by transferring him to another school 100 miles from Cradock. When he refused to accept the transfer he was fired, sparking the most widespread and sustained school boycotts ever in South Africa.¹⁶⁵ Beginning in February 1984, Cradock's 14,500 school students boycotted classes for a year and a half demanding Goniwe's reinstatement as well as democratic SRCs, textbooks and sufficient qualified teachers.¹⁶⁶ The outbreak of the school boycott was followed by thirteen months of violence and mass detentions.

In early April 1984, Goniwe was detained, depriving the community of a leader who had the stature necessary to end the stalemate between the students and the authorities. In the ensuing weeks, three other members of Cradora were detained, police reinforcements were deployed in the township and more than a 100 people arrested on charges of public violence and attending illegal meetings.¹⁶⁷ In the wake of these arrests the police presence in Lingelihle increased leading to a virtual seige.

The school boycott was accompanied by a campaign against the local authorities. Cradora's call on town councillors to resign was accompanied by attacks on the houses of councillors and other residents associated with the local white administration. By January 1985, all the town councillors had resigned, leaving a vacuum which was subsequently filled by Cradora. The

¹⁶⁴ Mufson,S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.111 and Lodge,T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.74-5. Refer to Table 3 above.

¹⁶⁵ Mufson,S. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.111.

¹⁶⁶ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁶⁷ The Argus, (12/9/84), p.20.

campaign was characterised by frequent clashes with the police, while the local authorities tried to crush Cradora by detaining its leaders, banning its meetings, and terrorising its supporters. However, repression had the effect of uniting the community and increasing support for Cradora.¹⁶⁸

The Lingelihle Village Council was the first African local authority to resign in the Eastern Cape. Councillors stated that they had resigned because they had been rejected as representatives by the community and were viewed as servants of apartheid. In addition, they claimed that the system of local authorities created councils which were financially impotent.¹⁶⁹ In large part, this impotency was reflected by the inability of the council to improve conditions in the township because they were not given a hearing by the authorities.¹⁷⁰ The resignation of the local council gave Cradora a measure of recognition from the authorities. Representatives of Cradora met top officials in the DET over the school boycott and took over the administration of the payment of pensions.¹⁷¹

Throughout the first half of 1985, Cradock residents engaged in widespread resistance and outbreaks of violence. This violence was sparked by a ban on a Cradora meeting to be held on February 2. On that day the police entered the town in armoured personnel carriers (Casspirs).¹⁷² The ensuing violence was marked by an increase in attacks on the homes of policemen living in the township. On June 5, SADF and SAP personnel moved into

¹⁶⁸ Murray, M. (1987); South Africa: Time of agony, time of destiny, (London, Verso), p.274.

¹⁶⁹ "Cradock: Building a tradition of resistance", in Work in Progress, (38, August 1985), p.5.

¹⁷⁰ The Cape Times, (7.1.85), p.2.

¹⁷¹ Weekly Mail, (28.11.85), p.4.

¹⁷² SA Outlook, (31.7.85), p.99.

Lingelihle in response to the violence. Three weeks later, the stabbed and burnt bodies of four Cradora leaders, including Goniwe, were found in bushes along a road near Port Elizabeth.

Cradock was included among the "affected areas" during the eight month partial state of emergency. According to a community leader: "During the First Emergency, despite the death of our comrades and the detentions, resistance was the same". Police informer networks were all but smashed, detained leaders were rapidly replaced, residents' meetings were held under the guise of church services, and "people's education" classes were held to give some direction to boycotting students.¹⁷³

Community organisations in Cradock were ravaged by the second state of emergency and the deployment of municipal police. Goniwe's murder, and the detention and harassment of leaders left the civic association without leaders. Street committees still existed at the beginning of 1987, but met sporadically. Street committees from Lingelihle's eight residential blocks each elected three representatives to a co-ordinating group called the Local Committee. However, no executive was drawn from the committee's 24 members, who were mostly in their twenties. According to one member of the Committee:

The structures are operating basically from second leadership level down. We want to elect leaders democratically, but we can't hold meetings and many people are in detention.¹⁷⁴

During the emergency, "dirty elements" were once again providing information for the police and residents accused municipal policemen of committing malpractices against them. The community's problems were exacerbated by falling morals and discipline because of the lengthy school boycott. Although

¹⁷³ The Weekly Mail, (24.4.87 - 29.4.87), p.14.

¹⁷⁴ *Loc.cit.*

the community was highly politicised by events during 1984-85, the leadership vacuum left the residents without any direction.¹⁷⁵

At the end of 1987 there was still widespread opposition to the local authorities despite the suppression of community organisations. At the end of November 1987, Lingelihle township in Cradock was among the three townships in the Eastern Cape which were run by administrators and not by community councils. This demonstrated the failure of the state to eliminate or undermine the influence of the progressive forces in the township.

8.5. Natal

Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC)

In Durban's black townships, rent increases and related matters such as the lack and poor quality of housing as well as increases in transport costs were the main reasons for the emergence of civic organisations.¹⁷⁶ The civic organisations which emerged in Durban's African townships in the early 1980s eventually formed an umbrella body, JORAC.

In October 1982, the Port Natal Administration Board (PNAB) announced that it would increase rent in townships under its jurisdiction in May 1983. The PNAB proposed a rent increase of between 25 and 90 percent (averaging 63 per cent). Two months later, in December, PUTCO in Inanda announced a bus-fare increase of 7,6 percent on cash fares, and 16,6 percent and 19,4 percent on coupon fares. In the same month the Durban Transport Management Board (DTMB) declared an increase in bus fares of 12 per cent.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁷⁶ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Durban and to Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of JORAC.

¹⁷⁷ Suttcliffe, M. and Wellings, P. (1988); "Inkatha versus the rest: Black opposition to Inkatha in Durban's African townships", in *African Affairs*, (July), p.346.

The affected townships responded to the proposed busfare increases by boycotting DTMB buses. In each of the affected townships - Inanda, Clermont, Lamontville, Klaarwater, St Wendolins and KwaMashu - a Local Commuter Committee (LCC) emerged to co-ordinate the boycott. These in turn united to form a Joint Commuter Committee.¹⁷⁸ The 1982 Durban transport boycott made four significant gains. According to McCarthy and Swilling:

Firstly, the formation of LCCs in each area facilitated the growth of community organisations in the greater Durban area; secondly, the formation of the JCC was an important step towards forging inter-township unity; thirdly, a well supported petition managed to popularise the JCC leadership; fourthly, the extensive discussions, pamphleteering and participation generated a new political consciousness.¹⁷⁹

The townships within which these LCCs emerged were areas that were previously unorganised. In addition, these new community organisations "provided the community leaders with a ready-made constituency that they ... managed to develop and enlarge".¹⁸⁰ The LCCs, which in some cases developed strong community participation and support, formed the organisational base of the community organisations which served the townships. Harrison Dube, a disenchanted member of the Ningizumu Community Council (NCC), organised mass meetings and used general community activity to inform residents about the dynamics of the rent increase, and the unrepresentative and impotent response of the NCC to the proposed increases.¹⁸¹

Dissatisfaction with the Town Council's efforts to represent the residents on

¹⁷⁸ McCarthy, J. and Swilling, M. (1984); "Transport and Political Resistance", in South African Research Service (eds.); South African Review II, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.36.

¹⁷⁹ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁸⁰ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁸¹ Reintges, C.M. (1986); Rents and urban political geography: The case of Lamontville, unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, p.82.

the rent issue led to the formation of JORAC on 8 April 1983 as an umbrella body of residents' associations serving five townships. These were the Lamontville Rent Action Committee, the Hambanathi Residents' Association, the Chesterville Rent Action Committee, the Klaarwater Residents' Association, and the Shakaville Residents' Association.¹⁸² JORAC also included representatives from hostels in the townships.

Representatives were elected by each of the constituent residents' associations at meetings held in the townships. These representatives in turn elected the executive of JORAC. JORAC's first executive comprised: 12 representatives from Lamontville; 12 representatives from Hambanathi; 6 representatives from Chesterville; 6 representatives from Klaarwater; and 4 representatives of the hostels.¹⁸³

Although JORAC was created to unite a few townships in their opposition to rent increases, it soon became a leading force in the community on other issues as well. Eventually, it became an affiliate of the UDF when the latter was formed at the end of 1983. The leadership of the residents' associations which made up JORAC consisted largely of members of the petit-bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, these organisations had a "common people" approach and a strong "redistributive focus which often brought them into conflict with elite interests".¹⁸⁴

Several of JORAC's executive members became high ranking officials of the UDF. The first regional Executive of the Natal UDF included Rev. Xundu,

¹⁸² Suttcliffe, M. and Wellings, P. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.346.

¹⁸³ Reintges, C.M. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.120n.

¹⁸⁴ Sitas, A. (1986); 'Inanda, August 1985: "Where wealth and the worship of blood reign worshipped gods"', in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.4, Feb-March), p.103.

vice chairperson of JORAC, as well as S. Tsenoli and Victoria Mxenge. JORAC's close links with the progressive movement placed it in direct conflict with Inkatha and other statutory bodies.

On April 25, 1983, the organisation's chairman, Harrison Dube was shot dead, sparking off violence in both Lamontville and Chesterville. According to Reintges, the assassination failed to disrupt opposition to the rent increase. Instead, the outrage generated by Dube's murder served to unite the community against the Community Council and the PNAB.¹⁸⁵ Under the chairmanship of the Reverend Mcebisi Xundu, JORAC staged mass protest meetings in May and July. The authorities' immediate response was to postpone the increases until August. But they were eventually shelved indefinitely, partly for fear of provoking further unrest and partly because of uncertainty over the future of the townships.¹⁸⁶

The failure of the NCC to effectively represent the residents on the rent issue, as well as its lack of interest in eliciting residents' responses, made it apparent that the Council did not represent residents' interests.¹⁸⁷ By the end of May 1983, all the councillors on the Hambanathi and Klaarwater Advisory Boards, as well as several Ningizumu Community Councillors had resigned.¹⁸⁸ In addition, Lamontville residents called for community councils to be scrapped and replaced by JORAC, and resolved to boycott the Community Council elections scheduled for June 6.¹⁸⁹ JORAC's demands

¹⁸⁵ Reintges, C.M. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.90.

¹⁸⁶ Suttcliffe, M. and Wellings, P. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.346-7.

¹⁸⁷ Reintges, C.M. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.88.

¹⁸⁸ *Loc.cit.*

¹⁸⁹ City Press, (27.5.84), p.3 and The Daily News, (6.6.84), p.10.

extended beyond the rent issue. Resolutions taken at meetings of the constituent organisations included demands that the PNAB townships be administered by the Durban municipality and for representation on the City Council.¹⁹⁰

Other factors which were instrumental in widening JORAC's support were its democratic organisation and links with other progressive forces. As Dan Smit explains:

The strength of JORAC is in no small measure due to the fact that the movement had been strong on organisation. A number of spatially disparate communities have been organised into a single movement to fight issues of common interest. JORAC also linked with and obtained support (both organisationally and moral) from other significant urban social movements in the Durban metropolitan area, such as the Joint Commuters Committee and the Durban Housing Action Committee. Links have also been established with progressive community organisations such as Diakonia and the trade unions.¹⁹¹

JORAC's capacity to establish links with other progressive organisations was encouraged by the fact that it was strongly represented on the UDF Regional executive, which was made up exclusively of people living in Durban. Smit also attributed JORAC's success in mass mobilisation on its ability to reach the masses through the utilisation of grass-roots, door-to-door tactics.¹⁹² However, JORAC had limited support in KwaZulu-administered townships.

In the latter areas, Inkatha was able to use the considerable powers of coercion and patronage of the homeland government to minimize penetration by the UDF. Inkatha was strongly entrenched in local government structures and the homeland government's control over the granting of trading licences and loans provided it with support among local traders and businessmen.

¹⁹⁰ Reintges, C.M. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.89.

¹⁹¹ Smit, D. (1983); "Community, Class and Social Change", Published paper presented at a workshop on Urban African Life, University of Natal, Durban, July, p.9.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.8.

Civil servants and teachers were "nudged" into co-operating with Inkatha because they depended on the homeland government for their jobs. Inkatha's dominance was further aided by the special status it was accorded at homeland schools, including those in the urban townships, where Inkatha was allowed to mobilize school-children through its youth brigade branches at each school and the "Inkatha syllabus" taught at schools.¹⁹³ The homeland government's control over the KwaZulu security forces provided it with the coercive means to prevent the UDF from mobilising in the KwaZulu townships. The situation was different in the PNAB-administered townships because of the absence of the homeland authorities.

JORAC's support is reflected in a number of surveys conducted in the African townships during the 1980s. In October 1983, the Centre for Applied Social Sciences found that 84 percent of respondents (n=100) in Lamontville, Chesterville and Klaarwater felt that JORAC was making a sincere effort to solve township problems, 74 percent favoured "the youth of the townships", 18 percent the community council, 24 percent the KwaZulu Government, and 53 percent the Durban City Council. One percent of the respondents felt that JORAC was causing problems. By contrast, 20 percent felt that Inkatha assisted residents in solving their problems and 44 percent felt that the organisation was causing problems.¹⁹⁴ A survey of 756 people in Lamontville in 1984 by the Built Environment Support Group found that 97 percent of respondents felt that Inkatha had not helped the community.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ McCaul, C. (1988); "The Wild Card: Inkatha and contemporary black politics", in Frankel, P. et.al. (eds); *op.cit.*, pp.150-1.

¹⁹⁴ The Natal Witness, (20.1.84), p.3.

¹⁹⁵ Wellings, P. and Suttcliffe, M. (1984); Lamontville and Chesterville: Attitudes towards incorporation, Built Environment Support Group, University of Natal, Durban, p.4. Cited in Booth, D.G. (1987); An interpretation of political violence in Lamont and KwaMashu, unpublished M.Soc.Sc. Dissertation, University of Natal, January, p.168.

In the aftermath of the Inanda "riots" in 1985, the Institute of Black Research found that 51 percent of 227 respondents in KwaMashu, Umlazi, Inanda and Clermont supported the UDF.¹⁹⁶ A survey of Lamontville residents undertaken in April 1986 during the occupation of the township by the security forces found the following levels of support: UDF - 78 percent; ANC - 21 percent; UDF student/youth groups such as COSAS, Malayo and AZASO - 21 percent; the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) - 8 percent; and JORAC - 5 percent.¹⁹⁷

JORAC's links with the UDF had a number of adverse affects on the organisation. Firstly, a number of local leaders were drawn into regional and national structures of the Front. Secondly, JORAC bore the brunt of the ideological and violent battle between the UDF and Inkatha (which was supported by the state in this confrontation).¹⁹⁸ From July 1984, JORAC's activities were directed towards defending itself against the combined assault of the state and Inkatha.

In August 1983 the incorporation issue resurfaced when the Department of Co-operation and Development announced that a "final" decision had been taken to incorporate Lamontville and Hambanathi into KwaZulu, with Chesterville's fate undecided. This provoked further unrest in townships already tense over Dube's assassination and the rent increases. JORAC maintained that incorporation would endanger residents' Section 10 urban rights (thus making them vulnerable to the pass laws) and make KwaZulu responsible for township services and upkeep. Both Pretoria and the PNAB

¹⁹⁶ Meer, F. (ed.) (1985); *Unrest in Natal, August 1985*, (Institute for Black Research, University of Natal, Durban), p.79. Cited in Booth, D.G. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.168-9.

¹⁹⁷ Sutcliffe, M. (1986); "The Lamontville township operation: 'Safety' or 'Security'", Unpublished paper, University of Natal, Durban, pp.15-16. Cited in Booth, D.G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.169.

¹⁹⁸ Reintges, C.M. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.107.

refused to negotiate with the community organisation on the issue. The KwaZulu government, meanwhile, retained a low profile. All this had the effect of hardening opinion in the townships against incorporation and furthering resentment against Inkatha.¹⁹⁹

Violence erupted on 22 July 1984 when Inkatha supporters provoked a fight at a service in Lamontville to unveil a tombstone honouring Dube. The violence spread to Hambanathi in August when Inkatha supporters attacked houses and set fire to cars in the township. JORAC official Alfred Sithole and two others were killed and the house of JORAC chairman Joseph Gumede stoned during the week long violence. The families of those closely associated with JORAC and the UDF eventually fled the township.²⁰⁰

Buthelezi's announcement that he would visit Lamontville on 1 September to allow residents to express their views on incorporation, and provocative statements he made before the visit, prompted a massive evacuation of the township. Although there was no violence on the day of the rally, during the days which followed residents of a nearby hostel attacked residents of the township. In early 1985, violence erupted between residents of Hambanathi resulting in an exodus of the most prominent JORAC activists.²⁰¹

The declaration of the partial state of emergency in July 1985 (which excluded Natal) intensified repression of the civic. JORAC's chairman, Reverend M. Xundu, was detained in August and other executive members forced into hiding.²⁰² In late August, Inkatha impis attending a Shaka Day

¹⁹⁹ Suttcliffe, M. and Wellings, P. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.349.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.352 and City Press, (26.8.84), p.2.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.353-4 and Sitas, A. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.103.

²⁰² Booth, D.G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.167.

Rally in Umlazi crossed into Lamontville where they attacked houses and residents, killing four people. The wave of attacks on JORAC officials and UDF members, the detention and removal of leaders, and the distancing of residents from the organisation for fear of Inkatha reprisals effectively smashed JORAC during the second half of 1985.

Intensified conflicts between Inkatha and UDF members were sparked off by the murder of Victoria Mxenge, a treason trial lawyer of the UDF and treasurer of the organisation. This provoked unrest throughout Durban: the youth embarked on a school boycott; Inkatha members attacked mourners at Mxenge's funeral; vigilantes attacked township residents; and numerous attacks were waged on individuals. By means of this wave of intimidation, Inkatha was able to establish itself in the townships while simultaneously removing JORAC from the political arena.²⁰³ This process was facilitated by the activities of the security forces.

On 16 April 1986, the SAP and SADF invaded Lamontville at the invitation of the town council. Roadblocks were set up, and homes and individuals searched, while residents were forced to indicate their support for the community council, the UDF or COSATU on a signed statement which included their names and addresses.²⁰⁴ Members of the Lamontville Co-ordinating Committee, representing various community organisations including JORAC, accused the security forces of assisting Inkatha impis. In Chesterville, residents were harassed by the "A-team" vigilantes. About 40 people were killed during 1986 and hardly three weeks into 1987 eight more people were killed.

²⁰³ Suttcliffe, M. and Wellings, P. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.354-6 and De Villiers, R. (1985); "Inkatha and the State: UDF under attack", in *Work in Progress*, (39), p.34.

²⁰⁴ Booth, D.G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.167.

The residents of Lamontville and Chesterville responded to the wave of intimidation and violence by forming the Lamontville Crisis Co-ordinating Committee (LCCC) - comprising the local branch of COSAS, Malayo (youth organisation), the Lamontville Residents' Association, the local branch of the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), the Lamontville Parents' Association, Hostel representatives, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), and JORAC - and the Chesterville Crisis Committee respectively.²⁰⁵ The motivating force behind the formation of these organisations was to increase organisational co-ordination and extend the social base of the community organisations.

It was hoped that these organisations would lead to the creation of civic associations in the two townships. However, according to Schofield, "these relatively high profile bodies ... gave the vigilante units easily accessible civic bodies and high profile township personalities, who were easy targets for vigilante hit squads". The leadership of local community organisations bore the brunt of the intensive wave of vigilante attacks. Consequently, the LCCC and the Chesterville Crisis Committee split into a myriad of "interest groups".²⁰⁶

During 1986, clashes between UDF-aligned organisations and Inkatha, vigilantes and the security forces continued unabated. Inkatha demonstrated its determination to suppress popular organisation in Durban's African township. Although the wave of intimidation and repression led to the collapse of organisations in the townships, the spirit of defiance, as well as opposition to Inkatha, was not diminished. The violence also spread to the KwaZulu

²⁰⁵ Reintges, C.M. (1986); *op.cit.*, pp.108-9 and Schofield, A.M. (1986); Chasing the wind: Unrest, space, place and time in Durban, 1982-1986, Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, pp.35-6.

²⁰⁶ Schofield, A.M. (1986); *op.cit.*, p.36.

townships, particularly KwaMashu where clashes between vigilantes and school students developed into unprecedented open warfare.

8.6. The Western Cape

Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC)

Although the first modern civic organisation was formed in Soweto in 1977, the first mass-based civics were formed in Port Elizabeth's African townships and Cape Town's coloured suburbs.²⁰⁷ School and consumer boycotts in Cape Town in 1979-80 played an important part in the early development of civic organisations in the suburbs. The thirty-two civic groups which emerged between 1980 and 1982 in the coloured suburbs often began as small, *ad-hoc* groups to tackle such problems as inconvenient and expensive transportation, high rents, and poor recreational and child-care facilities.²⁰⁸

In 1980 a number of popular struggles provoked the emergence and growth of community organisations in Cape Town. Community activity in support of the 1980 school boycotts, a bus boycott against fare increases and a meat boycott in support of a strike by meat workers involved widespread community mobilisation. Political activity was focused almost entirely on the emerging community organisations because of the relative weakness of trade unions in the area. The most important of these organisations were the residents' associations in Cape Town's coloured suburbs and the parent-student committees which were formed to support the school boycotts. Twelve of these organisations came together in June 1980 to form the Umbrella Rentals Committee (URC) to oppose a rent increase announced by the City

²⁰⁷ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in Cape Town and to Appendix C below for a summary of the emergence and development of CAHAC.

²⁰⁸ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.40.

and Divisional Councils in May 1980.²⁰⁹

The government responded to widespread community mobilisation in the Western Cape by banning all meetings in the area from mid-June. When the ban on meetings was lifted in September that year, the URC was able to meet. At its first meeting the committee concluded that the problems facing the oppressed people in their residential areas did not arise from the rent question alone but from the "whole housing situation". It accordingly decided to broaden its perspective and changed its name to CAHAC to reflect this. When CAHAC had its second meeting in December 1981, it had 33 affiliate organisations based in both the "Coloured" and African communities.²¹⁰

CAHAC was formed largely to combat the proposed rent increases during 1980. In this struggle CAHAC concentrated on the organisation of the rent campaign within the context of a broader struggle over the whole housing question in South Africa. This campaign involved three phases. The first involved the unification of a number of dispersed local civic associations and other groups into a larger and more effective organisation.

In the second phase the organisation articulated its grievances and framed its demands. The Committee identified the causes of the massive rent increases and eviction of tenants as: the lack of representation of oppressed people on bodies taking decisions about housing; the Group Areas legislation which forced people to live far from their work-place and placed them under the control of state officials; and the system of "jump rents" which pushed up rent payments enormously when fairly small wage increases were won. CAHAC demanded: the ending of all rent increases; the setting of rents at

²⁰⁹ *Loc.cit.*

²¹⁰ *Loc.cit.*

affordable levels; that the government take full responsibility for housing; and bigger state subsidies for housing.²¹¹

The final phase in the rent campaign was publicity and mass action. In early December 1981 the organisation embarked on a campaign against high rents. CAHAC organised a petition (which was signed by 41 000 people), rallies, meetings and demonstrations and finally demanded a meeting with the Minister of Community Affairs, Pen Kotze. However, a meeting with the Minister in March 1982 failed to gain any favourable response from the authorities. By the end of 1982 CAHAC had decided against a rent boycott because it did not yet feel strong enough to sustain such a campaign. In addition to the rent campaign, CAHAC was involved in campaigns against bus fare increases, boycotts of products in support of striking workers and in mobilising support for the anti-Republic Day and anti-SAIC campaigns in 1981.²¹²

Two principles played an important role in CAHAC activities during the early 1980s: the belief that working-class struggles cannot be narrowly confined to factory based issues; and the belief in working class leadership. CAHAC contended that rents often absorb up to 50 percent of wages and cannot therefore be considered as secondary issues. In addition, it was argued that if working class leadership is to be established within the broader struggle for democracy, then it is important "that workers themselves move increasingly into leadership positions, not only in trade unions but also in community and other organisations".²¹³

²¹¹ Davies, R. et al. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.362-3.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.363.

²¹³ *Loc.cit.*

CAHAC also committed itself to establishing working relationships with other progressive organisations. It resolved to establish a firm relationship with the trade union movement, recognising the close link between the struggles workers face in their workplace and in their communities.²¹⁴ However, according to Nasson, suspicion and factionalism in the coloured community prevented "civic structures in the Western Cape from attaining the cohesion and maturity that existed in the Eastern Cape and the Transvaal".²¹⁵ From the early 1980s, civic associations in the coloured townships began to reflect "philosophical divisions and significant differences in political outlook between the unity movement and the increasingly influential charterist-oriented organisations".²¹⁶

Tensions between the two ideological groups emerged after the formation of a broad-based Disorderly Bills Action Committee (DBAC) in August 1982 to oppose the "Koornhof Bills". The unity movement groups within the DBAC questioned the role of white liberal organisations such as NUSAS and the Black Sash as well as black petty bourgeois groups such as the Western Cape Traders' Association. This led to the withdrawal of CAHAC, other charterist movements, and the trade unions from the committee.²¹⁷

The formation of the UDF in 1983 also generated conflict within CAHAC. Ideological differences within the Western Cape coloured community led to the disaffiliation of some CAHAC affiliates in 1983. These were the Schotsche-kloof Residents Association, the Bokmakierie, Bridgetown, Silvertown, Kewtown

²¹⁴ *Loc.cit.*

²¹⁵ Nasson,B. (1991); "Political Ideologies in the Western Cape", in Lodge,T. and Nasson,B. (eds.); *op.cit.*, pp.220-1.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.220.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.221-2.

Residents Association (BBSK) and the Bishop Lavis Action Committee.

During 1982 and 1983, CAHAC was drawn into the national political campaign against the reform initiatives. CAHAC, because of its roots in the coloured community, was at the centre of the campaign. According to CAHAC's chairman, Wilfred Rhodes, the organisation's guiding principles made it impossible for it to support the reforms. These principles included the belief that all South Africans should have direct representation at every level of government.²¹⁸ CAHAC strongly condemned and rejected the reforms in the following terms:

We believe that working within the system will never bring about the fundamental change we all desire. We reject any reforms that exclude the vast majority of the population of SA. CAHAC will continue to strive for a non-racial democratic South Africa.²¹⁹

The organisation aimed to mobilise the community against the proposals by seeking "alliances with all those who stand in opposition to the Government's constitutional proposals".²²⁰ CAHAC was included among the 50 organisations which met in early May 1983 to plan a joint campaign against the constitutional proposals. A co-ordinating committee was established and broad principles drawn up as the basis for the campaign. This meeting laid the basis for the formation of the Western Cape region of the UDF which was formally launched on 24 June.

CAHAC, through its constituent organisations, was able to reach almost every resident of the coloured residential areas. The campaign against the constitution was conducted largely through the Million Signature campaign, house-to-house meetings and mass rallies. In this campaign, activists

²¹⁸ Cape Herald, (22.5.82), p.1.

²¹⁹ Cape Herald, (15.1.83), p.10.

²²⁰ Rand Daily Mail, (31.12.82), p.7.

popularised the UDF and called on prospective voters to boycott the elections. The low polls in the election for the House of Representatives in August 1984 was regarded as a huge success by those opposing the new constitution. In the Western Cape, where nearly 40 percent of the total coloured population and an estimated 35,5 percent of eligible voters live, the average poll in the 20 constituencies was only 11 percent.²²¹

However, mobilisation during the anti-election campaign was not transformed into permanent organisation. By the beginning of 1985 civic, youth and student activity had declined and organisations which emerged during the campaign were depleted. Many organisations collapsed and those that still existed involved only a small number of activists. In mid-1985, however, the spread of the school boycott to the Western Cape revived and transformed organisations and politics in the region.²²²

The school boycott gave rise to a new student organisation, the Western Cape Students Congress (WESCO), and led to the revival of CAYCO. It also led to the rapid political education of thousands of school students and other young people. The government's heavy-handed response to the boycott and other popular activities also promoted the political consciousness of adults. Parents were brought into the protest by the formation of PTSAs and education crisis committees while many other adults overtly supported the students.

During the school boycott political activity and protest in the Western Cape assumed near insurrectionary levels. However, the brief period of mass

²²¹ Heymans, C. (1985); 'The new constitution: A view on "coloured" perspectives', in Africa Insight, (Vol.15, No.1), p.38.

²²² Anon (1987); "Student and youth politics in the Western Cape", in Work in Progress, (Nos.50/-51, October-November), p.33.

protest was followed by a wave of repression. The government responded to the upsurge in protest by targeting the UDF and its leaders.²²³ On 26 October 1985 the government extended the state of emergency to the Western Cape. Sixty-nine members of civic organisations (including almost the entire Western Cape UDF executive) were detained and 100 organisations prohibited from holding meetings.²²⁴

Community organisations in the Western Cape were ravaged by the various emergencies, particularly, the second state of emergency.²²⁵ Mass detentions from the outset of this emergency forced many key activists and leaders in the coloured areas into hiding. In addition, police actions against mass meetings eroded mass mobilisation because of the widespread fear of the effects of involvement. The government also banned 119 organisations in the Western Cape, including CAHAC, from functioning, from holding any meetings and publishing any statements in any form.²²⁶ However, according to Nasson:

despite the UDF's shrinking organisational base in the Western Cape, the ideology and imagery of the charterist tradition continued to occupy a vital position in the lexicon of progressive politics throughout the eighties. UDF supporters, away from the whiff of tear gas and the clatter of South African police helicopters, retained the capability of rapidly mobilising mass demonstrations with thousands of exuberant supporters.²²⁷

Throughout the eighties CAHAC failed to develop a mass base. The Committee remained a collection of community organisations consisting of a

²²³ Nasson, B. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.226.

²²⁴ Cameron, R. (1988); "The Crossroads: Sectarianism and the State", in Howe, G. (ed.); *op.cit.*, p.58.

²²⁵ See Kruss, G. (1987); "The 1986 state of emergency in the Western Cape", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 4, *op.cit.*, p.182.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*; pp.182-3 and City Press, (22.6.86), p.1.

²²⁷ Nasson, B. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.214.

small number of activists. People flocked to the organisation during times of crisis and drifted out at the end of campaigns. The historical tradition of weak, ultra-left political organisation, the existence of a rival organisation and a weak tradition of trade union organisation accounted for the failure to create a mass based organisation. In addition, from mid-1985 the UDF and its affiliates bore the brunt of repression resulting in the neutralisation of many leaders and organisations.

8.7. Northern Transvaal

The Northern Transvaal People's Congress (NOTPECO)

The Northern Transvaal is largely rural and the region included four homelands - the "self-governing" territories of KwaNdebele, Lebowa, and Gazankulu, and the "independent" Venda.²²⁸ The issues facing African people in the area are issues which face all rural Africans in the country. These are poverty, landlessness, over-population, drought, high unemployment, the effects of forced resettlement, and rule by corrupt and puppet chiefs and homeland authorities. Many people faced the additional threat of incorporation into, or forced resettlement to, the homelands.

The Northern Transvaal region of the UDF was launched at the beginning of 1986 and soon had over 100 affiliates. A number of village and action committees from the rural areas, consisting of students, the youth and older residents, were part of this group. The most important structures in the region were the youth congresses, which mushroomed in the second half of the 1980s.

Mass mobilisation in the Northern Transvaal was provoked by three major struggles during the second half of the eighties: the Lebowa revolt from

²²⁸ Refer to Appendix B below for a summary of the conditions underlying mass mobilisation in the Northern Transvaal and to Appendix C below for the emergence and development of NOTPECO.

1984-86, and the anti-independence struggles in Venda and KwaNdebele. In addition, resistance to incorporation and relocation into the homelands gave rise to a number of rural community organisations. The following is an analysis of rural struggles in Lebowa, Moutse and KwaNdebele, and their impact on mass mobilisation in these areas.

The formation of the Northern Transvaal UDF region in 1986 brought together sixty-three affiliates: most of these organisations were in or near the Lebowa homeland.²²⁹ Many community organisations in Lebowa grew from small political discussion groups. Increasing national organisation and resistance, and the spread of ideas on organisation, and strategies and tactics from the urban areas to the rural areas provided an impetus to local organisation.

Responding to a climate of political change, feeding on the accounts and materials brought by youths in contact with the urban areas and some input from individual Turfloop students, these groups discussed the rise of the UDF and the contents of the Freedom Charter.²³⁰

The proliferation of youth congresses in Lebowa can be traced to the 1984 school boycotts. The 1984 school boycott was responsible for politicisation in Lebowa following a police assault of marching students. The students responded by attacking government vehicles and introduced a campaign to isolate the local police. This campaign was coupled with a call on chiefs and MPs to resign when the UDF region was formed in 1986. The school boycott and the campaign to isolate the police spread to Sekhukhuneland and in Steelpoort farm and mine workers stayed away from work on May Day.

The major forces behind mass mobilisation in the area were students from

²²⁹ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, p.119.

²³⁰ Delius, P. (1990); "Migrants, Comrades and Rural Revolt: Sekhukhuneland, 1950-1987", in Transformation, (No.13), p.21.

Turfloop, UDF activists, and members of COSATU unions. Beginning in mid-1984, these activists began organising meetings for school students, the youth and the community leading to the formation of community organisations in the area.²³¹ For example, in a village in Letsilele near Tzaneen, the Merakoma Youth Congress (MEYCO) was a leading force in the formation of street committees.²³² The village was divided into three sections, with street committees formed in each section. A people's court was set up after the death of an activist in an attempt to isolate the police. In addition, the emergence of street committees led to the removal of the local chief from his position. Thus, as Jo-Anne Collinge pointed out:

Within particular villages - as for instance in Steelpoort - the youth congress co-ordinates its work with women's, pupils, workers' and civic organisations. The structures, activists point out, are a rural equivalent of the street committees and neighbourhood organisations established in the urban townships....Popular organisations in Lebowa have taken up the national education issues and they have posed themselves as an "alternative" civic body by handling public projects such as clean-up campaigns. They have also taken up distinctly local issues - such as protest against enforced contributions to a company-owned recreation club in Eerstegeluk.²³³

On April 11, 1986, the regional chairman of the Northern Transvaal UDF died in detention 12 hours after he was detained. Twenty thousand people attended his funeral on the 4 May, where it was announced that white-owned businesses would be boycotted. During May, the South African police and army entered southern Lebowa and effectively occupied the homeland after the declaration of the state of emergency on June 12.²³⁴ A vigilante group also emerged in the homeland at the beginning of 1986 and, during the second half of the year, UDF activists were forced to retreat. In Sekhukhune

²³¹ See Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (1989); "Workers and the Community", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.14, No.2, June).

²³² See Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (1989); "Workers and the Community", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.14, No.2, June).

²³³ The Star, (21.4.86), p.10.

²³⁴ Lodge, T. (1991); *op.cit.*, pp.122-4.

and Nebo the majority of community organisations were crushed by repression during the state of emergency. The residents of the homeland accused the police of torture, assaults, firebombing and intimidation. During 1987 a number of organisations were reactivated.²³⁵ In both areas village committees were established while students were organised into the Sekhukhune Students Congress (SESCO) and Nebo Students Congress (NESCO) despite repression by the security forces.

Rural resistance and mass mobilisation in the region were also provoked by border adjustments leading to the consolidation of Lebowa, KwaNdebele, Venda and Gazankulu. One example of resistance to incorporation and relocation occurred in the central Transvaal area of Moutse which was incorporated into KwaNdebele on 31 December 1985.

In 1980 Moutse was excised from Lebowa and placed under central government administration as a step towards its incorporation into KwaNdebele.²³⁶ During the following years, the mainly Pedi-speaking residents of the villages refused to accept incorporation. Opposition to incorporation was spearheaded by two groups: the government-appointed tribal authorities, chiefs, and Lebowa MPs; and the mass based community organisations - village committees and youth organisations.²³⁷

In October 1985, at a mass meeting 10,000 people in Moutse unanimously rejected incorporation. On December 22, over 5,000 people at a rally rejected incorporation and resolved to form youth and parents organisations in their

²³⁵ "Sekhukhune and Nebo don't give in", in SASPU National, (Last Quarter, 1987), p.4.

²³⁶ Transvaal Rural Action Committee (1988); "KwaNdebele: The struggle against independence", in Cobbett,W. and Cohen,R. (eds.); *op.cit.*, p.120.

²³⁷ "Moutse incorporation backfires on government", in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.1, February 1986), p.16.

villages and boycott anything connected to KwaNdebele - documents, passes, pensions, schools and shops. On 1 January 1986, the day after Moutse was incorporated into the homeland, vigilantes from KwaNdebele attacked the residents of Moutse's villages in a dawn raid, leaving seven vigilantes, two policemen and one villager dead. 60 residents were loaded onto trucks by the vigilantes and taken to a stadium where they were held captive, beaten and tortured.²³⁸

The next day, protest meetings were held in two Moutse villages, which were followed by the murder of two policemen by protesting residents. On 3 January, police and soldiers invaded the villages.²³⁹ In the ensuing months, clashes with the police intensified. At the forefront of resistance and mass mobilisation were the area's youth congresses, in particular the Dennilton Youth Congress (DEYCO) and the Uitvlucht Youth Congress (UIYCO).²⁴⁰ These two congresses, the former established at the beginning of 1985 and the latter in December 1985, were politicised during the resistance campaign by police harassment. Once politicised, these organisations identified their primary task as building community organisations and people's power in Moutse. During the campaign against incorporation, village meetings and mass rallies led to the formation of a number of village committees in Moutse. These came together to form the Moutse Civic Association.

In 1986, resistance to independence for KwaNdebele led to the formation of a popular alliance consisting of the royal family, the youth, the homeland's civil service, local white farmers, and the population at large.²⁴¹ Resistance

²³⁸ The Cape Times, (3.1.86), p.1.

²³⁹ See "Moutse incorporation backfires on government", *op.cit.*, pp.16-17.

²⁴⁰ *Loc.cit.*

²⁴¹ Transvaal Rural Action Committee (1988); *op.cit.*, p.114.

began after the central government announced plans to relocate the residents of Ekingale²⁴² and incorporate Moutse into the homeland. Throughout 1985, the residents of these two areas resisted these plans, paving the way for the anti-independence struggles in the homeland. The use of Mbokodo to harass opposition groups in these two areas was followed by widespread harassment of KwaNdebele's anti-independence groups in 1986.

The KwaNdebele anti-independence struggle took a number of different forms: school boycotts, stayaways, demonstrations and strikes. Between May and August 1986 there was a sustained school boycott, a two-day stayaway by the civil service, and a three-day stayaway by homeland workers. The period was also characterised by numerous clashes between the youth on the one hand, and Mbokodo and homeland police and the SADF on the other. Resistance in the homeland began after a mass meeting at the Royal Kraal on 12 May, 1986, following an announcement on 7 May that KwaNdebele would become independent in December.

At this meeting, the 20 to 30 thousand people present put forward three demands to be put to the homeland authorities: that the decision to accept independence be withdrawn; that Mbokodo be dismantled; and that all MPs and cabinet ministers resign. During April, community outrage against Mbokodo was inflamed by the assault and abduction of school children and teachers, and the murder of an anti-independence activist, Jacob Skosana, on 28 April. On May 13, soldiers and police invaded nearly all the 25 villages in KwaNdebele after hundreds of youths went on a rampage on the day of Skosana's funeral.²⁴³

²⁴² See Transvaal Rural Action Committee (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.117-119.

²⁴³ The Star, (14.5.86), p.1.

A report-back meeting, scheduled for 14 May, was banned by the local magistrate. However, 25,000 people attended the meeting, which was broken up by the police and army. In the aftermath of the attack, students embarked on a school boycott, the businesses and houses of 41 MPs were burnt down, and successful mass stayaways were held on 3-4 June and 16 June. Between 15 and 29 July, the entire civil service stayed away from work. The turning point of the violence occurred on the 29 July when Piet Ntuli, a leader of Mbokodo and a Cabinet Minister, was murdered. The legislative assembly eventually banned Mbokodo and cancelled the independence plans on 12 August.²⁴⁴

However, in late 1986 a new spate of detentions swept through the homeland indicating a renewed crackdown on anti-independence activists. By October, most of the leading opponents of independence were in hiding. Skosana's death in November, and the election of George Mahlangu as Chief Minister, led to uncertainty on the future of the homeland. In 1987 the homeland government renewed its attempts to gain independence.²⁴⁵ In March, house-to-house raids were carried out by police and unknown supporters, scholars were detained, vigilante groups were harassing people and there was a strong police and army presence in the villages. Detentions, banning of meetings, and harassment of opposition groups by the South African and homeland police took its toll and by May, the momentum of the anti-independence movement was reversed. On May 6, the Legislative Assembly took a decision to declare the homeland independent retrospective from 11 December 1986.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Ritchken, E. (1989); "The KwaNdebele struggle against independence", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 5, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.429.

²⁴⁵ See "KwaNdebele: Puppets vs. the people, Round two", in SASPU National, (Last Quarter, 1987), p.14.

²⁴⁶ Pretoria News, (7.5.87), p.22.

However, in June, the Pretoria government's attitude towards granting independence underwent a significant change when it declared that independence would only be conferred after a show of "broad support".²⁴⁷

The anti-independence struggle in 1986 was won without any formal organisation. However, according to the Transvaal Rural Action Committee, during the course of the campaign "the population became politicised and was able to take power into its hands".²⁴⁸ In 1987, activists identified the formation of mass organisations as a priority. The second wave of resistance to independence provoked the formation of structures linking students, youth and old people. According to a KwaNdebele youth activist:

We have a coordinating committee for the students, youth and old people...We are preparing to form street and village committees in every village. There is unity among the people and they are eager to fight this thing. We want to form organisations, for the people, of the people and by the people.²⁴⁹

The major UDF-aligned organisation in the area was the KwaNdebele Youth Congress (KYC) which emerged in response to Mbokodo activities. The youth of KwaNdebele took it upon themselves to defend the community against the brutality of the vigilantes and security forces. Many took to the bush during the three month anti-independence struggle in 1986. The youth also took it upon themselves to form community organisations in the area, focusing on street and village committees.

After the launch of the Northern Transvaal Regional UDF at the beginning of 1986, regional organisers set out to establish the Northern Transvaal

²⁴⁷ The Cape Times, (10.6.87), p.13.

²⁴⁸ Weekly Mail, (23.1.87 - 29.1.87), p.9.

²⁴⁹ "KwaNdebele: Puppets vs. the people, round two", *op.cit.*, p.14.

People's Congress (NOTPECO).²⁵⁰ NOTPECO was formed in August 1986 to draw the numerous village committees which sprang up throughout the region into an umbrella civic organisation. These included organisations such as the Phaahla-Manoge Action Committee, the Leandra Action Committee, and the Moutse Civic Association. Three urban-based action committees manned by migrant workers on the mines were formed "to further awaken rural people from political slumber".²⁵¹ The creation of an umbrella civic organisation for the region was seen as a means of expanding organisation in the rural areas - a means of politicising people and drawing them into progressive structures.

The establishment of NOTPECO introduced the first regional civic organisation in the country. The formation of NOTPECO was significant for another reason. The organisation drew together migrants working in the urban areas and residents of the rural villages. One of NOTPECO's aims was to close the gap between the rural communities and the migrant workers in the cities. This was achieved, according to the organisation, by establishing committees of migrant workers in the towns and cities to work alongside the village committees. NOTPECO, according to Delius, used the urban hostels as recruiting grounds and rural burial societies as building blocks.²⁵²

Migrant workers living in hostels in the urban centres were formed into urban committees with links to their village committees. Whenever one of the committees met, a delegate was sent from the other committee. Both the urban and rural committees shared the same agenda, so both committees

²⁵⁰ See "NOTPECO: Bridging the gap from town to village", in SASPU National, (Vol.7, No.4, Nov/Dec 1986), pp.17-18.

²⁵¹ *Loc.cit.*

²⁵² Delius,P. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.22.

were bound by decisions taken at committee meetings. Thus, urban committees had a say in decisions affecting their rural communities, while rural dwellers, who often preferred to consult the migrant workers before taking decisions, had the opportunity to do so. Consequently, NOTPECO's membership included migrant workers from the PWV industrial centre and the mines, domestic workers, farmworkers, and young and old people from the rural villages. In addition, because of the ethnic mix located in the homelands and surrounding areas of the Northern Transvaal, NOTPECO's membership cut across ethnic lines.

NOTPECO's constituency was largely a peasant one and, unlike the civic organisations in the urban areas which were concerned largely with rent and housing issues, was concerned largely with issues around land hunger.²⁵³ Local structures of the umbrella civic organisation were structured along the lines of local youth congresses. Every village was demarcated into unit blocks and each unit block into street committees. Where there were no streets, as in most rural areas, elected representatives of the villages sat on "kgoro (kraal) committees". According to Peter Mokaba, general secretary of the UDF regional executive:

We have already had unparalleled success in organising 'village block' and 'street committees'. We intend removing the tribal chiefs as soon as possible. We have called on them to resign. [The ultimate aim was] to allow the people to govern themselves. We have already established people's courts in some areas and are in the process of forming our own militia which will carry out the orders of the courts.²⁵⁴

These village committees entrenched "people's power" in the rural areas of the Northern Transvaal. According to a youth leader, John Mahlangu, the kgoro facilitated democratic participation through "grassroots involvement" in discussions in small groups, thus making "it possible to continue mass

²⁵³ New Nation, (23.4.87), p.21.

²⁵⁴ Sunday Times, (11.5.86), p.7.

meetings", during a period in which they had been banned.²⁵⁵

NOTPECO was highly critical of the tribal authorities and aimed at developing a close relationship with trade unions. It also sought support among the unemployed and aimed to start employment generating projects. From 1985 migrants with trade union experience began to play an assertive role in the affairs of some villages. These men usually emerged as informal local leaders by challenging the traditional decision-making processes.²⁵⁶

However, NOTPECO's influence in the region was over-shadowed by the numerous youth organisations which sprang up in late-1985 and 1986. For example, by March 1986, almost every village in Sekhukhuneland had its own youth congress.²⁵⁷ These organisations grew under conditions of widespread resistance and repression. This had a number of consequences for rural organisation and resistance.

The increasing membership of youth congresses led to the declining influence of relatively politicised elements in the village committees "who were either swept along with this new constituency or were increasingly overshadowed by new leaders more in tune with the concerns of this enlarged following". Parents' committees in the villages diminished in significance once the migrants returned to the urban areas. Under these conditions, the activities of the youth "increasingly took the form of a generational revolt against all forms of authority". State reaction to the militancy of the youth during 1986 and 1987 led to the collapse of the youth movement by mid-1987.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ New Nation, (23.4.87), p.21.

²⁵⁶ Delius, P. (1990); *op.cit.*, p.22.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.23-4.

In conclusion, the formation of the UDF drew together large numbers of civic associations in a broad alliance to oppose the apartheid regime. This Front organisation also had a major role in the formation of new civics during the second half of the 1980s. The result was the increasing mobilisation and politicisation of black society. These were evident in the capacity of civic associations to develop a mass-based membership and/or to mobilise communities to support their campaigns. This demonstrated the hegemonic-building role played by civic associations during the period under review. In this sense, the civic associations played a central role in mobilising and politicising civil society leading to a shift in the balance of social forces towards the UDF.

Firstly, civic organisations emerged in response to a wide range of political, economic and social factors, and, in some cases, as a result of the organisational efforts of activists. The emphasis of these organisations was on the mobilisation and organisation of people around the concrete particulars of their everyday lives (rent increases, bus-fare increases, state repression, etc.). The majority of black people have similar material and political grievances, which played a major role in mass mobilisation and organisation. In addition, civic associations embarked on various campaigns around local issues as a means of mobilising people and drawing them into their organisations.

The first modern civic associations were established in Soweto (to oppose the community council system and rent increases) and in Port Elizabeth (to oppose rent increases). The SCA, established by a small group of prominent residents, was unable to build a mass base until 1985. By contrast, PEBCO, which was established by the unification of four existing residents' associations, had a much wider mass base in its first year of existence. During this period, the SCA remained an elite organisation with a small following

and a relatively minor influence on township politics. This was apparent during the revolt which broke out in September 1984. During its first year of existence, PEBCO's rallies were often attended by up to 10,000 people.

Both CAHAC and JORAC were formed by existing residents' associations to oppose rent increases in Cape Town's coloured suburbs and Durban's African townships respectively. They thus had a mass base with affiliates in a number of townships. However, both civics had to contend with powerful rival organisations. In the Western Cape, the rival Federation of Cape Civic Associations prevented the civics affiliated to CAHAC from attaining cohesion and maturity. In Natal, very weak links with trade unions and, more importantly, clashes with Inkatha, prevented JORAC from consolidating its support base.

The formation of the UDF in 1983 and widespread opposition to the new constitutional dispensation and the "Koornhof Bills", generated a number of civic organisations and the revival of others between 1983 and 1986. Amidst widespread resistance to the introduction of the BLAs and state repression during 1985 and the beginning of 1986, civics were established in townships in Cradock (CRADORA), in Pretoria (MCA), in East London (DVRA), in Alexandra (AAC), in the Northern Transvaal (NOTPECO), and in many other areas. In addition, a number of civics were revived (PEBCO, UBCO and the SCA).

In general, civics were established or revived during this period in response to a combination of state reform and repression. The inclusion of Soweto in the list of "affected areas" when the first emergency was declared in 1985 led to a tactical change leading to the formation of street committees in the townships. The SCA also embarked on a rent boycott during the second half of 1986, which was well supported, and a number of stayaways. PEBCO's

revival occurred in the wake of a consumer boycott and as a result of widespread repression during the first emergency. The gains made by the well-supported consumer boycott increased the organisation's prestige and state repression led to the formation of street committees throughout Port Elizabeth's townships.

The revival of Uitenhage's civic association occurred in the aftermath of a massacre in Langa on March 21, 1985. This was followed by a school boycott and, amidst violent confrontation with the security forces and attacks on policemen and councillors, the local authority collapsed. The street committee system was introduced and UBCO briefly took over the running of the township.

The MCA was formed in 1985 after police fired on protesting residents of Mamelodi. In the aftermath of the massacre, residents decided to embark on a rent boycott and establish a civic association. The MCA set up street committees and people's courts and virtually ran the township for a brief period. In Alexandra township, police action at a funeral at the beginning of 1986 led to a virtual civil war in the township. The AAC took advantage of the situation and set up street committees which took over some of the administrative and judicial functions after the local authority collapsed. Similar motivations for the establishment or revival of civics occurred in other parts of the country.

The UDF was able to extend its influence to the rural areas during the second half of the 1980s. Struggles against homeland rule, "independence" and incorporation and relocation into the homelands, and the effects of poverty, landlessness, over-population, drought, and high unemployment led to the formation of mass-based organisations in these areas. The establishment of NOTPECO in August 1986 brought together a number of these

organisations into an umbrella civic organisation. NOTPECO became the first regional civic organisation in the country.

The civics organised communities in one township or brought together organisations from a number of townships or villages. CAHAC, JORAC, PEBCO, UBCO and the SCA drew their membership from more than one township while NOTPECO united a number of existing village committees into a regional civic organisation. PEBCO, UBCO and the SCA functioned with branch structures which elected a small executive committee. CAHAC, JORAC and NOTPECO were umbrella organisations with delegates from all affiliate organisations represented on their executive committees. PEBCO, UBCO and the SCA maintained links with their membership through mass rallies. However, PEBCO, as well as CAHAC and JORAC, had regular meetings at branch (or affiliate) level in addition to mass meetings, thus ensuring mass participation.

Most of the civic associations formed during the first period (1979-1984) were led by the petit-bourgeoisie. The SCA's undemocratic and elitist foundations largely accounted for its insignificant membership until 1985. PEBCO, although led by the petty bourgeoisie, had a radical confrontationist approach which appealed to students and workers as well as businessmen and professionals. Likewise, JORAC had a "common people approach and a strong redistributive focus which played a major role in providing it with widespread support.

A central tool of mass mobilisation and organisation were the various campaigns organised by the civics around local material, as well as political grievances. The civic associations spearheaded township struggles around issues such as increasing rent and service charges, increases in bus-fares and food prices, etc. Such struggles facilitated the growth of civic associations in townships which were previously insulated from political activity,

while existing associations were often at the centre of mobilisation of the campaigns leading to an increase in their support.

The SCA, for example, aimed to draw people into the organisation by getting involved in popular struggles around issues like high rents and service charges, the unpopular community councils, and fighting for the recognition of Sowetans as permanent South African residents. A rent boycott organised by the SCA in June 1986, which was well supported by Soweto residents, led to a rapid growth of the street committee system in Soweto and expanded the support base of the civic.

The AAC was primarily concerned with issues which immediately affected the residents of Alexandra. These included unemployment, police harassment, informers, high taxi and bus fares, low wages, high rents, poor education, poor housing, the demolition of shacks by police, the presence of troops in the township, and the "bucket system" of sewerage. In April 1986 consumer and rent boycotts were launched in Alexandra as part of a national programme intended to effect the collapse of local administration. The resulting collapse of local administration placed the Action Committee at the forefront of the township's politics and led to its takeover of local administration for a brief period.

PEBCO was revived in November 1984 when it threatened a boycott of council-owned liquor outlets, a bus boycott and a one-day stayaway following a proposed rent increase by the Khayamandi Town Council. The Council backed down and the rent hikes were withdrawn leading to an increase in PEBCO's support. A PEBCO organised boycott of white-owned shops in July 15 1985, which lasted until December, led to the formation of street committee structures and a substantial expansion of the civic's membership.

During 1985, Uitenhage's African community embarked on three consumer boycotts organised by the local civic association. The boycotts during the first part of the year resulted in an expansion of UBCO membership, as well as the support of other UDF organisations in the area. However, during the second half of the year UBCO suffered a decline in support. The township had only four shops, and the consumer boycott of white-owned shops made shopping difficult. Harsh punishments were meted out by people's courts to suspected informers, people who declined to join the consumer boycott, and common criminals.

JORAC, which was created to unite a few townships in their opposition to rent increases, soon became a leading force in the community on other issues as well. Likewise, CAHAC, which was formed because of rent increases, became involved in campaigns against bus fare increases, boycotts of products in support of striking workers and in mobilising support for the anti-Republic Day and anti-SAIC campaigns in 1981.

Virtually all the organisations which existed at the time of the elections for the BLAs and the tri-cameral parliament participated in mobilising in the anti-elections campaigns. CAHAC, for example, through its constituent organisations, was able to reach almost every resident of the coloured residential areas. The campaign against the constitution was conducted largely through the Million Signature campaign, house-to-house meetings and mass rallies. In this campaign, activists popularised the UDF and called on prospective voters to boycott the elections. However, mobilisation during the anti-election campaign was not transformed into permanent organisation. By the beginning of 1985 civic, youth and student activity had declined and organisations which emerged during the campaign were depleted. Many organisations collapsed and those that still existed involved only a small number of activists.

By contrast, the leading role played by the SCA in the anti-elections campaign before the elections for the BLAs increased the support base of the organisation. The SCA took a leading role in forming an Anti-Community Councils Election Committee, which held meetings and rallies calling for a boycott of the elections. This committee, which was composed of student, youth, women's and labour organisations, gave the SCA access to a wide range of individuals and groups.

Street committees also played a fundamental role in mass mobilisation and organisation. These structures provided the base for establishing strong grassroots organisation. In Mamelodi, for instance, the intention was to organise the community into yard, block and street committees, while in Soweto the basic structure was the street committee. Each street elected leaders (consisting of four parents - two men and two women - and two youths - one student, and one working or unemployed) which were represented in a block committee consisting of six or eight adjoining streets.

In addition, since membership included workers, women and youth, the street committees provided an organisational link between specific local organisations of these groups. For example, the executive of the MCA, based on the street committee system, consisted of ten central committee members, and four representatives elected by the Mamelodi Youth Organisation, the student committee, the Zakheni Women's Organisation and the newly formed Mamelodi Teachers Union (MATU). The UBCO Executive Committee had representatives from the trade unions, the Uitenhage Youth Congress, Uitenhage Women's Organisation, Uitenhage Students' Committee, Uitenhage Parents' Committee, Uitenhage Traders' Association, the Consumer Boycott Committee, the Langa Advisory Committee and the Langa Coordinating Committee.

Secondly, the civics played a central role in transforming the particular interests of communities they organised into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system. This they did in a number of ways. The principles and objectives of civic associations affiliated to the UDF represented challenges to the dominant apartheid system. Many of these civic associations had adopted the Freedom Charter by the end of the period of review, signalling their conception of an alternative political system to that of apartheid. All the civic organisations rejected and opposed apartheid structures and, during the mid-1980s, began to develop alternative organs of people's power. The UDF civic associations drew into their structures organisations of the youth, women and trade unions (unity-in-action) and recognised the link between the struggles of these interest groups and their own struggles. In practice, unity-in-action meant uniting these struggles into one struggle against all aspects of apartheid exploitation and domination. In addition, from the very beginning, civic associations linked immediate material issues with broader political issues in their aims and objectives. Among these was the call for the overthrow of the whole political structure and black representation in central government.

In large part, the civic associations emphasized the destruction of apartheid rather than the movement to socialism as the goal of the national liberation struggle. Although most adopted the Freedom Charter, or were identified as "Charterist" because of their affiliation with the UDF, little attention was placed on developing a socialist content in their aims and objectives. However, some civics did promote an embryonic socialist consciousness. CAHAC, for example, maintained a strong belief in working class leadership and argued that if working class leadership is to be established within the broader struggle for democracy, then it is important "that workers themselves move increasingly into leadership positions, not only in trade unions but also in community and other organisations".

The civics' challenge of the dominant system was also evident in the new structures created by them during the second half of the 1980s. The introduction of the street committees constituted a challenge to the authority of the local state. The total collapse of the local authorities in 1985 was identified as an opportunity to establish people's power in the townships. Many civics stepped into this vacuum, performing limited administrative and judicial duties. Furthermore, in certain areas the authorities were forced to enter into negotiations with civics on a wide range of issues. Civic associations perceived the street committees as alternative structures of mass participatory democracy which were bound by such democratic principles as mandates, accountability, and report-backs.

United action and collaboration with other progressive forces were evident in the principles and practices of all the civic associations reviewed. The SCA, for example, aimed to co-operate with any organisation which had similar aims and objectives to its own. Before the elections for the Black Local Authorities in 1983 the SCA also took a leading role in forming an Anti-Community Councils Election Committee, composed of students, youth, women's, and labour organisations.

The strategies employed by civic associations in their campaigns during the second half of the 1980s also took the form of a challenge to state power. By the middle of the 1980s most civic organisations were directing their activities at opposing all forms of apartheid oppression and exploitation which township residents were experiencing. From 1984 civic associations increasingly recognised and asserted a political role in their campaigns. Civics began to link local concerns for the abolition of rent, service charges and bus fare increases with demands for the resignation of all town councillors, the release of detainees and political prisoners, the withdrawal of the army/police from townships, and the unbanning of political organisations.

The rent boycott, which began in the Vaal Triangle at the end of 1984, was initiated by a UDF affiliate and taken up by UDF affiliates in other parts of the country. In the process, the rent boycott was transformed from a tactic to oppose rent increases to a strategy to challenge the government. Consumer boycotts were introduced in the Eastern Cape townships by UDF affiliates and were soon taken up in other parts of the country by other affiliates. Activists soon began to link local demands with national political demands.

Finally, civic associations also played a central role in expanding the political and ideological leadership of the UDF in civil society. Civic associations led popular resistance under the banner of the UDF in many townships and rural villages and their dominance within civil society spread the UDF tradition to most parts of South Africa. Here, because of the mass-based membership of civic associations and their dominance in local politics the UDF was able to shape the political, intellectual and moral objectives of communities. This is a clear demonstration of the role civic associations played in the political and ideological struggle found in Gramsci's strategy of the war of position.

The political leadership of the UDF civic associations is demonstrated by the lead they took in township campaigns. For example, the SCA took the lead in forming an Anti-Community Councils Election Committee prior to the elections for the BLAs in 1983. It also initiated a boycott of rent and service charges on 1 June 1986, and by the end of the month 80 percent of Soweto residents had stopped paying rent. In the course of the rent boycott a survey of Soweto residents indicated the widespread support of the civic association. In April 1986 a well-supported consumer and rent boycotts launched by the AAC as part of a national programme intended to isolate all collaborators socially and effect the collapse of local administration resulted in the resignation of the entire town council.

PEBCO's leadership in the townships of Port Elizabeth is also best indicated by the campaigns it initiated. The November 1984 PEBCO threat of a boycott and a one-day stayaway led to a withdrawal of a proposed rent hike. In March 1985, a PEBCO initiated stayaway was supported by 90 per cent of the African workers of Port Elizabeth. On July 15 PEBCO called for a boycott of white-owned shops which lasted until December. In 1986, another stayaway was organised by Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage community organisations to commemorate the March 1985 massacre in Uitenhage. This stay-away was supported by unions in both cities and by African and coloured workers in the two cities. Subsequent stayaways on May Day and June 16 were also well supported by blacks in both cities.

In a number of instances civic associations were able to establish elaborate networks of street committees, drawing in the majority of the people living in their communities into their structures. Examples here are the AAC in Alexandra, the MCA, and Cradora. Finally, in certain areas the authorities were forced to enter into negotiations with civics on a wide range of issues. This represented a limited shift of power from the local authorities to the mass-based civic associations. Examples here include the SCA, which entered into negotiations with the town clerk on the rent boycott, PEBCO, which entered into negotiations with the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, individual employers, and the state, including the SAP, during the course of a consumer boycott, and the DVRA, which entered into negotiations with the East London City Council about plans for the upgrading of Duncan Village.

Widespread and sustained rent, consumer and transport boycotts, the formation of extensive networks of street committees involving large numbers of people, the detention and arrests of scores of township people, mainly members of the civics, widespread rebellion often reaching insurrectionary levels, the cordoning off of entire townships, all of these demonstrate the

extent to which black people, and the African people in particular, were prepared to make sacrifices in the struggle for national liberation. The establishment of peoples power in many townships, and the central role played by certain civic associations in their townships thereafter demonstrated the extent of their political impact. The enormous resources (both human and financial) expended by the state to destroy these civic organisations also demonstrate their significance in this struggle.

Thus, the civic associations reviewed here played a central role in meeting the Leninist/Gramscian strategic emphasis on mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc, and the political and ideological struggle to raise the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. What also becomes clear is the shift in the balance of social and cultural forces towards the UDF.

Chapter 9

WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

9.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the role of women's organisations in the political and ideological struggle to raise the revolutionary consciousness of women in South Africa. This is done, firstly, by examining the issues which confront women as a specific group and their responses to this and, secondly, by examining the formation, membership and structure, and policies and aims of selected women's organisations which were affiliated to the UDF.

The former analysis leads to an understanding of the general factors underlying the formation of women's organisations, the general role of women and of women's organisations in the national liberation struggle, and the general nature, and aims and objectives of these organisations. The latter analysis leads to an understanding of the strategies used to draw women into the national liberation struggle, and the nature of the revolutionary idea within the UDF women's organisations and its spread through these organisations. Finally, this analysis reveals the type of democratic organisations which were emerging during the course of the 1980s: their structures, practices and membership.

9.2. Overview

More than 50 percent of South Africans are women. Approximately 81 percent of the women in South Africa are black. African women make up 66,5 percent.¹ In 1980 32,4 percent, 38,3 percent and 25,7 percent of

¹ Shapiro, J. (1980); "Political and economic organisation of women in South Africa: The limitations of a notion of 'sister-hood' as a basis for solidarity", in Africa Perspective, (No.15, Autumn), p.12.

African, coloured and Indian women respectively were economically active.² African women comprised 65,5 percent of the female labour force while coloured and Indian women constituted 11,6 percent and 2,2 percent respectively.³ African women are also over-represented in the unemployed category. In 1980, 75 percent of African women were recorded as having no paid work.⁴

African women constituted the most exploited and oppressed group in South Africa. In the first place, as blacks, they were confronted by the general system of oppression characteristic of apartheid. Secondly, as workers, they experienced the exploitation characteristic of racial capitalism. Finally, as women, they experienced inequality both at home and at the workplace. The multiple burdens faced by women led to the increasing participation of women in organisations which addressed these problems. These included, at one level, increasing participation of women in the independent trade union movement and, at another level, the emergence and proliferation of organisations which dealt specifically with women's issues.

There are a variety of forms of oppression and exploitation directed against working women in general and African women in particular. Working mothers often leave their children with unqualified child minders because there are no adequate child care facilities in the townships. In addition, women in general and pregnant women in particular have no legal protection at work and, employers see women as "temporary and intermittent" workers because they

² Pillay,P. (1985); "Women in employment in South Africa: Some important trends and issues", in Social Dynamics, (Vol.11, No.2, December), Table 2, p.23.

³ *Ibid.*, Table 3, p.23.

⁴ Marcus,T. (1988); "The Women's Question and National Liberation in South Africa", in Van Diepen,M. (ed.); The National Question In South Africa, (London and New Jersey, Zed Books), p.98.

left to have children - they use this as an excuse not to train them or promote them. In addition, after a hard day at work women are expected to do all the domestic work at home.⁵

In South Africa there is no explicit policy regarding maternity rights and maternity leave. In the majority of cases, employers grant unpaid leave after which returning to work depends on individual negotiation.⁶ Women thus often return to work as soon as possible leaving their children in the care of adult relatives.

Apartheid has also defined a particular place in the social division of labour for African women. The migrant labour system reinforced women's dependence on their husbands, fathers or male guardians. However, the desperate economic situation common to most households in the homelands forced many women to move to the urban areas in search of employment. These women often gained employment in jobs which have a low prestige, are low paying and have bad working conditions.⁷

African women and, to a lesser degree, coloured women have been concentrated in domestic service and agricultural employment. Domestic service isolates the individual worker, intensifies her vulnerability *vis-a-vis* her employer and makes exploitation absolute. In the agricultural sector, African and coloured women have been employed mainly as irregular or casual agricultural workers. Furthermore, these two sectors were excluded from labour legislation which permitted legal organisation, bargaining, protective legislation,

⁵ Friedman,S. (1987); Building tomorrow today: African workers in trade unions, 1970-1984, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.415.

⁶ Cock,J. (1987); "Trapped workers: Constraints and contradictions experienced by Black women in contemporary South Africa", in Women's Studies International Forum, (Vol.10, No.2), p.137.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.133-140.

workmen's compensation, and so on. This reinforced women's vulnerability and powerlessness. Another major employer of women is the clothing sector, which is characterised by poor working conditions, low pay, and poor health conditions.⁸

After 1960, employment of black women in the manufacturing, commercial and service sectors of South Africa increased dramatically.⁹ Women employment in professional, technical and related jobs increased from 41,6 percent of total employment in this category in 1960 to 44,9 percent in 1980. African women constituted 88,0 percent of female employment in agriculture and fisheries, 82,8 percent of women employed in services, and 56 percent of women employed in production.¹⁰

The increasing number of women entering the work-place, and the growth of the independent trade union movement, resulted in the increasing participation of women in trade unions. The existence of unions with a large female membership made it possible for women's rights to be placed firmly on the agenda of the trade union struggle for working class rights. Trade union co-operation with the political organisations led to the inclusion of women's rights in the demands made by the broad liberation movement. In addition, women increasingly participated in community and political organisations.

The UDF's Women's Congress, launched on 25 April 1987, brought together eight regional women's organisations affiliated to the UDF. According to Jaffee: "The UDF's Women's Congress is a concerted attempt to assert

⁸ Casaburri, I.M. (1988); "On the question of women in South Africa", in Magubane, B. and Mandaza, I. (eds.); Whither South Africa?, (New Jersey, Africa World Press Inc.), pp.146-150.

⁹ Jaffee, G. (1987); "Women in trade unions and the community", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); South African Review 4, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), p.74.

¹⁰ Pillay, P. (1985); *op.cit.*, Table 9, p.27.

women's leadership, bring women's issues into the UDF in a more forceful way, and ensure that women's struggle is an integral part of political struggle".¹¹

These issues were a dominant concern of women in both the independent trade union movement and the mass democratic movement. During the early 1980s none of the emerging unions elected a women president or branch chairperson. Even in industries where women predominated or were as numerous as men, such as commerce and clothing, the union presidents were men. Furthermore, although some unions elected women general-secretaries, this position is often far less an important position than the presidency.¹²

Within both local community organisations and national political organisations there was a problem with the organisational involvement of women. Women were poorly represented in leadership positions at all levels, in part, due to their family responsibilities. Out of 61 national and regional UDF leaders in 1985 only eight were women. Women were often involved in short-term activities; but this was not translated into a sustained organisational role.

Women are possibly the least organised group of township residents, despite (indeed because of) the fact that they face specific problems, stemming from the sexual division of labour and their "triple oppression", as women, as workers and as blacks. Women are therefore likely to be under-represented in all township organisations except for specifically women's organisations....¹³

In addition, until the mid-1980s, the organisation of women workers was very

¹¹ Jafee, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.84

¹² Friedman, S. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.415-6.

¹³ Seekings, J. (1986); "Workers and the politics of consumer boycotts", in South African Labour Bulletin, (Vol.11, No.6, June-July), p.28.

limited.¹⁴ This was due to a number of factors. Firstly, women are generally employed in economic sectors which are badly paid, unprotected by legislation, and relatively unstable within the economy. Secondly, women employed in agriculture and domestic service are highly controlled and isolated. They usually live on their employers premises and resistance of any form is often met with harsh punishment.¹⁵ Even in unions with a majority of women workers, women are prevented from fully participating in union affairs because of their domestic responsibilities.¹⁶

According to Hassim et.al., the manner in which the independent trade union movement and the political organisations conceptualize women's oppression and their role in the struggle had implications for the way in which women participated in the struggle, for the way in which their interests and needs are addressed in the course of struggle, and for development policy in post-apartheid South Africa.¹⁷ The reproduction of roles and relationships which oppress women within popular organisations was a central concern of women during the 1980s.

According to Leila Patel, "the question of the emancipation of women did not appear on the agenda of political organisations and trade unions automatically".¹⁸ The development of a formal position on women's oppression and the role of women in the struggle within political organisations and the independent trade union movement was largely due to the wide-spread

¹⁴ See "Organising Women?", in Work in Progress, (No.21, February 1982), pp.17-18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁷ Hassim,S., Metelerkamp,J. and Todes,A. (1987); "A bit on the side?' Gender struggles in the politics of transformation in South Africa", in Transformation, (5), p.3.

¹⁸ Patel,L. (1988); "South African Women's struggles in the 1980's", in Agenda, (No.2), p.29.

participation of women in popular struggles and the emergence and proliferation of women's organisations.

In spite of the under-representation of women in leadership positions and their inability to participate fully in long-term political activities, women played a significant role in popular struggles and campaigns during the 1980s. The upsurge of political activity during this period led to an increase in the participation of women as well. Women, often in leadership positions, could be found in the trade unions; leading the resistance to forced removals in the rural areas; leading the squatter struggles; at the centre of consumer boycotts; in student and community organisations; and in street committees.¹⁹ In addition, women joined support committees for detainees, trained as first aiders offering emergency health and counselling services in the townships, and became involved in organisations fighting to free the children from detention.²⁰

Women workers displayed a high degree of militancy with strikes taking place in all sectors, (except domestic service), in which African women are employed. Women are the breadwinners in a large number of households with the result that any threat to their ability to support their households is met with militancy.²¹

According to Berger²², a number of factors helped to foster a militant, politically aware female component within the black working class: the heavy

¹⁹ Urdang, S. (1986); "Aspects of the struggle: Women", in Monthly Review, (Vol.37, April), p.83.

²⁰ Patel, L. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.30.

²¹ Unterhalter, E. (1983); "South Africa: Women in struggle", in Third World Quarterly, (Vol.5, No.4), pp.891-2.

²² Berger, I. (1983); "Sources of class consciousness: South African women in recent labour struggles", in International Journal of African Historical Studies, (Vol.16, No.1), p.51.

economic responsibility most women bear, the large number of women migrants who live in single-sex hostels that are densely populated and rigidly controlled, and the strict regulation of living and working conditions that lends a political dimension to all workers' protests.

Women also played a significant role in the general opposition to apartheid. The many struggles rooted in local protests against housing shortages, high rents, increases in transport costs, the lack of social services and Bantu Education facilitated the politicisation and mobilisation of women. In many cases women assumed leadership roles in crisis committees set up to deal with rent and consumer boycotts. In some cases women dominated structures at the forefront of struggle. Women also provided the initial impetus for consumer boycotts in several townships. This is partly due to the pattern of income expenditure by working women and in part due to the responsibilities of housewives. Most working women reserve their income for groceries and rent.

These struggles increasingly drew women into grassroots organisations. Women became heavily involved in community-based organisations, forming a large proportion of the rank-and-file membership of the organisations represented in the UDF. More particularly, the 1980s witnessed a growth in the number of women participating in already existing women's organisations and the spread of women's organisations to many parts of the country.

In spite of the increasing participation of women in the broader liberation struggle, and even as consciousness of women's strategic interests rose, the main focus of attention were local popular struggles and the struggle for national liberation. Thus,

...political battles over rents, squatter rights and bus boycotts are always so pressing that there is no time to consider questions of patriarchy out of this context. Whether or not these issues are debated...the very political participation of the women must challenge

their inferior position in society and the prevailing sexual division of labour.²³

However, women's organisations provided a platform for women to articulate their grievances in a political context and to take a lead in organisation and in action. Most women's organisations were formed to articulate women's issues and demands. Many organisations were started to improve the conditions of life/survival of women, while others were formed to meet the various class, professional, ethnic, and cultural needs of various women.²⁴ Many were formed specifically to foster self-help and other schemes for the assistance of women, for instance, the establishment of creches, etc. A few were formed specifically to combat the sexual oppression of women. Others, such as the Inkatha Women's Brigade, were created by political organisations to draw the support of women and the youth and to channel the aims and objectives of these organisations to these groups.²⁵

The objective of some women's organisations was to draw women as a united group into the broad liberation struggle. Some of these became affiliates of the UDF and strove to place women's issues on the agenda of the broad liberation struggle. According to Tessa Marcus, the fundamental principles of "revolutionary feminism" in South Africa were:

1. The recognition by the national liberation movement that women are oppressed as women and that women's oppression, as a social injustice, has to be overcome.
2. The recognition that it is necessary for women to organise as women to overcome their oppression.
3. The recognition that the women's struggle is an integral part of, and not in contradiction with, the national liberation struggle.²⁶

²³ Unterhalter, E. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.893.

²⁴ Casaburri, I.M. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.155.

²⁵ See Hassim, S. (1988); "Reinforcing Conservatism: An analysis of the politics of Inkatha's Women's Brigade", in *Agenda*, (No.2), pp.2-7.

²⁶ Marcus, T. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.102.

The formation of women's organisation which combined the struggle for women's rights with the struggle for national liberation placed women's issues on the agenda of the broad liberation movement. Issues which concern women specifically are not normally the subject of political struggle. By bringing the triple oppression and exploitation of women into broader political debates, the barriers which kept women out of political struggles were broken down.²⁷ Furthermore, people became increasingly conscious that gender is a political issue.

The UDF women's organisations identified the need for a specific women's organisation to fight both against the forms of oppression and exploitation particularly directed against women, and against sexism in other organisations.²⁸ One commentator viewed the need for progressive women's organisations in the following terms:

Women's issues, although they can form a rallying point, cannot be a priority in the business of trade union or civic organisation. "Politics" is seen as a specifically male interest where women seldom take part in discussion let alone form part of any political organisation. ...

It is thus important to build a militant and confident spirit amongst women. Because of existing ideological barriers by which women are often excluded from political responsibility women must play an important role in the organisation. This will encourage the belief that they can change not only their own position in society but also play a central role in the struggle for democracy. In a women's organisation this can develop without introducing conflicts produced by the male-female (dominant-passive) relationship.²⁹

The UDF women's organisations mobilised women around the issues most immediate to them: health, childcare, food prices and housing. They also conducted on-going education programmes to foster pride among their

²⁷ Cock, J. (1982); "'Organising Women': Response 1", in Work in Progress, (No.22, April), p.17.

²⁸ Davies, R., O'Meara, D. and Dlamini, S. (1988); The struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, (Volume Two, New Edition, London and New Jersey, Zed Books Ltd.), p.355.

²⁹ "Women and organisation in South Africa", in Social Review, (Issue 16, November 1981).

membership. They had leadership training and educational workshops. In addition, they produced newsletters (e.g. FEDTRAW News and Women's Voice), which focused on news related to specific branches and the activities of their organisations. These newsletters also focused on specific issues and demands which concern women as a whole, such as maternity rights, child-care facilities, etc., as well as local and national popular struggles.

These organisations were strongly committed to democracy, which meant encouraging full and active participation in their organisations. As one women activist said, "control of our own organisations is a step towards taking control of our own lives".³⁰ The emphasis on active participation was thus directed towards instilling confidence in their members. A major objective of these organisations was to encourage women to take an active part in their own organisations as well as other community or political organisations.

In general, the UDF women's organisations sought to improve the quality of women's lives through the following activities³¹: income-generating activities (sewing, handicrafts, etc.); educational activities (literacy projects, leadership training, etc.); agricultural activities (vegetable growing, etc.); home and health-care activities (creches, family hygiene, etc.); and civil and political activities (encouraging women to participate in local and national political campaigns and organisations).

The leadership of the women's organisations consisted of veterans of the 1950s and the Congress Alliance and younger, educated, black women, many politicised through student politics. There were a small number of branches

³⁰ "Taking the march forward", in SASPU National, (Vol.3, No.2, August 1982).

³¹ See Muchena, O.N. (1987); "The role of women's organisations within Southern Africa", in Qunta, A. (ed.); Women in Southern Africa, (London, New York, Allison and Busby Ltd., Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers), pp.66-7.

among white, Indian and coloured women, and a growing organisation in rural areas, particularly in the Cape and the Transvaal. The mass membership of the organisations were black working class women radicalised through apartheid exploitation and domination.

This gave rise to a new consciousness among women, "one which reflects a deeper understanding of the nature of their oppression as women and a growing resolve to challenge it at every level". Women recognised the need to mobilise at a political level; examined the way their organisations should relate to other democratic organisations; examined how women's issues can be taken up in the political organisations and in the trade union movement; and examined ways of defending women's organisations under repressive conditions.³²

Fourteen women's organisations were present at the inaugural conference of the UDF in August 1983.³³ The following is an analysis of the most significant of the women's organisations which affiliated to the UDF. The focus is on the formation, membership and structure, and policies and aims of the various organisations in order to demonstrate their role in the political and ideological struggle to raise the revolutionary consciousness of women. This leads to an understanding of the strategies used to draw women into the national liberation struggle, and the nature of the revolutionary idea and its spread through women's organisations.

9.3. Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW)

The first major African women's organisation in South Africa was the Bantu Women's League formed as the women's wing of the ANC. The Bantu

³² Marcus, T. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.105.

³³ Refer to Appendix A below.

Women's League (which later became the ANC Women's League) was formed in 1913 to oppose attempts by municipalities in the Orange Free State to force African women to carry passes.³⁴ In April 1954, the ANC's Women's League joined with other women's organisations to form the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW).³⁵

FEDSAW was the first attempt to establish a broad-based women's organisation to take up women's issues. It also registered its willingness to take up national political issues when it pledged its support for general campaigns of the Congress Alliance. FEDSAW was established to unite women in struggles against all forms of exploitation and oppression which particularly affected women, to mobilise women to participate in the broader liberation struggle and to fight against sexism in other organisations.³⁶

FEDSAW had two primary aims: to work for majority rule and an end to apartheid; and to build a multiracial women's organisation that would also work for the rights of women. FEDSAW was a united front of women who were members of political organisations, trade unions and community organisations. The organisation's members, estimated to be 230,000 women, were drawn largely from the ANC's Women's League but included other members of the Congress Alliance.³⁷ These included women members of the Congress of Democrats, the Coloured People's Congress, the South African Indian Congress as well as the Food and Canning Workers' Union.³⁸

³⁴ Unterhalter, E. (1983); *op.cit.*, p.889.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.890.

³⁶ Davies, R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.366-7.

³⁷ "Women and Apartheid", in Objective: Justice, (Vol.12, August 1980), p.41.

³⁸ "Fedsaw revival", in FEDTRAW News, (National Women's Day Edition, August 1987), p.10.

In the wake of the Sharpeville massacre a number of organisations were banned while state security forces embarked on a wave of repression. FEDSAW was never formally banned but many of its leaders were jailed, restricted or forced into exile. In addition, the organisation was prevented from holding meetings or carrying on other activities.³⁹ The organisation was effectively destroyed by the activities of the security forces during the early 1960s. The formation of FEDTRAW in December 1984 was the first step in an attempt to revive FEDSAW.

In 1984 over 200 women representing women's groups throughout the Transvaal met to unite women in common action for the removal of political, legal, social and economic disabilities and to work towards a free, non-racial and democratic society where women would be treated with dignity and equality. The formation of FEDTRAW was an attempt to create a federal structure for a revived FEDSAW.⁴⁰

On March 31 1984, 150 women at a Transvaal Regional Conference elected a Transvaal FEDSAW Interim Co-ordinating Committee. This Committee was mandated to work towards a Transvaal regional conference, and to start women's groups where none existed and strengthen existing women's groups.⁴¹ FEDTRAW was launched at a conference held on the 7-9th December, 1984 where the 200 delegates ratified the draft constitution and elected the first executive.

Structurally, FEDTRAW consisted of an Executive Committee, an Inter-branch

³⁹ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.368.

⁴⁰ Survey of Race Relations, 1984, p.23 and Jafee,G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.85.

⁴¹ Document; Report of the Transvaal Interim Committee submitted at the 1st Launching Conference, 7-9th December, 1984.

Committee and branches. The Inter-branch Committee consisted of delegates from each branch and met at least once every three months. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was the supreme decision-making body of the organisation and met in September of each year. Each branch was allowed four delegates with voting rights. The new organisation elected Sister Bernard Ncube, a leading anti-apartheid activist, as its first president. Three vice-presidents were elected while the organisation's four patrons were Mrs Albertina Sisulu, Francis Beard, Winnie Mandela and Helen Joseph. The new organisation chose the Women's Charter (adopted at the "Congress of the People") as its guiding principles, thus displaying its early allegiance to the ANC.

In terms of its constitution, FEDTRAW had the following aims and objectives which directly related to women: obtaining equal rights with men in relation to property, marriage and children, and for the removal of all laws and customs that deny women such equal rights; the development of every child through free compulsory and equal education for all, the protection of mother and child through maternity homes, social welfare, creches and nursery schools, in countryside and towns, through proper homes for all, and through the provision of health services, water, lights, transport, sanitation and other amenities of modern life; the removal of regulations, customs or social practices which hinder the activity of women in democratic organisations, and the right to participate equally in the work of these organisations; building and strengthening women's sections in the National Liberation Movement, and to promote the organisation of women in trade unions and through other community organisations; and educating society as a whole on the rights and responsibilities of women.

The organisation also had a number of other aims and objectives which were linked to social and political issues, and included: obtaining the right to vote

without restriction or discrimination; obtaining the right to full opportunities for employment, equal pay and possibilities of promotion in all spheres of work, the right to enjoy acceptable working conditions and benefits, the right to join the union of one's choice; the removal of all laws that restrict free movement, that prevent or hinder the right of free association and expression, the right to a healthy family life and to live and work wherever people choose; and co-operation with all other organisations that have similar aims in South Africa as well as throughout the world.

The organisation planned to concern itself with practical problems faced by women such as unemployment, work conditions, removals, education, and housing and to link these to the national struggle for liberation. In 1985 the Federation's Education Officer outlined the aims of the organisation at a workshop on women:

Our understanding of the special disabilities faced by women is that they are rooted in exploitation, racial oppression and sexism. The battle against capitalism, racism and sexism cannot be fought as part of a three stage plan - the struggle must be waged simultaneously at all these levels. We are committed to building women's organisations; to uniting women; to raising the voice of women in the national democratic struggle led by the working class. It is our task to develop the working-class leadership amongst women and to allow working-class interests to dominate our women's organisations.⁴²

FEDTRAW linked the struggle for women's rights and freedoms together with the struggle against capitalism and racism. There was also a growing awareness that women do not win their emancipation only in the politics of mass mobilisation but in organisations which address the specific needs of women within the overall struggle for national liberation.⁴³ According to FEDTRAW's Education Officer:

After we have thrown in our lot with the struggle for democracy, we may find that on the day when freedom comes we are in fact not so free.... This is precisely why we struggle

⁴² Leila Patel, speech given at United Democratic Front workshop on women, Johannesburg, February 1985. Quoted in Jafee, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.77.

⁴³ Jafee, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.90.

today, and why we need to plant the seeds of the new society in the womb of the old so that it grows and develops in the direction we would like it to go.⁴⁴

FEDTRAW was acutely aware of the absence of women in leadership positions in the community and political organisations. There was a need to organise women because: "Our struggle needs all the people in South Africa to get involved in building democracy. Half of these people are women. But there are not many women in our organisations. And very few women are leaders. Some organisations, like civics, have lots of women. But the women are not leaders".⁴⁵

But getting women involved in women's organisations goes beyond ensuring women's leadership in other organisations. FEDTRAW argued that women must be organised in order to improve their conditions. In addition, the involvement of women in organisations like FEDTRAW would make them aware of "other organisations which are working in the struggle".⁴⁶ This would increase their political consciousness as well as their involvement in the national liberation struggle.

According to FEDTRAW, organisations specifically designed for women are necessary because women need to develop their organisational skills if they are to improve their position in the country. Women's organisations are needed so that women can learn from each other, develop confidence and be able to take leadership positions. Through such organisations women can discuss the special problems facing them as women and how to deal with

⁴⁴ Leila Patel, *op.cit.* Quoted in Jafee, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.90.

⁴⁵ "Organising Women for Freedom", in FEDTRAW News, (National Women's Day Edition, August 1987), p.4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5.

them.⁴⁷

FEDTRAW organised women by focusing on the numerous local issues and problems women face. Women's groups were created when women came together to discuss local problems such as childcare, the high cost of food, education, etc. They established their own creches or established bulk-buying schemes. Once established the group broadened to embrace issues such as high rents, inadequate housing and low wages. Once the women became aware that the problems they faced are problems faced by women throughout the country they soon identified with the struggle for national liberation. Through this mobilising tactic FEDTRAW was able to raise the consciousness of women from the level of their particular interests to the level of consciousness of national oppression and exploitation.

FEDTRAW was established as a non-racial, multi-class federation of women's organisations. Membership was open to women of all races and from all social backgrounds. The organisation had a small number of professional black women members, with the bulk of the membership drawn from women workers, mainly in industry and service jobs. FEDTRAW had a small number of white women members which were almost exclusively English-speaking and middle class. Women in the rural branches of FEDTRAW were mainly peasant women, living in the homelands.⁴⁸ Residential segregation resulted in the formation of groups along racial grounds.

FEDTRAW brought together a number of local women's organisations. It had 23 regional affiliates each incorporating a number of branches. Soweto, for

⁴⁷ "Fedtraw lifts the load", in SASPU National, (Vol.6, No.1, March 1985), p.19.

⁴⁸ Unterhalter, E. (1988); "Class, Race and Gender", in Lonsdale, J. (ed.); South Africa in Question, (Cambridge, University of Cambridge African Studies Centre), p.158.

example, had 50 branches.⁴⁹ Throughout 1984, women in the Transvaal concentrated on building up local-level organisations. Women's groups were set up in the Vaal Triangle; in Pretoria, women's groups were set up in Atteridgeville, Mabopane, Soshanguve and Mamelodi; in Johannesburg groups were formed in Coronationville, Bosmont, and Newclare (coloured), Alexandra and Soweto (African), and Lenasia (Indian); and in the remote rural and semi-rural areas, groups were established in Tzaneen and Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal.⁵⁰ The impetus for organisation was diverse, but most women's groups dealt with issues affecting the daily life of women.

The Vaal Organisation of Women (VOW) was organised around issues such as high prices, high rents and child care. The group organised discussions on these issues and, in order to encourage participation, organised projects like jumble sales, a programme of child-care, and adult literacy, and a grocery co-operative. The Soweto women's group discussed school fees, electricity and busfare increases, health, nutrition, religion, and the arrests of fathers, husbands and children. In the rural areas, the major issue was poverty and many rural women's organisations started out as vegetable-growing or buying co-operatives. In the Northern Transvaal, women formed cultural and singing groups. Indian and coloured women were organised around opposition to the new constitution.⁵¹ Thus, there was a mix of both the immediate issues which affected women and broader political issues.

FEDTRAW also took up a number of national campaigns other than the anti-BLAs campaign and the campaign against the tri-cameral parliament. For example, in 1985, the organisation resolved to work with the youth on the

⁴⁹ Marcus, T. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.109n.

⁵⁰ Dawber, A. (1984); "Transvaal Women Organise", in *Work in Progress*, (No.34, October), p.31.

⁵¹ *Loc.cit.*

International Year of the Youth campaign and to endorse and popularise the Education Charter. It also participated in campaigns for an end to military conscription, for the withdrawal of troops from the townships, for free and equal education in South Africa, and for the abolition of apartheid.⁵² The broad political campaigns the organisation engaged in demonstrated its commitment to united action with other organisations and to the national liberation struggle to end apartheid.

In sum, FEDTAW's aims and objectives were directed specifically at bringing about change in areas which directly affected women's interests and in areas which would lead to national liberation. It drew women into the organisation by focusing initially on issues which affect women directly, and linked these to national social and political issues, thereby raising the revolutionary consciousness of their members. It also engaged in campaigns in co-operation with other organisations, and linked its struggles to the national political challenge of the dominant system.

9.4. United Women's Organisation (UWO)

The middle of 1980 was a period of intense mass mobilisation in the Western Cape.⁵³ Popular struggles engendered a number of community organisations including CAHAC and the Western Cape Civic Association. The 1976 Soweto uprising and subsequent wave of state repression provoked the formation of a women's organisation in the region. At the end of 1978 a small group of women in Gugulethu began working towards the formation of an organisation for women.⁵⁴ These women had participated in FEDSAW in the 1950s and 1960s and saw the need for a women's organisation to help

⁵² Jafee, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.85.

⁵³ Refer to Chapter 8, pp.386-7 above and Appendix B below.

⁵⁴ Davies, R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.369.

mobilise the people.⁵⁵

The events of 1976 brought the youth to the forefront of the struggle against apartheid and eventually fostered tensions between the youth and their parents. During the 1980 school boycotts parents sought ways in which they could actively support the youth. UWO was initially formed to support students in the education struggle. As one UWO executive member explained:

1976 showed parents that they were not able to support their children and that there was something wrong with our society. We had fought Bantu Education when it was started in 1954, yet many parents became their children's enemy when they stood up against that education in 1976. We saw that we had no voice to speak for us or our children. We knew that as women we were oppressed both in our houses and at work, and that we needed to work towards changing things as women with both short- and long-term goals.⁵⁶

In April 1981, more than 300 delegates from 31 areas of the Western Cape attended the launching conference of UWO.⁵⁷ The participants recognised the need for a specific women's organisation to struggle for the elimination of women's oppression within the context of the broader struggle against oppression and exploitation in South Africa.⁵⁸ Most of the participants had a history of political experience in trade unions, community organisations or in popular struggles during the 1950s. The meeting accepted the Draft Constitution and mandated the areas represented to begin organising women and forming local branches of UWO.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Barrett, J. et al. (1985); South African women on the move, (London, Zed Books), p.241.

⁵⁶ Jafee, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.85.

⁵⁷ Davies, R. et al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.369.

⁵⁸ *Loc.cit.*

⁵⁹ "Women and organisation in South Africa", *op.cit.*, p.23.

In the preface of the Policy Document⁶⁰ of the organisation, UWO stated "that oppression in South Africa cannot be wholly removed without removing the oppression of women". In addition: "Only in the wider setting of fundamental rights for all can we hope to achieve our own important goal. We cannot abstract ourselves from political issues, for they are our daily life, the roofs over the heads of our families, the food in the stomachs of our children. Our place must be as part of the struggle for fundamental rights".

UWO aimed: to participate in the struggle for full and equal democratic rights for all; to work on practical activities which affect the day-to-day problems of people in oppressed communities; to involve women in solving problems that affect them in their community and at their places of work; and to struggle for the removal of all racial and sexual discrimination and economic exploitation.⁶¹ In terms of both its principles and aims, then, UWO identified the link between the liberation of women and national liberation, the link between issues which directly affected women and political issues which affected the subordinated people in general.

UWO identified women's oppression as deriving from capitalist exploitation, rather than inherent contradictions between men and women. As its supporters put it:

It is clear that women's oppression has a basis in the general system of capitalist exploitation. The rulers confuse us by making it seem as if men are responsible for women's oppression and thus we don't see that as workers we are all exploited and must join forces against the system of exploitation. There are women's organisations which make the mistake to organise women against men and thus do not threaten the system in any way.⁶²

⁶⁰ Adopted as policy at the First UWO Conference on 5th April 1981 and amended at the Second UWO Conference on 4th April 1982. Quoted in Hassim, S. et al. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁶¹ Matiwahe, M. and Walters, S. (1986); The struggle for democracy: A study of community organisations in Greater Cape Town from the 1960's to 1985, (Cape Town, Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape), p.111.

⁶² Quoted in Davies, R. et al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.369.

UWO thus asserted a strong anti-capitalist perspective, and, like FEDTRAW, linked the struggle against women's oppression, apartheid and capitalist exploitation.

And:

The fight to end this system of exploitation can only end in defeat as long as women occupy a passive position in society. Women's oppression must be ended and it is only women who can consistently fight to achieve their liberation. This shows the need for organisation on a broad and democratic scale, since it is only by organising that women can become a political force. While recognising that both men and women are exploited under capitalism, it is also necessary to organise women around that oppression which they experience unlike men (sexism - the belief that women are inferior to and dependent on men - and domestic slavery)...Even within the organisations of the oppressed, prejudices against women still exist and must be rooted out...Women must constantly struggle against their own attitudes of passivity as well as against the attitudes of men, both of which have been socially conditioned.⁶³

In addition, women's organisations helped "to train women, to give them leadership and organisational skills". This also promoted fuller participation by women in other community organisations.⁶⁴

A primary objective of UWO was to "unite women from all classes who could play a constructive role in the struggle for democracy in South Africa". It organised discussions between women at various branches, and public functions such as commemorative meetings on 9 August - South African Women's Day - in order to draw women into the organisation. It encouraged women to participate in other organisations of the oppressed masses and fight within them for the "removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against women", as well as against sexist practices which persist within these organisations themselves.⁶⁵

UWO brought together veterans of the struggles of the 1950s and the Congress Alliance with younger, educated black women and working class

⁶³ Quoted in Davies, R. et al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.369.

⁶⁴ Barrett, J. et al. (1985); *op.cit.*, pp.242-4.

⁶⁵ Davies, R. et al. (1988); *op.cit.*, pp.369-70.

black women. The organisation had a number of white members but its white membership was small and almost exclusively drawn from women with petty bourgeois, university-educated backgrounds. The mass membership of the organisation was composed of black working class women, radicalised through poverty and their circumstances. UWO had small branches in the coloured areas of Cape Town, largely made up of professional women, and huge branches, up until mid-1986, in Crossroad, entirely made up of working women, the majority of whom were domestic servants.⁶⁶

According to a UWO executive member, the organisation had a membership of one thousand in 1982, 90 percent being African women. In some cases, branches of the organisation were racially mixed (particularly in racially mixed or "grey" areas), but many of the branches were racially segregated because of residential segregation. Initially, UWO had large white branches, but after the formation of the UDF in 1983 many white members became more active in the UDF.⁶⁷

UWO delegates at the launching conference of the UDF in August 1983 represented 19 branches located in white and coloured suburbs as well as African townships and squatter camps.⁶⁸ Women were generally excluded from leadership positions in community and political organisations in most parts of the country. In the Western Cape, however, and as a consequence of UWO encouraging its members to participate in other organisations, women were strongly represented in local community organisations. UWO was an early forerunner of the phase of resistance and organisation which occurred

⁶⁶ Unterhalter, E. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.157.

⁶⁷ Fester, G. (1989); "The United Women's Congress", in Russell, D.E.H. (ed.); Lives of courage: Women for a new South Africa, (New York, Basic Books, Inc.), p.249.

⁶⁸ Refer to Appendix A below.

in the early 1980s; its members actually helped initiate community organisations. As a result, women maintained their positions in such organisations.⁶⁹

UWO members played a central role in the formation of civics in their own areas.⁷⁰ In Gugulethu, for example, the community responded to the 1980 school boycotts by forming a Parents Action Committee. When the boycott ended, activists in UWO and the Parents Action Committee came together to form a civic. UWO's commitment to involving women in the broader liberation was also evident in its early activities. UWO participated in broader struggles of the oppressed such as the anti-Republic Day campaign in 1981 and the anti-Ciskei campaign in 1983.⁷¹

However, according to Bernstein, UWO, like its counterpart in the Transvaal, began to seek forms of more permanent mobilisation and organisation of women. UWO set itself a double objective. "Recognising the social barriers to the organisation and political activities of black women under apartheid", UWO gave its "attention to promoting the organisation of women into smaller localised groups dealing with immediate issues. This included encouraging women to join and work in trade unions. In this way the women in smaller organisations, concentrating on local and grassroots issues, could also be drawn into the national political campaigns".⁷²

UWO branches began to focus on projects that were important to people in

⁶⁹ Jaffee, G. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.87.

⁷⁰ Barrett, J. et.al. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.242.

⁷¹ "Organising Women", *op.cit.*, p.20.

⁷² Bernstein, H. (1985); For their triumphs and for their tears: Women in apartheid South Africa, (London, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, Revised Edition), p.108.

their area. "For example, the KTC branch concentrated on getting more taps and doing something about the lack of garbage collection. ... Reaching women through organising creches is a very big project in most township branches".⁷³ The organisation also demonstrated its support for trade union struggles and community struggles.⁷⁴ The organisation was active in the early stages of the Nyanga Squatters' campaign and had representation on the Wilson-Rowntree and Leyland Strike Support Committees in 1981.⁷⁵ UWO saw problems of high rents and bad housing, forced removals because of the Group Areas Act, and the threat of evictions, as women's concerns.⁷⁶

The organisation linked specific "women's concerns" with general political concerns.⁷⁷ For example, in 1982 UWO had two themes for the year - "Childcare" and "High Prices". Play groups were organised, and UWO organised around International Children's Day and the United Nations Declaration of Children's Rights. The organisation held a meeting on the issue of high prices and resolved not to buy bread for a week. They also called on the shopowners to support them in their struggle against high prices. The themes for 1983 were "Childcare", the "Koornhof Bills" and the "Constitution".

UWO also encouraged political education, with branches considering the importance of feminism and how it relates to women's role in the national democratic struggle. At broader forums of the organisation, discussions were

⁷³ Fester,G. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.249.

⁷⁴ "Women and organisation in South Africa", *op.cit.*, p.24.

⁷⁵ Davies,R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.370.

⁷⁶ "UWO opposes removal", in SASPU National, (Vol.4, No.3, September 1983), p.6.

⁷⁷ Barrett,J. et.al. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.245.

held on the struggles in countries such as Algeria, Nicaragua, Cuba, the Philippines, and the peace movement. Members "studied the history of the struggle, the ANC, the history of South Africa", the Freedom Charter and held workshops on media skills.⁷⁸ In addition to discussions on political issues, UWO held discussions on strategy and tactics, e.g. the consumer boycott.

UWO consisted of an elected Executive Committee and numerous local branches. Five women formed a UWO women's group and when the group reached ten or more members a branch was formed. Each branch elected representatives to an Executive Council, the supreme decision-making body, which met every second month. Branches operated fairly autonomously, determining which projects were suited to their areas and the abilities and interests of their members.⁷⁹

UWO played an important role in the formation of the Western Cape UDF. In early 1983 UWO issued a call for women to bring the organisations they were part of into the UDF.⁸⁰ Many UWO members became active in both the women's organisation and the UDF.⁸¹ Members of UWO played a relatively prominent role in the regional UDF. It had three members, including a past UWO president Mrs Mildred Lisea, on the Western Cape Regional UDF in 1985.⁸² In addition, one of its members, Cheryl Carolus, sat on the first NEC of the Front.

⁷⁸ Fester, G. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.250.

⁷⁹ "Women and organisation in South Africa", *op.cit.*, p.24.

⁸⁰ Bernstein, H. (1985); *op.cit.*, p.109.

⁸¹ Fester, G. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.250.

⁸² The Argus, (18.3.85), p.3.

On 22 March 1986, UWO merged with a township-based women's organisation, the Women's Front, to form the United Women's Congress (UWCO). This was in response to the UDF call to consolidate all sector-based affiliate groups. The Women's Front, a small organisation comprising less than 100 members, initially resisted a merger on the grounds that UWO was dominated by whites. However, according to Fester, the executive members of UWO were mostly black people - mostly domestic workers; and all the chairpeople had been black people. The first executive committee of UWCO, consisting of eight people, included a chairperson and two secretaries from each of these groups. UWCO's membership reached 2,500 in 1986.⁸³

UWCO also prioritised education in its activities. The new organisation created an Education and Training portfolio in its executive to organise broad educational forums and branch education projects. The organisation also encouraged interbranch education by promoting joint activities. For example, the Observatory branch worked with the New Crossroads branch on a sewing co-operative while the Woodstock branch worked with the Langa branch.⁸⁴ This type of activity was directed towards promoting a deeper understanding by women of different races of the issues which affect women of other races.

In sum, UWO was able to draw women from the different races and class groups into an organisation which dealt specifically with women's issues, but linked these with the national liberation struggle. The objective was to draw women as a specific group into the national liberation struggle, while simultaneously ensuring that women acquire a leadership role in community

⁸³ Fester,G. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.251.

⁸⁴ Fester,G. (1986); "Education and Democracy within women's organisations", in Conference Reports, The Building of Community Organisations: The role of education, (Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 16 August), p.23.

and political organisations and that women's issues are placed on the agenda of the broad liberation front. In the process, UWO was able to mobilise and politicise a small number of women in Cape Town, leading to their involvement in the broader national-democratic revolutionary struggle.

9.5. Natal Organisation of Women (NOW)

Durban also experienced a period of mass mobilisation during the early 1980s. In Durban's African townships, rent increases and related matters such as the lack and poor quality of housing as well as increases in transport costs were the main reasons for the emergence of community organisations.⁸⁵ The struggles which provoked the growth of community organisations had a particular affect on African women.

The struggles against rent and bus-fare increases were sparked off by real declines in living standards. An additional assault on the living standards of Durban's African population particularly affected women, who are responsible for the management of the household.⁸⁶ Opposition to the proposed rises in living costs were directed at the state, in particular the Port Natal Administration Board (PNAB). Popular struggles were soon directed towards opposing Inkatha's attempt to control the Natal townships by incorporating them into KwaZulu. Women played a direct role in this opposition when, in 1983, women from Lamontville confronted the central state directly by travelling to Cape Town to put forward their demands to Parliament.⁸⁷

Natal's women experienced the same problems women in other parts of the country were experiencing. According to Hassim et.al.:

⁸⁵ Refer to Chapter 8, pp.364ff. above and Appendix B below.

⁸⁶ Hassim,S. et.al. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.13.

⁸⁷ *Loc.cit.*

Although women participated in these struggles and were dominant in the management of some of the campaigns, political leadership ultimately fell into the hands of men. Increasingly, mass meetings became the key means of reaching people and consolidating the campaigns. At this level, women were severely handicapped Whilst they (women) participated confidently in the day-to-day activities of community organisations, they were significantly absent from the platform at mass meetings. This was further compounded by the inability of many women to speak English with the degree of fluency required for public meetings conducted in English.⁸⁸

NOW was formed at the end of 1983 by women in Durban's townships. These were mostly women who were involved in the community organisations and popular struggles affecting the townships at the time. The motivation came largely from women involved in JORAC and NIC. The organisation grew out of a small group of women "who felt the need to come together and observe South African National Women's Day on the eighth of August", 1983. This group later consolidated to form the women's organisation before joining the UDF.⁸⁹

NOW soon had about 20 branches in the Durban area, and began to expand in the rural areas. Initially, the organisation had members only in Durban townships like Lamontville and KwaMashu. By 1987, NOW had members in Empangeni, Pietermaritzburg and Natal rural areas such as Howick, Ladysmith and Weenen and claimed a total membership of 1,000. In addition, according to NOW activists, almost all the townships around Durban had branches.⁹⁰ These included informal settlements such as Inanda and Umbumbulu, the Natal townships such as Lamontville and Chesterville, and the KwaZulu townships such as Umlazi and KwaMashu. NOW was

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁸⁹ Ramgobin, E. (1989); "An Indian Women confronts apartheid", in Russell, D.E.H. (ed.); *op.cit.*, p.140.

⁹⁰ "Working on the ground is the way for NOW", in SASPU National, (Last Quarter, 1987), p.16.

overtly non-racial and organised women of all races.⁹¹ However, its initial leadership was drawn largely from women activists in JORAC and NIC.

NOW identified the participation of women in trade unions and community organisations as important. It co-operated with other progressive organisations, especially civic and youth structures, around community issues.⁹² Now thus recognised the importance of united action tactics and the link between various types of popular struggles. NOW aimed: to struggle against all racial, economic, and sexual exploitation; to unite women to solve problems that affect women in the community and at work; and to strengthen women so that they become more confident of their decisions and actions, and to enable them to play a greater role in other organisations to which they belong.

The organisation aimed to organise women around issues that most affected their lives - the high cost of living, poor housing, maternity benefits and childcare. The Pietermaritzburg branch organised a creche while the Lamontville branch got involved in a knitting project. Other branches took up civic issues such as transport, education and rent, soup kitchens for pensioners and orphans. NOW ran projects such as shoe making and sewing co-operatives to organise unemployed women.⁹³ NOW's demands included the right to full employment opportunities for women, with equal pay and promotion possibilities; free and compulsory education for all; and the removal of all laws that restrict free movement.

⁹¹ Interview with Nosizwe Madlala, a founder member of the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), in Frederikse, J. (1990); The unbreakable thread: Non-racialism in South Africa, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), pp.178-9.

⁹² "Working on the ground is the way for NOW", *op.cit.*, p.16.

⁹³ *Loc.cit.*

The issues which affected women differed from area to area. In the informal settlements, struggles were based on survival: over scarce material resources, particularly land and water; and the threat of incorporation into KwaZulu. In the KwaZulu townships, the major issue was education. However, women were drawn into NOW as violent confrontation between UDF supporters - usually the youth - and Inkatha members increased. NOW focused on issues such as high rents, inadequate education and incorporation into KwaZulu to draw women in the Natal townships into the organisation.⁹⁴ Opposition to the tri-cameral parliament drew women in the Indian and coloured townships into the organisation.

NOW identified apartheid as the root of women's problems and encouraged participation in national political campaigns. This was partially responsible for the crisis NOW experienced during 1984-1985. The demands placed on women to participate in broad political campaigns rather than those that affected their material demands placed constraints on the organisation's ability to organise and sustain membership. Furthermore, suggestions brought by women in NOW to the UDF to take up issues such as General Sales Tax hikes could not be tackled because of the pressures placed on the national leadership by the 1984 treason trial. NOW also faced more general problems associated with organising women politically, such as their isolation in the home or in domestic service, and the burdens on women's time created by their responsibilities for housework and childcare.⁹⁵

NOW's organisational problems were further compounded by state repression and the conflict between Inkatha and local UDF structures. These organisational problems prevented NOW from developing and consolidating a

⁹⁴ Beall, J. et al. (1987); "African women in the Durban struggle, 1985-1986: Towards a transformation", in Moss, G. and Obery, I. (eds.); *South African Review* 4, *op.cit.*, p.95.

⁹⁵ Hassim, S. et al. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.15.

strong base among women in the townships. But it was the conflict between Inkatha and UDF structures which affected NOW's attempts at organisation and which finally destroyed local UDF structures in Durban's townships. The conflict between the UDF and Inkatha was waged over education, local government, and the proposed incorporation of certain townships into KwaZulu.⁹⁶

During 1985, however, the popular struggles in Durban's African townships, resistance against state repression and opposition to incorporation into KwaZulu played a central role in mobilising previously unpoliticised women. These struggles extended the women's terrain beyond the isolation of individual households into the neighbourhood and community.⁹⁷ Once the townships were drawn into the battle against Inkatha over incorporation, when the troops moved into the townships, and once the school children went on boycott, women were increasingly drawn into the daily township battles.

Women became increasingly involved in the township struggles as troops moved into the townships and vigilante groups began to appear. In Lamontville, for example, women (as mothers and teachers) put themselves in the front line in clashes between boycotting school students and the security forces. In Chesterville where, in addition to security force harassment, attacks occurred on homes of UDF members at the hands of vigilantes, many men and boys were forced to leave their homes and go into hiding. The women organised themselves in order to protect their children and their homes from attacks by vigilantes. They held all-night vigils and for a while they were able to stave off the violence.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Loc.cit.* Refer also to Chapter 8, pp.382ff. above and Appendix C below.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁹⁸ Hassim,S. et.al. (1987); *op.cit.*, pp.17-18.

Women activists in NOW also played an important role in the creation of "new structures in which they have moved into positions of dominance in certain townships".⁹⁹ These took the form of crisis committees to deal with local issues such as detentions, the deployment of troops in the townships, and support for boycotting school students. The organisation also participated in such national campaigns as the anti-election campaigns, the UDF's One Million Signature Campaign, etc.

In sum, NOW played a similar role as the other women's organisations discussed above in drawing in a number of committed activists into the struggle for national liberation. Mobilisation and organisation focused on the link between women's issues and national political issues. However, the struggle for national liberation soon took precedence over other issues because of direct confrontation between community organisations, and the state and Inkatha during the second half of the eighties. In the process NOW was able to politicise and mobilise a relatively small number of women from all race groups and virtually every class group.

9.6. UDF Women's Congress

In 1985 the UDF adopted the phrase "From Mobilisation to Organisation" as part of its theme for that year. This involved transforming the massive support it enjoyed in its campaigns into mass-based organisations. Part of the process of developing mass based organisations involved the establishment of powerful, sector-based national affiliates - women, youth and civics being the most important. The emphasis lay in streamlining and centralising organisations in the process of consolidating the UDF as a whole.

At the UDF's National Working Committee Conference in May 1986, the UDF

⁹⁹ Beall, J. et al. (1987); *op.cit.*, p.99.

singled out the role of women as a key issue in its Programme of Action. It passed a resolution urging that women be organised:

Women's organisations should be formed where none exist and should affiliate to the regional structures which need to be built and strengthened to pave the way for a strong national structure.¹⁰⁰

UDF activists embarked on a programme to consolidate women's organisations at the local and regional levels as a precursor to national consolidation. In the process a tremendous amount of unity and cohesion was developed at a regional and national level. For example: "In both the Border and Western Cape regions, competing women's organisations were united into single organisations".¹⁰¹

From the outset, student and youth organisations emphasised the organisation of women in their structures. COSAS, AZASO and the youth congresses all developed women's sections with a view to increasing the involvement of women in their organisations. In addition, women's groups at universities affiliated to regional women's organisations. Women's groups also sprang up in many urban townships and rural villages, most having close links to their local civic associations. These groups formed the basis of the organisations which came together to form a national women's organisation in 1987.

The UDF Women's Congress was formed under conditions of secrecy in Cape Town on 27 April 1987. The launch was attended by delegates of eight regional women's organisations. Among the delegates at the launching conference were members of student groups and trade union affiliates of the Front. The launching conference of the Women's Congress did not adopt a formal constitution. It elected a twenty-person national committee and a

¹⁰⁰ "True liberation means the liberation of women too", in Special Supplement to the New Nation, (August 13-19, 1987), p.12.

¹⁰¹ *Loc.cit.*

council with four convenors, one for each of the provinces.¹⁰² Included among the convenors were UDF president Albertina Sisulu and N. Ngalo.¹⁰³ According to one of the participants:

Our idea is that by consolidating ourselves into this national organisation, we will strengthen our presence within the UDF as well as our activities outside the UDF within other women's organisations. Because until we women are powerful and confident enough, we can't expect to participate fully in the struggle.¹⁰⁴

One of the major objectives of the Women's Congress was to unite "the broadest range of democratic women". The launching conference pointed out that the Women's Congress was not a wing of the UDF but "an organisation uniting all women's organisations which are affiliated to the UDF". The Women's Congress also indicated its determination to organise women outside the ranks of the UDF as well. It resolved to approach women's organisations outside the UDF and to work towards relaunching FEDSAW. The Congress identified a relaunched FEDSAW as the ideal way of achieving the goal of maximum unity. In FEDSAW, "all women who are against apartheid, even if they do not want to be in the UDF, can join together and fight for freedom".¹⁰⁵

The Women's Congress saw its ultimate goal the creation of a society free of any form of oppression - whether through race, sex or class. It claimed a direct role in the national political struggle, concentrating on specific issues confronting women, such as legal inequities. Resolutions emerging from the Women's Congress indicated the explicit linking of general and specialised issues: they called for the unconditional release of detainees, especially

¹⁰² Ramgobin, E. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.141.

¹⁰³ Davies, R. et.al. (1988); *op.cit.*, p.466.

¹⁰⁴ Ramgobin, E. (1989); *op.cit.*, pp.140-1.

¹⁰⁵ "True liberation means the liberation of women too", *op.cit.*, pp.12-13.

children, and pledged to work with COSATU in establishing women's rights within the trade union movement. The organisation saw itself as being within the tradition of the ANC Women's League of the 1950s. Thus the new organisation adopted the Freedom Charter and the ANC's Women's Charter.¹⁰⁶

At the launching conference, the Women's Congress noted several problem areas within the UDF. These problems were particularly evident in the light of the Congress's belief that the struggle for freedom could only be won if men and women fought side by side; that the struggle against apartheid and exploitation could not be victorious while women were in bondage; and that a democratic society could not be established when women were oppressed and unable to participate fully in all aspects of society.

The Women's Congress noted in a resolution that although women were active in most UDF affiliates: there was a marked absence of women in leadership at regional and national levels; discrimination against women at work, in the home and in political organisations was not challenged by UDF affiliates; women lacked the confidence and skills to participate actively in organisations; women deferred to men in organisations and men often did not listen to women's views; and sexual harassment took place in UDF organisations.

The Women's Congress identified several ways in which it planned to respond to these problems. It resolved to: educate men and women in all UDF affiliates about the oppression of women; ensure that UDF activities were organised in a way which would enable women to participate fully; end

¹⁰⁶ Naidoo, K. (1989); "Internal resistance in South Africa: The Political Movements", in Johnson, S. (ed.); South Africa: No turning back, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press), p.197.

sexism in the UDF's ranks and promote a vision of a non-sexist future South Africa; and raise women's issues in all UDF forums and take UDF campaigns into women's organisations.

The UDF's Women's Congress also pledged itself to building women's leadership. This it would do by: encouraging and training women to become leaders; fostering collective leadership answerable to the members; developing leadership who would be committed to work in the organisation; and building working class leadership. The organisation stated that women have the right to live and work where they choose; to maternity benefits; to child care; to a healthy work environment; to equal pay; to education and to job security. In order to achieve these rights the Women's Congress would encourage women to join trade unions; stand in solidarity with worker action; campaign against unemployment; campaign for a living wage; fight against sexual harassment and forced contraception; fight for maternity rights and creches; and fight against unsafe working conditions.¹⁰⁷

In 1987, the UDF-aligned women's organisations articulated a common set of demands which reflected the increasing participation of women in popular struggle and the growing recognition of the specificity of women's oppression. These demands included: an end to the state of emergency; support for the rent boycott; an end to high prices; higher wages and workers' rights; an end to gutter education; a rejection of identity books and influx reforms; and an end to sexual harassment, rape and wife battering. These demands asserted the link between women's emancipation and national liberation and the view that women's emancipation must be based on four guiding principles: "democracy, working-class leadership, non-racialism, and the equality

¹⁰⁷ "Resolutions of the UDF Women's Congress", in FEDTRAW News, (National Women's Day Edition, August 1987), pp.6-7.

of men and women".¹⁰⁸

Although the Women's Congress brought together a number of UDF-aligned women's organisations, the membership of the Congress was insignificant when compared to the female population of the country. UDF acting publicity secretary, Murphy Morobe, acknowledged in an address to COSATU's congress in July 1987 that: "We have still not taken the organisation of women as seriously as we should, if we hope to advance".¹⁰⁹ Domestic responsibilities, the widely held belief that politics is for men only, and women's lack of confidence in their abilities were the main factors responsible for the weak organisational involvement of women.

In conclusion, the UDF-aligned women's organisations were responsible for placing gender issues firmly on the agenda of the Front and associated organisations. The development of a formal position on women's oppression and the role of women in the struggle within political organisations and the trade union movement was largely due to the wide-spread participation of women in popular struggles and the emergence and proliferation of women's organisations.

The women's organisations were a major means of drawing women who were not members of trade unions, civic associations, or student and youth organisations into the UDF. They also provided a political home for many of the older generation of political activists as well as young activists who were concerned with women's issues. In addition, these organisations heightened

¹⁰⁸ Kadalie,B., Layne,V. and Volbrecht,G.; "'We must find ourselves": The story of the stayaway in eCawa, Eastern Cape', Unpublished paper presented at the Eighteenth Annual Congress of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa held at the University of Cape Town, 29 June - 2 July, 1987, p.1.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Naidoo,K. (1989); *op.cit.*, p.197.

the political consciousness of their members thereby producing a small number of highly active, militant and politically conscious women.

Combining women's issues with local community and national political issues, the women's organisations which emerged in the eighties combined the struggle for women's liberation with the struggle for national liberation.

These organisations gave rise to a new consciousness among women which reflected a deeper understanding of the nature of their oppression as women and a growing resolve to challenge it at every level.

This is a clear demonstration of Gramsci's war of position whereby a sector of society is mobilised under the banner of a national liberation front. Here, the UDF was able to mobilise women in the anti-apartheid struggle by forming organisations which focused on issues which affected them. These organisations linked the women's struggle with the national liberation struggle and united their objectives with those of the UDF. In the process they functioned as a means through which the ideology of the UDF spread through black civil society, thus promoting and expanding revolutionary consciousness. In short, the UDF's women's organisations played a small, but important role in the national liberation struggle by mobilising a sector of the community through their focus on issues which were important to them.

Some of these organisations were activist organisations with a small number of members. Others were mass-based comprising the majority of women in a particular township. Some women's organisations brought together women over a vast area. Membership of these were through affiliated women's groups or branches while other organisations were based on individual membership. In all of these organisations, however, there was a commitment to the struggle for national liberation, and the establishment of a united, non-racial, non-sexist democracy in South Africa.

Chapter 10**CONCLUSION**

This study traced the formation, policies and aims, strategies and tactics, membership and structure, and practices of the UDF and selected affiliated organisations during the period 1983-1987. The central problem investigated was the relation between revolutionary theory and praxis and the aims, policies and practices of the UDF and selected affiliate organisations. The main intention was to prove that the formation of the UDF and revolutionary developments during the period of review accorded with a Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy.

Lenin developed the "two-stage" theory of revolution in which an alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry wages the bourgeois-democratic revolution as a prelude to the struggle for socialism. In the first stage, the stage leading to a democratic revolution, the proletariat must lead all struggles directed against the ruling class. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the proletariat must rally all the separate currents of protest against autocracy into a single stream. This was reinforced by the "united front" tactics adopted by the 3rd Comintern Congress which called for communists to join other organisations (e.g. professional, women, student or youth organisations) with a view to obtaining control over them. The communists could use these organisations to infuse socialist consciousness into the masses. Finally, Lenin stressed the importance of the political struggle to develop and expand revolutionary consciousness.

Gramsci expanded the Leninist concept of alliances and their role in advancing the revolutionary struggle, particularly in countries where civil society is highly developed. In such societies, the terrain of civil society is

also a terrain of struggle. The relevance of Lenin's concept of alliances assumes a new dimension in Gramsci's concept of the "war of position". In the "war of position", the aim of the working class is to undermine the hegemony of the bourgeoisie by increasingly assuming leadership in the numerous social movements found in civil society.

The war of position corresponds to a gradual shift in the balance of social and cultural forces. In order to establish its hegemony, the working class must become the leading political and cultural force in a system of alliances with other classes and social forces. To gain the support of these groups for the revolutionary movement it is necessary for the working class to present itself as the leading movement in the struggle for the demands and objectives of other social forces and movements. In the process, proletarian ideology will be infused in the consciousness of these social forces providing the basis for a transformation of class and political relations. The war of position, therefore, is an ideological struggle at the level of civil society in which proletarian consciousness is promoted and expanded, leading to a shift in the balance of social and cultural forces towards the working class.

Thus, a Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy and praxis would involve a stage of struggle leading to a national-democratic revolution in which the working class, together with all forces interested in overthrowing the ruling bloc but not in the immediate transition to socialism, establishes a historical bloc, united to achieve common economic, political, and intellectual objectives, and under the political, intellectual and moral leadership of the working class.

However, it is Lenin's two-stage theory of revolution and the importance of the struggle for political freedom - the democratic revolution - that assumes significance here. Thus, the Leninist/Gramscian model is the application of the

war of position to that stage of struggle leading to a democratic revolution. In this sense, revolutionary consciousness arises from the transformation of the particular demands of various social classes and forces into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system, and is directed at a democratic revolution. This does not mean, however, that the promotion and expansion of socialist consciousness is ignored. Rather, the demands of ideology and class war are subordinated to those of the national democratic struggle.

The essential requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian model of a United Front strategy are as follows:

- (1) the necessity of mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc;
- (2) the necessity of creating a broad alliance of social forces under a minimum programme and which is directed primarily at the goal of democratic revolution; and
- (3) the necessity for political and ideological struggle in which revolutionary consciousness is promoted and expanded.

The 1960s witnessed the destruction of popular resistance to apartheid and the banning of the ANC and the PAC. This decade was relatively quiescent as the state used its extensive security establishment to contain black opposition. Popular resistance was revived by a wave of strikes in Durban in 1973 and the 1976 Soweto revolt. The major extra-parliamentary opposition movement during the seventies was the BCM, which set the ideological and organisational foundations for black resistance. However, the BCM and its progeny, AZAPO, failed to provide the organisational form to sustain mobilisation and resistance.

During the early 1970s, the ANC's internal political work involved the creation

of a permanent network of ANC cells to undertake political duties. After the Soweto revolt the focus of these cells was directed towards influencing potentially sympathetic legal organisations.

In 1979, a strategic review led to a change in the ANC's revolutionary strategy from its prior emphasis on the armed struggle. This change was based on the following important conclusions: that political struggle was primary in all phases of revolution; that revolution could succeed only through mass involvement in the struggle; that it was necessary to build the broadest possible united front to unite all classes and strata in the anti-apartheid struggle; and that it was necessary to create legal and semi-legal organisations inside the country that should be led by the revolutionary vanguard.

The new strategy adopted in August 1979 was called the four-pillar people's revolutionary war strategy, which included, among others: the mobilisation of the masses to actively resist apartheid; and the establishment of people's power in black areas. The main elements of this revolutionary strategy were: the establishment of mass-based organisations to challenge apartheid domination and exploitation; the creation of a multi-class and non-racial united front to challenge white minority rule; and establishing the ideological and political hegemony of the ANC within the Front's affiliates and the Front itself.

The strategic and tactical aims of the revolutionary alliance were heavily influenced by the writings of Lenin, and the practical experiences of Vietnamese revolutionaries. However, a complex relationship existed between revolutionary intentions and concrete developments in the country. The people's war revolutionary strategy stressed the mobilisation of the broadest coalition of forces against the apartheid regime, punctuated by guerilla

warfare, leading to a general uprising and the overthrow of the state. Revolutionary intentions did not, however, correspond with the development of the revolutionary situation in the country. Although this strategy gave rise to mass mobilisation and widespread rebellion, it did not result in the overthrow of the apartheid regime.

Instead, the formation of the UDF and revolutionary developments thereafter are best explained by the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy - increasing the complexity of civil society by establishing mass organisations, creating a historical bloc in opposition to the ruling bloc, and expanding the revolutionary consciousness of the masses.

These have their parallels in some aspects of the ANC's people's war revolutionary strategy - mass organisation and resistance, the creation of a united front to challenge white minority rule, and winning members of the front's affiliates and the affiliates themselves politically to the ANC's positions.

There are also parallels in developments in popular resistance during the 1980s - the general drive to create mass-based community organisations, the creation of the UDF in August 1983, and, the spread of a common national political culture that has its roots in a long tradition of resistance to white minority rule.

During the 1980s the challenge to white minority rule in South Africa reached an unprecedented level as popular struggles in the townships, villages and factories provoked unparalleled state repression and reform. The main factors which shaped popular resistance in the 1980s were: the emergence of a militant youth contingent and the proliferation of community organisations born in the context of popular struggles; an institutionalised political system maintained by a powerful regime with a considerable repressive capability;

and orientation towards political struggle on the part of the ANC.

A process of deskilling and mechanisation which occurred during the seventies resulted in a highly complex and diverse African working class. This was a better educated working class than previously, it contained a large number of semi-skilled, urbanised workers, and it was militant. The late 1970s and early 1980s was characterised by an unrivalled organisational drive and a wave of industrial- and community-based popular struggles.

This organisational drive and wave of popular struggles were also affected by material conditions. The impact on the black population of the worsening economic conditions during the early to mid-1980s resulted in their increasing participation in the existing popular organisations and the emergence of a number of new organisations. From 1979 a large number of community organisations were formed in response to rent, bus-fare and price increases.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s changes were made in the form and functioning of certain state apparatuses. These changes resulted in the creation of an extensive security system designed to be a comprehensive response to revolutionary activity and capable of extensive and systematic repression. The main purpose of the system was to counter what the state believed was a revolutionary onslaught against it, to contain internal political resistance, and to co-ordinate a "welfare" system to remove the social and material causes of resistance. The government's repressive reforms were supported by other political and social reforms aimed at removing causes of resistance. These included a new constitutional dispensation and the extension of limited autonomy to Black Local Authorities. These structural conditions gave rise to a number of organisational and ideological developments.

Firstly, there was a general drive to create disciplined and highly structured

township organisations with a strong commitment to mass participation, democratic practices and accountability. Civic associations, student, youth and women's organisations took root in scores of towns and villages throughout the country. Factors which encouraged or provoked the establishment of these organisations were: the changing material conditions within the country as a whole and its affect on the black population; state policy during the period; the numerous popular struggles against the terms of labour reproduction and state policy; the political realignment of black activists away from Black Consciousness towards the ANC and the Freedom Charter; and the formation of the UDF.

Secondly, the UDF was created with two main objectives in mind: to oppose the Constitutional and Koornhof Bills, and to strive for a unitary, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. The Front identified its immediate role in uniting the broadest possible coalition of forces in opposition to the new reforms. The fragmented and localised popular struggles - rent, transport, trade union, student, unemployed, women, etc. - were organised under a national united front which guaranteed the broadest possible unity-in-action of different classes and social groups.

Thirdly, these organisational developments, as well as the upsurge in popular resistance, gave rise to a common national political culture. The main components of this political culture were: the rejection of, and opposition to, apartheid structures and the development of alternative organs of people's power; the adoption of a strategy based on "unity-in-action" and the mobilisation of grass-roots organisations formed around local issues; the consolidation of a political language with its own slogans, freedom songs and symbols; an ideological system expressed in such documents as the Freedom Charter; and the articulation of a set of common demands such as the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of organisations and the

establishment of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and unitary South Africa.

The formation of the UDF, the elaboration of certain united aims and objectives, and the adoption of specific strategies and tactics conformed to certain strategic requirements of the Leninist/Gramscian United Front strategy. First, was the formation of the UDF, which was a "concrete elaboration in practice" of the strategic objective of a historical bloc of all classes and strata opposed to the ruling bloc. Second was the development of a set of common aims and objectives, which conforms to Gramsci's idea of a united front with common political, intellectual and moral objectives. Third, were the evolving strategies and tactics, which transformed the particular demands of numerous organisations into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system, and which aimed at national liberation.

The UDF was able to draw under its political leadership a wide variety of organisations, consisting of leaders and with membership drawn from every race and virtually every class group in society. By the end of 1987, UDF affiliates had been established in almost every corner of the country. The following profile of the Front's organisational capacity indicates the hegemonic position it achieved in black civil society, thus meeting another requirement of the Leninist/Gramscian model: achieving political leadership in the organisations of civil society, leading to mass politicisation and the spread of revolutionary consciousness.

By the end of 1987, the UDF had close to 700 affiliates with a total membership of over two million and a wider support base. UDF affiliates were mainly student and youth organisations, civic associations, trade unions, women's organisations, political organisations, religious organisations, and sports and cultural organisations. The Front's members were drawn from almost every major anti-apartheid tradition in the country. The UDF was also

a multi-class organisation, consisting of affiliates which ranged from petit-bourgeois to worker organisations. Among the affiliates were several middle-class business groups. The UDF also drew support from every race group in the country, including a number of whites. However, the overwhelming bulk of the rank-and-file membership of UDF affiliates was drawn from the African working class.

Initially, with the exception of the so-called "political unions", the UDF was unable to establish a workable relationship with significant sectors of the independent trade union movement. This position changed in the second half of the decade and in 1987 formal links were established at all levels with COSATU.

The UDF faced a number of challenges in its struggle for hegemony. Firstly, the state employed repression and economic reform to limit the support for, and activities of, the UDF and its affiliates. The widespread detention of activists, security force activity, vigilante actions, and upgrading programmes eroded UDF support and activity. Secondly, government "collaborators" in the urban areas and the tribal homelands were used to suppress the UDF. Thirdly, the initial reluctance of organised labour to participate in the Front and its programmes inhibited attempts to draw trade unions into the UDF. Finally, the hegemony of the UDF was undermined by the existence of other mass organisations, in particular, Inkatha, the BC-oriented organisations and the New Unity Movement, which were also struggling to achieve hegemony in the black townships.

The people's war strategy of the ANC-led revolutionary alliance also focused attention on the mobilisation and organisation of the working class, women, the rural masses, and the youth and students, and the formation of civic organisations. This strategic objective has its parallel in the Leninist/Gramscian

emphasis on mass mobilisation and organisation around all struggles in civil society which are primarily directed against the ruling bloc as well as developments in popular resistance which led to a general drive to create mass-based community organisations.

The student/youth organisations, trade unions, civic associations, and women's organisations affiliated to the UDF played a hegemonic-building role by promoting mass mobilisation and organisation, particularly around the concrete particulars of people's everyday lives (rent and bus-fare increases, education issues, women's issues, etc.).

The affiliates of the UDF that played the most significant role in mass mobilisation and organisation were the student and youth organisations. Student and youth organisations focused on particular sectors of civil society, drawing them into the struggle for national liberation.

The initial basis for mass mobilisation and organisation in the schools were the glaring inequalities between the racially-based education systems and the resulting defects of African education in particular and black education in general. From the very beginning of its existence, COSAS emphasized the organisation of students around issues affecting them rather than concentrating on issues affecting the community. However, students soon realised that they needed the support of their parents and began organising students in various actions around community issues, often in collaboration with community organisations.

Local structures of student organisations were also based on very small numbers, making it easy for students who supported their aims to establish a branch. Branches could be established by a minimum of four students (COSAS) or ten (AZASO).

The first youth congresses to emerge in 1983 focused on the organisation of all youth in order to tackle their problems through united and collective action, and to develop a role for young people in their communities and in the broader democratic struggle. High failure and drop-out rates at schools, age-limit regulations at schools, and economic recession during the 1980s swelled the ranks of unemployed youth, which formed the major constituency of the youth congresses.

However, most youth congresses tended to concentrate on political campaigns which became the main organisational tool of the congresses and student organisations as well. These included campaigns against the BLAs, the tri-cameral parliament, homeland independence, the threat of removals, state repression (the formation of defence committees), etc. In addition, youth congresses participated at the forefront of other campaigns which related to local material grievances, such as the rent boycotts (where the youth mobilised to resist evictions), and, in particular, the consumer boycotts and mass stayaways, which were largely enforced by youth congresses and (when coupled with school boycotts) student organisations. School boycotts served as a major organisational tool as well.

The student and youth organisations extended their organisational role beyond that of organising the youth into student organisations and congresses. They also assumed responsibility for organising and conscientising their parents. This was directed towards the formation of street and area committees in the townships and villages.

The trade unions affiliated to the UDF also played a central role in mass mobilisation and organisation. The general internal structure and style of organisation of the UDF unions as well as the creation of alliances with other organisations in order to create a convergence of workplace and

township struggles demonstrated an early commitment to mass mobilisation and organisation.

Initially, the UDF unions were preoccupied with mass mobilisation rather than internal worker control of the unions or organisational practices that encouraged strong unions. The objective was to draw as many people as possible into these structures and/or their activities, including township residents who were not members of the unions. From their inception many of the UDF unions adopted mass participatory democracy as their internal form of organisation. This had the effect of drawing the broader community into trade union struggles while trade union members were drawn into community struggles.

In addition, most of the UDF unions were general unions - that is, open to workers from all sectors of the economy. This method of organising made recruitment easy and promoted mass organisation because membership was confined largely to a single township. The trend towards general unionism was also promoted by the practice of recruiting at mass rallies in the townships.

Finally, the commitment of the UDF unions to linking their industrial-based struggles with community struggles led to the establishment of alliances with other community organisations. The unity-in-action practised by the UDF unions was another factor which promoted community support for (and involvement in) trade union struggles and the support and involvement of trade unions in community struggles. The resulting convergence of trade union and community struggles promoted mass mobilisation and organisation while certain trade unions played a leading role in township struggles and organisations. In turn, the strong links between unions and community structures expanded trade union membership.

Civic organisations emerged in response to a wide range of political, economic and social factors, and, in some cases as a result of the organisational efforts of activists. The emphasis of these organisations was on the mobilisation and organisation of people around the concrete particulars of their everyday lives. The majority of black people have similar material and political grievances, which played a major role in mass mobilisation and organisation. In addition, civic associations embarked on various campaigns around local issues as a means of mobilising people and drawing them into their organisations.

A central tool of mass mobilisation and organisation were the various campaigns organised by the civics around local material, as well as political, grievances. The civic associations spearheaded township struggles around issues such as increasing rent and service charges, increases in bus-fares and food prices, etc. Such struggles facilitated the growth of civic associations in townships which were previously insulated from political activity, while existing associations were often at the centre of mobilisation of the campaigns leading to an increase in their support base. In addition, virtually all the organisations which existed at the time of the elections for the BLAs and the tri-cameral parliament participated in mobilising opposition to the new apartheid structures.

The street committees established by the civic associations also played a fundamental role in mass mobilisation and organisation. These structures provided the base for establishing strong grassroots organisation. In addition, since membership included workers, women and youth, they provided an organisational link between specific local organisations of these groups.

The women's organisations which became affiliates of the UDF also expanded mass mobilisation and organisation by mobilising women around issues which

affected them. The objective was, however, to link these issues to the nature of apartheid exploitation and domination. By combining women's issues with local community and national political issues, these organisations combined the struggle for women's liberation with the struggle for national liberation.

The people's war strategy of the ANC-led revolutionary alliance also aimed at winning members of the UDF's affiliates and the affiliates themselves politically to the ANC's positions. This has its parallels in the Leninist/Gramscian emphasis on expanding the revolutionary consciousness of the masses as well as developments in popular resistance which led to the spread of a common national political culture.

Revolutionary consciousness developed unevenly within the various civic associations, trade unions, etc., as well as between the different types of organisations, for example, between student organisations and civic organisations. Politicisation lay emphasis either on the goal of national liberation, without including a socialist content, or included a socialist content. Thus, the two main elements of revolutionary consciousness, the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for socialism, are to be found in the various organisations discussed below.

Student and youth organisations played a pivotal role in the development and spread of revolutionary consciousness in South Africa and in achieving the political and ideological leadership of the UDF. In many respects, the student and youth organisations, and their principles and objectives presented a challenge to the dominant system as these organisations developed (or incorporated) certain features of a revolutionary consciousness leading to its spread inside South Africa. A large proportion of the youth assimilated a political consciousness and popular culture based on opposition to apartheid through membership of these organisations.

The formation of COSAS in 1979 was perhaps one of the most significant factors in the liberation struggle during the eighties. The student organisation was a major force in the popularization of the ANC within the country; in establishing "unity-in-action" with other progressive forces; and in the various popular struggles waged during the period under review. Former COSAS members became leading activists in other progressive organisations - SANSCO, youth congresses, trade unions, civic associations and women's organisations.

After the initial outburst of student resistance in Soweto, schools and tertiary institutions for blacks became sites of struggle as increasingly politicised students challenged the state's authority and contested apartheid education, ultimately elaborating their own conception of a unified and democratic system of education.

The demands of student and youth organisations also reveal a growing challenge to the dominant system. The declaration of the partial state of emergency in 1985 shifted the focus of student demands from educational issues to the national focus on the release of detainees, the removal of troops from the townships, and the unbanning of political groups. In addition, school boycotts during 1985 rendered the schools ungovernable, a process that mirrored that occurring in the townships following the collapse of local authorities, and led to a shift of objectives from reform of the educational system to control. Likewise, university students also challenged the state's authority in their institutions by drawing attention to their "bush" character and the call for their transformation into "Peoples Campuses". The establishment of committees of peoples power at all levels was seen as the foundations of peoples power and democratic control of campuses.

These organisations were also among the first mass based organisations to

commit themselves to united action with other community organisations. The shared experiences of apartheid domination and exploitation generated a sense of unity in struggle against the common enemy. This resulted in their total rejection of apartheid education and society as a whole.

Student organisations were also the first mass organisations to adopt the Freedom Charter and to declare their support for the ANC. They also played a central role in popularizing the ANC through, for example, the 1980 Freedom Charter campaign. Both school and university student organisations aimed in the long-term at the creation of a non-racial and democratic education system in a non-racial and democratic society. This presented a challenge to the apartheid system since they identified the struggle for a non-racial and democratic education system as part of the broader struggle against oppression and exploitation. All of these reveal a desire for an alternative political leadership and system to that of apartheid.

Of all the organisations reviewed here the student and youth organisations displayed the most advanced sense of class analysis and of socialist consciousness. They recognised the leadership role of the working class and of the national-democratic path to socialism.

Finally, student and youth organisations emphasized political education in their programmes. Their newsletters dealt with the anti-apartheid struggle in general and with other popular struggles abroad. In addition, student/youth organisations held educational workshops and forums which dealt with politically relevant issues, campaigns and strategies.

The political leadership of these organisations is apparent in their support base and in the role they played in national, regional and local campaigns. COSAS, SANSCO, and SAYCO were the most significant student and youth

structures of the internal resistance organisations. Their dominance in schools, universities and in local township and rural communities provided them with political and ideological leadership, which in turn expanded the hegemony of the UDF in black civil society.

During 1984 COSAS expanded from an activist group to a mass movement and was able to generalise student demands from one area of the country to another, thus illustrating its political leadership among school students. At the time of its banning in 1985 COSAS had an estimated 3 million supporters. At the time of its formation in March 1987, SAYCO claimed a membership of between 500,000 and 700,000 (and a support base of two million). At the end of 1986 SANSCO claimed that it had 67 branches.

The student and youth organisations also played a leadership role in student campaigns and in certain community campaigns. They were prominent in the education struggle, the rent, transport and consumer boycotts, campaigns against the new constitution, the Black Local Authorities, the struggles against forced removals and incorporation into the homelands, and homeland independence. Certain youth congresses were at the forefront of struggle in the urban townships and rural villages. They were also prominent in coordinating and sustaining popular campaigns and assisting other sectors such as women and the civics. Student and youth organisations also played a prominent role in local structures of the UDF. In most regions, these organisations were strongly represented at area, zonal and regional levels and often acted as reinforcing mechanisms in the Front's organisational structures.

The significance of student/youth organisations lay, however, in the ideological contribution they made in producing a generation of people who rejected apartheid society and were prepared to make sacrifices to destroy it. Furthermore, the commitment to non-racialism, democracy, unity-in-action with

other progressive organisations, and a commitment to the ideals of the Freedom Charter were introduced by these organisations. These principles soon spread to a large number of organisations which proliferated during the first half of the 1980s.

The trade unions affiliated to the UDF also played a central role in raising the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. The essential characteristics of these unions included: a commitment to mass mobilisation and organisation; the recognition of the importance of unity-in-action (combining union struggles with township struggles); opposition to all apartheid structures and modes of domination (registration and the Industrial Council system); a commitment to non-racialism; a recognition of the leadership role of the working class in the struggle; and a commitment to transforming the particular demands of workers into a political challenge of the dominant system (identifying national liberation as the goal of struggle).

These unions did not limit their role and objectives to the purely economic interests of the working class. From the outset, the unions which later affiliated to the UDF linked trade union struggles with urban conflicts concerning education, rent, transport, housing, and the struggle for political rights. In addition, the UDF unions were united in their rejection of reforms in labour legislation and their commitment to the struggle for national liberation. They were essentially non-racial in terms of their principles and stressed the leadership of the working class in the struggle for national liberation. They recognised the importance of trade union participation in the broad struggle for liberation and affiliation to national political organisations. Finally, all were "Charterist" in terms of ideological affiliation, thus recognising an alternative political leadership and system in South Africa. All of these represented a political challenge to the dominant socio-political system in South Africa.

For the UDF unions, the goal of struggle was national liberation and this could be achieved by uniting their struggles with all township struggles and participating in the national democratic struggle as affiliates of the new political organisations. Thus, narrow trade union interests were subordinated to the national political challenge of the dominant system. However, although the UDF unions laid stress on the struggle for national liberation and the creation of a non-racial, democratic South Africa, they all laid emphasis on working class leadership in this struggle.

Nowhere, however, do these unions explicitly state that they were struggling for the establishment of a socialist society. For the UDF unions, apartheid was seen as the central contradiction and national liberation and the establishment of a non-racial, democratic South Africa was seen as the primary and immediate objective.

The re-emergence of political unionism in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a profound impact on subsequent developments in the independent trade union movement. The trade union movement was also influenced by the formation of the UDF and the upsurge of popular resistance during the eighties. Organised labour was increasingly drawn into popular struggles and by the middle of the decade the unions and popular organisations were drawn together. In 1987 formal links were established between the UDF and South Africa's largest trade union federation - COSATU. Thus, by 1987, political unionism had taken root in major sectors of the trade union movement. This was also due to the culture of community involvement established by the UDF's political unions.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the 1980s was the role of trade unions in securing the spread of revolutionary consciousness within the trade union movement. This is best indicated by COSATU's increasing

involvement in political struggles, adoption of the Freedom Charter, affirmation of ties with the ANC-SACTU-SACP alliance in exile, and formation of alliances with internal progressive organisations, in particular, the UDF. This represents the spread of the revolutionary consciousness underlying the "political unions" and the UDF into the leading worker federation in the country.

The UDF trade unions were thus an important component of the political and ideological struggle to raise the revolutionary consciousness of the working class and were partially responsible for drawing not only trade union members into political struggles, but the broader community into their struggles as well. In the process, the objectives of the UDF were increasingly spread in black civil society.

Civic associations also played a central role in transforming the particular interests of communities they organised into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system. This they did in a number of ways.

The principles and objectives of civic associations affiliated to the UDF presented challenges to the dominant apartheid system. Many of these civic associations had adopted the Freedom Charter by the end of the period of review, signalling their conception of an alternative political system to that of apartheid. All the civic organisations rejected and opposed apartheid structures and, during the mid-1980s, began to develop alternative organs of people's power. The UDF civic associations drew into their structures organisations of the youth, women and trade unions (unity-in-action) and recognised the link between the struggles of these interest groups and their own struggles. In practice, unity-in-action united these struggles into one struggle against all aspects of apartheid exploitation and domination. In addition, from the very beginning, civic associations linked immediate material issues with broader

political issues in their aims and objectives. Among these was the call for the overthrow of the whole political structure and black representation in central government.

In large part, the civic associations emphasized the destruction of apartheid rather than the movement to socialism as the goal of the national liberation struggle. Although most adopted the Freedom Charter, or were identified as "Charterist" because of their affiliation with the UDF, little attention was placed on developing a socialist content in their aims and objectives. However, some civics did promote an embryonic socialist consciousness, for example, CAHAC.

The civics' challenge of the dominant system was also evident in the new structures created by them during the second half of the 1980s. The introduction of street committees constituted a challenge to the authority of the local state. Many civics stepped into the vacuum created by the collapse of the local authorities in 1985, and established "peoples power" by performing limited administrative and judicial duties. In certain areas the authorities were forced to enter into negotiations with civics on a wide range of issues. In addition, civic associations perceived the street committees as alternative structures of mass participatory democracy which were bound by such democratic principles as mandates, accountability, and report-backs.

United action and collaboration with other progressive forces were evident in the principles and practices of all the civic associations reviewed, indicating a recognition of the pervasive nature of apartheid domination and oppression and the need for the unity of all struggles against the dominant system. Thus, the strategies employed by civic associations in their campaigns during the second half of the 1980s took the form of a challenge of state power. By the middle of the 1980s most civic organisations were directing their

activities at opposing all forms of apartheid oppression and exploitation which township residents were experiencing. Civics began to link local concerns for the abolition of rent, service charges, and busfare increases with demands for the resignation of all town councillors, the release of detainees and political prisoners, the withdrawal of the army/police from townships, and the unbanning of political organisations. Furthermore, the UDF civics began using rent and consumer boycotts as a strategy to challenge the government by linking local demands with national political demands.

Civic associations also played a central role in expanding the political and ideological leadership of the UDF in civil society. Civic associations led popular resistance under the banner of the UDF in many townships and rural villages and their dominance within civil society spread the UDF tradition to most parts of South Africa. The organisational impetus provided by popular struggles during the mid-1980s led to the growth of civic organisations in every major city and in almost every small and medium-sized town in the country. These ranged from the large, mass-based civics of Port Elizabeth to the small rural village committees. By the end of 1987 the UDF had some 200 urban and rural civic organisations.

Here, because of the mass-based membership of civic associations and their dominance in local politics, the UDF was able to shape the political, intellectual and moral objectives of communities. This is a clear demonstration of the role civic associations played in the political and ideological struggle found in Gramsci's strategy of the war of position in which an ideology is spread throughout society and determines united political, intellectual and moral objectives. The political leadership of the UDF civic associations is demonstrated by the lead they took in township campaigns.

The rent boycott, which began in the Vaal Triangle at the end of 1984, was

initiated by a UDF affiliate and taken up by UDF affiliates in other parts of the country. In the process, the rent boycott was transformed from a tactic to oppose rent increases to a strategy to challenge the government. The UDF-initiated boycotts were well-supported and played a central role in the collapse of the black local authorities in the mid-1980s. Many civics stepped into this vacuum, performing limited administrative and judicial duties. Similarly, consumer boycotts were introduced in the Eastern Cape townships by UDF civic associations and were soon taken up in other parts of the country by other affiliates. These highly successful boycotts soon took on a political significance when activists began to link local demands with national political demands.

The civic associations also played a leading role in initiating mass stayaways, which, in many cases, were well-supported by their communities. In a number of instances civic associations were able to establish elaborate networks of street committees, drawing in the majority of the people living in their communities into their structures. Finally, in certain areas the authorities were forced to enter into negotiations with civics on a wide range of issues. This represented a shift of power from the local authorities to the mass-based civic associations.

Sustained rent, consumer and transport boycotts, the formation of extensive networks of street committees involving large numbers of people, the detention and arrests of scores of township people, mainly members of the civics, widespread rebellion often reaching insurrectionary levels, the cordoning off of entire townships, all of these demonstrate the extent to which black people, and the African people in particular, were prepared to make sacrifices in the struggle for national liberation. The establishment of peoples power in many townships, and the central role played by certain civic associations in their townships thereafter demonstrated the extent of their political impact. The

enormous resources (both human and financial) expended by the state to destroy these civic organisations also demonstrate their significance in this struggle.

The various women's organisations which affiliated to the UDF also played a role in promoting and expanding revolutionary consciousness and in promoting the ideological and political leadership of the UDF in black civil society. This they did largely by drawing women into their structures through their focus on issues which immediately affected them, and educating them about the link between these and national oppression and exploitation, resulting in the expansion of revolutionary consciousness. Increasingly women were drawn into political struggles through their membership of women's organisations while they developed a consciousness of their own oppression as women. In the process, the women's organisations functioned as a means through which the ideology of the UDF spread through black civil society, thereby promoting and expanding the hegemony of the Front.

It is difficult to estimate the extent of politicisation achieved through any of these organisations. What is demonstrated here, however, is that these organisations did mobilise and organise large sectors of black civil society and were able to draw people into a highly politicised challenge against the dominant apartheid system which was directed at the goal of national liberation.

Thus, the events leading to the formation of the UDF, and subsequent revolutionary developments during the period of review met the three essential characteristics of the Leninist/Gramscian united front strategy. Firstly, a highly developed civil society emerged during the late 1970s and early 1980s which made it possible for the application of Gramsci's war of position during the national democratic struggle. The process of mass mobilisation and

organisation was conducted around the wide variety of material and political issues which resulted from the apartheid system of domination and exploitation, and which were eventually transformed into a challenge of that system.

Secondly, the formation of the UDF, its evolving principles and objectives, and strategies and tactics essentially met the need to establish a broad alliance of social forces in the form of a historico-political bloc, under a minimum programme involving united political, intellectual and moral objectives, during that stage of struggle involving a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system which leads to a democratic revolution.

Finally, the extensive organisational and political leadership achieved by the UDF, and the mobilising and organising role of the various community organisations met the third strategic requirement of the Leninist/Gramscian model - the spread of revolutionary consciousness. Here the organisations which came together to form the UDF in late 1983, the subsequent formation of new organisations and the incorporation of others in the Front, and the increasing mobilisation, organisation and politicization of people through these structures resulted in the spread of revolutionary consciousness, and the increasing hegemony of the UDF in black civil society.

POSTSCRIPT

On February 22, 1988 the government imposed restrictions on 18 organisations, including the UDF and 14 of its affiliates. These organisations were prohibited from engaging in a wide range of political activities such as encouraging boycott campaigns or stirring up public opinion against the BLAs. The restricted organisations could only act to preserve their assets, perform certain administrative duties or take legal advice or judicial advice or judicial steps. In addition, repression during the state of emergency had weakened many UDF affiliates and large numbers of UDF leaders remained in detention throughout 1988.

More important, however, was the affect of state repression on the structure and activities of the UDF. Firstly, it resulted in the transformation of the Front from a mass organisation to a political party. The detention of leaders, mass arrests, the banning of meetings, etc. resulted in the centralisation of decision-making and the transformation of the UDF into a vanguard party. Secondly, state repression and counter-mobilisation resulted in the virtual destruction of local affiliates and forced many UDF activities underground. These changes brought to an end the period of resistance which corresponded to the Leninist/Gramscian model of revolutionary strategy and tactics. Instead, the UDF became a Leninist vanguard party, with its affiliate membership operating largely underground.

In April, 1989 the government released 900 detainees, including most of the high level leaders of the UDF. On their release, the UDF and COSATU (the "Mass Democratic Movement" - MDM) immediately embarked on a defiance campaign of civil disobedience against hospitals and schools for whites. This campaign, which included mass meetings and mass marches in major cities and other areas, led to a revival of the Front.

On February 2, 1990, the government unbanned all political organisations, including the ANC. On April 6-7, the UDF held its Fourth National Working Committee at the University of the Western Cape. One of the central issues before the delegates was the future of the Front. The conference had two options: firstly, the UDF should disband and be replaced by the ANC, and; secondly, the UDF should continue to exist to fulfil its role of co-ordination and building of the unbanned ANC. The ANC wanted the UDF to continue to exist.

At the conference Popo Molefe, in a paper entitled "The Future of the UDF", raised some of the problems associated with the disbanding of the Front. Firstly, whereas some of the UDF affiliates could be easily absorbed into the ANC structure, such as SAYCO, NIC, TIC, and the Women's Front, there were many others, such as the religious, cultural and sports organisations, which could not. Secondly, the ANC could not abandon the armed struggle because the government had not met all the pre-conditions for negotiations set out in the Harare Declaration. It still remained possible that the government would ban the ANC because of the latter's refusal to abandon the armed struggle. Finally, it would be difficult to realize the objective of rebuilding the ANC and retaining the mass content of the struggle without the UDF.

The unbanning of the ANC meant that the UDF could no longer play a political role. In addition, many leading members of the Front were increasingly drawn into structures of the ANC. However, the conference decided that the UDF should not disband. Those organisations which could be absorbed into the ANC were permitted to do so. The UDF would continue to exist to co-ordinate the activities of the mass-based organisations, such as the civics, and play the role of facilitating the rebuilding of ANC structures. However, since the UDF could no longer play

a political role it would be phased out once it had completed the task of rebuilding the ANC. In 1991, after considerable debate, most UDF leaders felt that the Front had achieved its objectives. The decision to disband the Front was announced by its leaders on March 4, 1991.

Appendix A: List of Organisations, with branches and affiliates, that registered as participants at the National Conference of the United Democratic Front, August 20, 1983

TRANSVAAL

a) Student

Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO)

- Turfloop
- Wits Black Students Society
- Medunsa
- Soweto Teacher Training College
- Soweto College of Education
- Transvaal Regional Committee
- Student Tuition Society

National Union of South African Students (NUSAS)

- Wits SRC

Congress of South African Students (COSAS)

- Soweto
- Pretoria
- Alexandria

b) Youth

Kagiso Youth League

Benoni Youth League

Benoni Student Movement

Alexandria Youth Congress (AYCO)

Lenasia Youth League

Bosmont Youth Organisation

Saulsville/Atteridgeville Youth Organisation

Lutheran Church Youth League

Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO)

Young Christian Students (YCS)

- Pretoria Branch
- Central Branch

Time to Learn

Reiger Park Youth Movement

SACC Youth Desk

c) Worker

South African Mineworkers' Union (SAMWU)

Municipal and General Workers' Union

General and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU)

South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU) (Transvaal)

Orange and Vaal General Workers' Union (OVGWU)
 Johannesburg Scooter Drivers' Association
 Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union
 Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA)

d) Civic Associations

Winterveld Action Committee
 Mamelodi Action Committee
 Federation of Residents' Association - Lenasia
 Sendane Civic Association
 Reiger Park Tenants and Ratepayers Association
 Co-ordinating Rent Actions Committee (CRAC)
 Soweto Committee of Ten
 Motllakeng Civic Association
 Westbury Residents' Action Committee
 Naledi Civic Association
 Emedeni South Civic Association
 Mapetta Village Civic Association
 East Rand People's Organisation
 Tembisa Civic Association
 Noordgesig Ratepayers Association
 Actonville Rents Action Committee
 Orlando Civic Association
 Extension 9 Residents' Association - Lenasia
 Extension 10 Residents' Association - Lenasia
 Soweto Civic Association
 Huhudi Civic Association
 Soweto Residents' Association
 Krugersdorp Residents' Association
 Jabulani Civic Organisation
 Ten Morgan Residents' Action Committee
 Diepkloof Extension Residents' Committee
 Kinross Civic Association
 Ennerdale Civic Association
 West Rand Action Committee

e) Women

Federation of South African Women
 Women's Group, Transvaal Indian Congress
 University Women's Group, Turfloop
 Women's Group, Glynn Thomas
 Pfunanoni Women's Club
 Black Sash, Transvaal
 Lenasia Women's group

f) Religious

Ecumenical Visitors Programme
The Grail - Johannesburg

g) Political

Transvaal Indian Congress
Transvaal Anti-President's Council Committee
Alexandria People's Action Party
Release Mandela Committee (Transvaal)
Anti-Community Council Committee

h) Other

Media Action Group
Detainees Parents' Support Committee
Detainees Aid Movement
Africa Perspective
Community Newspaper Project
SASPU National Newspaper
South African Students Press Union
Community Resource and Information Centre
Africa News Association
Khovangano Cultural Group
Labour Resource Centre
SPEAK Newspaper
National Education Union of South Africa
Health Workers Association
Workers Support Committee
Media and Resource Centre
National Medical and Dental Association

WESTERN CAPEa) Student

Azanian Students Organisation
- University of Cape Town
- University of the Western Cape
- Regional Committee
National Union of South African Students
- UCT SRC
Muslim Students Association
Congress of South African Students
- 18 Branches

b) Youth

Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO)

- Ocean View Youth
- Lavender Hill Youth
- Steenberg Youth
- Lotus River/Grassy Park Youth
- Wynberg Youth
- Lansdowne Youth
- Crawford Youth
- Hanover Park Youth
- Rocklands Youth
- Portlands Youth
- Westridge Youth
- Eastridge Youth
- Lentegeur Youth
- Tafelberg Youth
- Silverton Youth
- Heideveld Youth
- Bonteheuval Youth
- Kensington-Facreton Youth
- Belhar Youth
- Bellville Youth
- Elsies River Youth
- KTC Youth
- Gugulethu Section One Youth
- Gugulethu Section Two Youth
- Gugulethu Section Three Youth
- Gugulethu Section Four Youth
- New Crossroads Youth
- Mau Mau Nyanga Youth
- Zwelitsha Youth
- Zwelintevamba Youth
- Nyanga Youth
- New City Youth
- Mbekweni Youth
- Worcester Youth
- Zimele Sege (Paarl) Youth (35)

Inter-Church Youth (ICY)

- 235 Youth Groups throughout the Western Cape.

c) Worker

Media Workers Association of South Africa - Western Cape.
Retail and Allied Workers' Union (RAWU)

d) Civic

Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC)
- Lavender Hill Residence Association

- Steenberg/Retreat Housing Area Committee
- Hout Bay Action Committee
- Kensington and Facreton Ratepayers and Tenants Association
- Avondale Tenants Association
- Ravensmead Residents Action Committee
- Lotus River/Grassy Park Residents Association
- Bellville South Housing Action Committee
- Bonteheuval Residents Association
- Hanover Park Residents Association
- Kewtown Residents Association
- Silvertown Residents Association
- Schotesha Kloof Civic Association
- Crawford Residents Association
- Woodlands Housing Action Committee
- Westridge Housing Action Committee
- Worcester Housing Action Committee
- Valhala Park Civic
- Belhar Civic
- Manenberg Civic
- Rylands Civic (21)

Western Cape Civic Association (WCCA)

- Six township zones

e) Women

United Women's Organisation

- Claremont
- Wynberg
- Observatory
- Woodstock
- Gardens
- Athlone
- Paarl
- Stellenbosch
- Ocean View
- Worcester
- Gugulethu
- Langa
- Kensington
- Mbekweni
- Kayamandi
- Cloeteville
- Zwelentlemba
- New Crossroads
- Nyanga (19)

Women's Front

f) Religious

Ecumenical Action Movement (TEAM)
 Young Christian Students (Western Cape)
 Association of Christian Students
 Student Union for Christian Action (SUCA)

g) Political

UDF Regional Committees

- Cape Town
- Northern Suburbs
- Southern Suburbs
- Athlone
- Mitchells Plain
- Townships
- Stellenbosch
- Paarl
- Worcester

h) Other

Detainees Parents' Support Committee (Western Cape)
 Grassroots Newspaper
 Western Cape Traders' Association

NATALa) Student

Azanian Students Organisation

- University of Durban-Westville
- University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg)
- University of Natal (Durban)
- Durban Medical School
- University of Zululand
- Natal Technikon SRC

Congress of South African Students
 National Union of South African Students

- Durban SRC
- Pietermaritzburg Local Committee

b) Youth

Reservoir Hills Youth Club
 Lamontville Youth
 Matinane Youth
 Tongaat Youth
 Amoltana Youth
 Kwa-Mashu Youth League

Chesterville Youth Organisation
 Umlazi Youth League
 Isipingo Youth Organisation
 Progressive Youth
 Verulam Youth
 Masakane Youth
 Ashport Youth
 Sons of Young Africa

c) Worker

African Workers Association
 South African Tin Workers Union
 National Federation of Workers
 South African Allied Workers Union (Natal)

d) Civic

Durban Housing Action Committee
 Asherville Ratepayers Association
 Reservoir Hills Ratepayers Association
 Reservoir Hills Action Committee
 Amoytana
 Merebank Ratepayers
 Chatsworth Housing Action Committee
 Tongaat Civic Association
 Joint Rents Action Committee
 Nabanati
 Greenwood Park Ratepayers Association
 Joint Commuters Committee
 Pietermaritzburg Ratepayers
 Committee of Concern (Sydenham)
 Bombay Heights Ratepayers Association
 Umlaer Ratepayers Association
 Commuters Association
 Committee of Concern (Pietermaritzburg)
 Committee of Concern (Wentworth)
 Committee of Concern (Verulam)
 Phoenix Working Committee
 Newlands East Ratepayers Association
 Cato Manor Ratepayers Association
 St Wendolins Ratepayers Association

e) Women

KwaMashu Women's Group
 Durban Women's Group
 Natal University Women's Organisation

f) Religious

Young Christian Students (Pietermaritzburg)
 Nazareth Baptist Church
 Isilido United Congregational Church
 Church of the Nazareth
 Diakonia

g) Political

Release Mandela Committee (Natal)
 Natal Indian Congress
 Democratic Lawyers Association
 Anti-South African Indian Council
 Detainees Parents' Support Committee
 - Pietermaritzburg
 - Durban
 UDF Regions
 - Western Areas
 - North Coast
 - Merebank
 - Pondoland

h) Other

Social Workers Forum
 Pietermaritzburg Child Welfare Society
 Claremont Advice Office
 Zomani Ladysmith Club
 National Medical and Dental Association (Durban)
 Natal Health Workers Association
 UKUSA Newspaper

OTHER REGIONSa) Students

COSAS Eastern Cape
 COSAS Bloemfontein
 NUSAS Local - Rhodes University
 Black Students Society - Rhodes

b) Youth

Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (PEYCO)
 Galvendale Youth
 West Coast Youth
 Independent Youth Association (Bloemfontein)
 South Cape Youth
 COSMOS
 All Saints Youth (Oudtshoorn)

Uitenhage Youth Congress (UYCO)
 Westville Youth
 Congregational Youth (Oudtshoorn)
 St Blaiz Roman Catholic Youth (Mosselbay)
 Saldanha Youth
 Pelikan Ontspanning en Kultuur Organisasie
 Bloemfontein Youth Congress

c) Worker

Motor Assemblies and Components Workers' Union (MACWUSA)
 General Workers Union of South Africa (GWUSA)
 South African Allied Workers Union (East London)
 Saldanna Food and Canning Workers Union

d) Civic

Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation
 Malabar Ratepayers and Tenants Association

e) Women

Port Elizabeth Women's Organisation
 West Coast Women's Organisation

f) Religious

West Coast Muslim Association
 West Coast Church Organisation
 Moravian Church - Genadendal
 Catholic Students Association
 - Transkei University
 ABRESCA
 Broederkring

g) Other

West Coast Traders Association
 Border Region Delegation
 UDF Interim Committee - Eastern Cape
 South West District Primary Schools Sports Association
 Orange Free State Delegation

Appendix B: General Characteristics Underlying Mass Mobilisation

CIVIC

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- SCA Soweto consists of twenty-six townships with between 2 and 3 million people. It has a broader ethnic and economic mix than any other township, consisting of migrant worker hostels, a handful of upper middle-class houses, shantytowns, and numerous two-, three- and four-roomed houses and an expanding conservative property-owning middle class. Soweto's political culture was also influenced by the lack of militant and powerful trade unions which might have played a role in radicalizing and organising the community.(1)
- AAC Alexandra township lies twelve miles north of Johannesburg and in the heart of an affluent white residential area. It is located outside the city's municipal boundaries and was one of the few freehold townships for Africans in the country. Alexandra residents were constantly under threat of removal from the area. Access to property rights made possible the development of a land-owning class as well as the development of African businesses resulting in a class structure which included the most skilled and experienced members of the working class as well as an established petty bourgeoisie. The autonomy Alexandra enjoyed from Johannesburg resulted in an influx of people who had no official sanction to live in an urban area. Alexandra also evolved organically over forty years and generations of families living together over a period of time were able to develop a strong sense of community. Alexandra's history of militancy provided the foundation for a well-developed history of collective action by the community.(2)
- MCA In 1953 the first residents were forcibly moved into Mamelodi, near Pretoria, and by the middle of the 1980s the township had a population of close to 200,000 crammed into 13,800 houses and countless backyard shacks. The township also included hostels accommodating 16,732 men from the various homelands. Accommodation has always been a major grievance in Mamelodi and residents consistently complained about the shortage of houses, the high rents and tariffs, and the government's failure to compensate victims of the forced removals.(3)
- PEBCO The overwhelming majority of Africans living in the Eastern Cape are Xhosas giving the region a unique homogeneous nature. In Port Elizabeth most workers live with their families in four townships.

CIVIC

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Drought, over-population and lack of employment in the homelands led to a rapid population growth and high unemployment rates. Funds for housing have been inadequate, and the townships are characterised by a lack of adequate services, overcrowding and shacks. The Eastern Cape has a history of political and trade union militancy which laid the basis for a high level of political consciousness.(4)

UBCO

Economically, Uitenhage is closely bound to the economic fate of the auto industry. An economic recession which began in 1982 led to high levels of unemployment. The state's failure to provide adequate housing, and the influx of large numbers of displaced people from the Cape rural areas, caused extreme overcrowding and the establishment of massive squatter settlements. Uitenhage's African population was also sympathetic towards the ANC. Conditions in the townships, the economic plight of township residents and the region's political tradition made Uitenhage a fertile ground for mobilisation.(5)

DVRA

East London's ethnic homogeneity and long tradition of popular struggles influenced mass mobilisation in the African township. East London workers earned by far the lowest wages in South Africa. In addition, the crisis-ridden economy is characterised by high rates of unemployment. A high degree of insecurity prevailed in Duncan Village because of the strict application of influx control, the threat of removal from the city bounds, and Ciskeian 'independence'.(6)

CRADORA

Cradock is a small rural town located at the northern point of the Eastern Cape, in the heart of the conservative sheep-farming plains of the Great Karoo. Cradock exhibited all the characteristics of the country's rural towns: rigidly observed racial hierarchies; ingrained deference to whites; and intense oppression and exploitation. Cradock's African population is housed in Lingelihle with a population of between fifteen and seventeen thousand, consisting largely of uneducated and unskilled labourers. Cradock also has a long tradition of support for the ANC.(7)

JORAC

Durban is the largest port in South Africa and is a major tourist area. The city also has an extensive industrial network which stretches along the northern and southern coastal regions and an interior corridor which extends up to the Pinetown-New Germany industrial complex. Natal is unique in South African politics because it was dominated by a

CIVIC**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

homeland government that developed a powerful political movement. On the one hand, during the first half of the 1980s Inkatha embarked on a programme to consolidate its support in Durban's African townships. On the other hand, the threat of homeland consolidation and incorporation into KwaZulu had long hung over Durban's African townships. Durban's African townships suffered from a lack of development and shortage of services characteristic of most African townships. The area also experienced widespread retrenchments and a high rate of unemployment during the recession which began in the early 1980s.(8)

CAHAC

Like Natal, the Western Cape has a number of peculiar characteristics such that there was no certainty that the region would follow national political trends. In part, the reasons for this are complex, relating to the specific social and economic conditions in the area and political traditions. These include: the relatively small number of Africans living in the Western Cape as a result of the "Coloured Labour Preference Policy"; a weak tradition of mass-based organisation; and a weak tradition of worker organisation. Cape Town is dominated numerically and socially by the coloured people. Although Africans, particularly Xhosas from the Eastern Cape, have a long history of residence in the area, the region is unique in that Africans constitute a minority. Coloured opposition politics is bound up with the history of ultra-left movements, particularly the Unity Movement. Historically, the ANC had relatively little support in the Western Cape. Factories are relatively small, and workers have weaker bargaining power because of the relatively unskilled and labour intensive character of their work. Cape Town's relatively small coloured working class, although possessed of a long tradition of trade unionism, has a conservative reputation. State ownership of housing and the shortage of houses in the region shaped popular organisation during the 1980s.(9)

NOTPECO

The issues facing African people in the Northern Transvaal are issues which face all rural Africans in the country. These are poverty, landlessness, over-population, drought, high unemployment, the effects of forced resettlement, and rule by corrupt and puppet chiefs and homeland authorities. Many people faced the additional threat of incorporation into, or forced resettlement to, the homelands. The region, because of the various homelands in the region, is characterised by an ethnic mix which has no parallel in the country. High levels of

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unemployment, particularly among the youth, combined with relatively high levels of education, accounted for a militant youth contingent in the region. Most people worked in South Africa's white-owned farms, on the mines or in the industrial centres of the Transvaal as migrant workers. The homelands are utterly devoid of a productive economy or resources, forcing many into the migrant labour system. The region has a history of resistance to homeland authorities and support for the ANC.(10)

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Appendix C: Chronology of the Emergence and Development of Civic Associations under review, 1977-1987

A. The Soweto Civic Association (SCA)

- 1977** A successful rent boycott leads to the resignation of most of Soweto's Urban Bantu Councillors. The Soweto branch of the Black People's Convention calls for the formation of a civic association to run Soweto. At a meeting held on the 26 June the Committee of Ten is formed to study and formulate recommendations for the running of Soweto.
- 1979** In September the Committee of Ten holds a conference to deal with Soweto's problems and to expand the Committee's activities. The SCA is formed at this conference, with the Committee of Ten acting as an interim committee until elections could be held.
- 1980** The SCA fails to prevent the implementation of rent increase thus weakening its leadership position in the townships.
- 1983** The SCA takes the leading role in the formation of an Anti-Community Councils Election Committee, consisting of student, youth, women's and labour organisations. This gives the SCA access to a wide range of individuals and groups.
- 1984** The SCA affiliates to the UDF in October. It holds its first annual general meeting in December at which a new executive committee of eight is elected. Included in the new executive are a number of leading members of the UDF.
- 1985** Soweto is included in the list of "affected areas" when the state of emergency is declared. The focus shifts to the building of street committees, a process that starts slowly in some townships in 1985 but gains momentum in 1986.
- 1986** The SCA calls for a rent boycott to begin on 1 June. The widely supported boycott increases support for the SCA. Security forces detain several members of the executive committee on June 16, bringing to seven the number of leaders in detention. Twenty-two town councillors flee Soweto after their lives are threatened and some of their houses burnt down. In August members of the SADF are deployed in Soweto to quash violence provoked by police action which resulted in the death of 27 people and wounding of 120.
- 1987** The rent boycott continues in Soweto after negotiations between the SCA and authorities fail.

B. The Alexandra Action Committee (AAC)

- 1985** The Alexandra Youth Congress begins organising and educating its youth constituency and sets out to promote grassroots organisations (street committees). First of a series of meetings held in December which leads to the formation of the AAC.
- 1986** A virtual civil war begins in Alexandra after police fire at mourners attending a funeral on 15 February. On 17 February, an acting executive of the AAC is

elected and mandated to form street committees. Outrage erupts on February 18 when police disperse 30,000 people marching to demand the removal of security forces from the township and the release of those arrested during the previous four days. During April, consumer and rent boycotts are launched as part of a national programme intended to isolate all collaborators and effect the collapse of local government. The Alexandra Town Council collapses after the resignation of all councillors on 22 April. In mid-May the security forces cordon off the township, set up check points at every exit and carry out house-to-house searches. On 25 May, block representatives meet to elect an executive committee to serve the AAC until its inaugural meeting in August. The AAC is unanimously elected sole representative of Alexandra during a mass meeting of all organisations in the township. The township is invaded by the security forces the night before the declaration of the emergency. Thousands of residents are detained, including the AAC leadership. From September, 1986 Alexandra is once again firmly under the control of the authorities when the Alexandra mini-JMC takes over control of the township.

1987 Street and yard committees continue to operate but not as effectively as before.

C. The Mamelodi Civic Association (MCA)

1985 On November 21, police fire on 50,000 residents of Mamelodi township marching to protest a ban on weekend funerals, the restriction against more than fifty mourners attending each funeral, high rents, and the presence of troops in the townships. Mamelodi residents embark on a rent boycott and intensify the process of establishing a civic association. Popular pressure leads to the resignation of three town councillors. Local youths and elders meet in July to formulate plans to root out the hooliganism plaguing the township. This leads to the formation of Disciplinary Committees, which soon develop into a network of organisations crisscrossing the township.

1986 The MCA is formally launched in April. The leadership and scores of members of the MCA are detained after the declaration of the emergency. The Mamelodi mini-JMC takes over the running of the township, curtails the activity of the MCA by intimidating many residents against becoming members of the association and repression of activists.

1987 Security personnel move out of Mamelodi giving way to township developers.

D. The Port Elizabeth Civic Organisation (PEBCO)

1979 PEBCO is formed on October 10, to oppose high water and rental charges and to represent the aspirations of the African people and take up their grievances with the authorities.

1980 PEBCO moves into decline following the detention, banning and subsequent flight into exile of its president, Thozamile Botha. Leadership problems plague the organisation until the end of 1984.

- 1984** In November, Edgar Ngoyi, Samuel Hashe and Henry Fazzie are elected to the Executive Committee of PEBCO, bringing to five the number of Robben Island graduates on the executive. PEBCO's popularity increases after the Khayamnandi Town Council withdraws a rent increase in response to a threat by the civic to boycott council-owned liquor outlets, to boycott buses and to call a one-day stayaway.
- 1985** PEBCO organises a consumer boycott on the weekend of 16 and 17 March and a stayaway on the 18 March to protest job cutbacks, the merger of Ford and General Motors companies, and a rise in the price of petrol. The stayaway is supported by 90 percent of the African population. On July 15, PEBCO takes up a consumer boycott which is widely supported and continues until December. The government clampdown on PEBCO after the declaration of the emergency and the highly successful consumer boycott lead to a decision to develop street committees. In December the consumer boycott is lifted after the SAP and SADF are withdrawn from the townships and activists in hiding are permitted to re-emerge. The leaders immediately begin to organise street committees and the first area committees are elected at a prayer meeting organised by the UDF.
- 1986** Three stayaways organised by PEBCO - to commemorate the March 1985 massacre in Uitenhage, May Day, and June 16 - are well supported. During the second half of the year the government uses emergency regulations to remove leadership and destroy grassroots and middle-level groups (200 area and street committee members and almost the entire executive committee are detained). Security forces invade the townships which are cut off from the rest of the world from July 19. Fifty-two Eastern Cape organisations, including PEBCO, are prohibited from holding or advertising in-door meetings.
- 1987** PEBCO is relatively weak by the end of the year because of mass arrests and widespread repression in the area. Although PEBCO continues to function, meetings and attendance at meetings are erratic, while street committees remain inoperative.

E. The Uitenhage Black Civic Organisation (UBCO)

- 1979** UBCO is formed in October to represent the residents of Uitenhage's African townships.
- 1980** UBCO declines in significance because of widespread state repression of striking workers and boycotting students in the Eastern Cape.
- 1981** Differences between trade unionists and community leaders finally result in the collapse of UBCO. Between 1981 and 1983, the civic experiences a decline and ultimately collapses, passing leadership in the townships to the UDF-aligned Uitenhage Youth Congress (UYCO).
- 1985** UBCO and other UDF organisations call for a stayaway on 18 March to protest against sales tax and price increases. On March 21 police fire on a crowd attending a banned funeral, killing twenty one people. Popular resentment is fuelled by the occupation of the township by the security forces and a ban on

memorial services. The ensuing violence leads to the destruction of the town council, the revival of UBCO and the creation of street committees. All sections of the community flock to join community organisations after the massacre. In May the government announces its intention to remove the entire Langa community to KwaNobuhle, leading to the formation of the Langa Co-ordinating Committee. Eighty-five activists are detained after the declaration of the emergency and many other leaders forced underground. At the end of October leaders re-emerge and begin to form street committees. In December, UBCO takes over the function of co-ordinating the activities of the new specialised organisations.

- 1986** During the first half of the year membership of UBCO expands while students engage in a boycott of classes and enforce a consumer boycott. Police round up the leaders of UBCO after the declaration of the emergency and forcibly remove Langa's 20,000 residents to nearby KwaNobuhle.

F. The Duncan Village Residents' Association (DVRA)

- 1983** The residents of Duncan Village respond to widespread dissatisfaction with the Ciskei Transport Corporation and a bus-fare increase in July by boycotting buses. The involvement of trade union officials and the wider community in the boycott raises questions about the development of a civic association.
- 1984** The Duncan Village Town Council orders the demolition of 400 shacks, leaving 2,000 people homeless. The removals and a proposed rent increase lead to the establishment of an interim committee to work towards the formation of a civic association. The interim committee establishes an Anti-Removal Committee which calls for the resignation of town councillors.
- 1985** In August, the funeral of slain UDF leader Victoria Mxenge is held in Duncan Village. This is followed by attacks on the homes of town councillors and school buildings and clashes between youths and the security forces. The town councillors are forced to flee the township and for the next three weeks the authorities, including the police, are unable to enter the township. The DVRA is officially launched on August 15 and takes over the running of the township. In late August the authorities use emergency regulations to detain leaders and arrest residents. The DVRA begins negotiations with the East London City Council on a proposed upgrading project. Negotiations break down because of the involvement of the town council.
- 1986** After the declaration of the emergency, mass arrests and detention of leaders (300 members and officials, including street committee members) marginalise the DVRA from township politics. The absence of community leaders is used to bring the newly styled Gompo town committee back into the township and to rebuild its credibility by handing it credit for the upgrading.
- 1987** The Duncan Village town council takes control of the upgrading project. This, together with the detention and harassment of the DVRA's leadership and members, strengthened the position of the town council. By mid-year the level of unrest in Duncan Village has fallen, students have returned to school and

the council begins to take action against rent defaulters.

G. The Cradock Residents Association (CRADORA)

- 1983** Cradora is formed on October 4 to oppose a rent increase proposed by the Lingelihle Town Council. Mathew Goniwe, Cradora chairperson, sets out to establish street committees in the township. In December, the government attempts to stifle Goniwe's influence by transferring him to another school 100 miles from Cradock. Goniwe refuses the transfer, and is fired, sparking a fifteen month school boycott.
- 1984** In February, Cradock's 14,500 school students embark on a school boycott demanding Goniwe's reinstatement, democratic SRCs, textbooks and sufficient qualified teachers. Goniwe and three Cradora leaders are detained in April. Police reinforcements are deployed in the township and over 100 residents arrested on charges of public violence and attending illegal meetings. Cradora's call on town councillors to resign is accompanied by attacks on their houses.
- 1985** By January all the town councillors have resigned, leaving a vacuum which is filled by Cradora. A ban on a Cradora meeting on February 2 provokes violence and the invasion of the township by the security forces. On June 5, SAP and SADF personnel move into the township. Three weeks later the burnt body of Goniwe and three other Cradora leaders are found. At the end of the year an administrator is appointed to run the township and make preparations for elections for a new town council.
- 1986** Goniwe's murder and the detention and harassment of leaders leave Cradora without a leader. Intensified repression after the declaration of the emergency and falling morals and discipline leave the community without direction.
- 1987** Street committees continue to exist but meet sporadically. However, opposition to the local authorities is strong and by the end of the year the Town Council has not been resuscitated.

H. The Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC)

- 1982** In October the Port Natal Administration Board announces that it would increase rent in African townships under its jurisdiction in May 1983. In December, PUTCO and the Durban Transport Management Board announce increases in bus-fares. In each affected community a Local Commuter Committee (LCC) is formed and are united to form the Joint Commuter Committee (JCC).
- 1983** The LCC's form the organisational base of community organisations which serve Durban's PNAB townships. Dissatisfaction with the Town Council's efforts to represent residents on the rent issue leads to the formation of JORAC on April 8. On 25 April, JORAC's chairman, Harrison Dube, is assassinated, sparking off violence in Lamontville and Chesterville. In August, the Department of Co-operation and Development announces that a "final

decision" had been taken to incorporate Lamontville and Hambanathi into KwaZulu, provoking further unrest.

- 1984** Violence erupts in Lamontville on 22 July when Inkatha supporters provoke a fight at a service to unveil a tombstone honouring Dube. Chief Buthelezi visits Lamontville on September 1 to discuss the incorporation issue, prompting a massive evacuation of the township.
- 1985** The clashes between Inkatha and UDF supporters spreads to Hambanathi and many prominent JORAC leaders are forced to leave the township. In August, JORAC treasurer, Victoria Mxenge is assassinated, sparking widespread violence. The wave of attacks on JORAC officials and UDF members, the detention and removal of leaders, and the distancing of residents from the organisation effectively smash JORAC during the second half of the year. The residents of Lamontville and Chesterville respond to the intimidation and violence by forming the Lamontville Co-ordinating Committee and the Chesterville Crisis Committee.
- 1986** Violence in Durban spreads to KwaZulu townships as Inkatha supporters clash with youths.

I. The Cape Areas Action Committee (CAHAC)

- 1980** A series of popular struggles (the school boycott, a bus boycott, and a meat boycott in support of striking workers) provoke the emergence and growth of community organisations in Cape Town. Twelve of these organisations unite to form the Umbrella Rentals Committee (URC) in June to oppose a threatened rent increase announced by the Cape Town City and Divisional Councils in May. In September the URC changes its name to CAHAC.
- 1981** In early December CAHAC embarks on a campaign against high rents by organising petitions, rallies and demonstrations. CAHAC also participates in the anti-Republic Day and anti-SAIC Campaigns.
- 1982** In August CAHAC joins the Disorderly Bills Action Committee (DBAC) to oppose the "Koornhof Bills". Ideological differences with BC-oriented organisations lead to the withdrawal of CAHAC and other charterist organisations from the DBAC.
- 1983** CAHAC joins with 50 other Western Cape organisations in early May to plan a joint campaign against the constitutional proposals.
- 1984** CAHAC activists participate in the anti-election campaign which includes the Million Signature campaign, house-to-house meetings and mass rallies.
- 1985** Mass mobilisation during the campaign is not converted into permanent organisation and civic activity declines during the first half of the year. In mid-year, the school boycott spreads to the Western Cape leading to a revival and transformation of organisation and politics in the region. The wave of mass protest which accompanies the boycott is followed by a wave of repression. The emergency is extended to the Western Cape on October 22. Sixty-nine members of civic organisations are detained and 110 organisations prohibited from holding meetings.

1986 Mass detentions from the outset of the emergency during the year force many key activists and leaders underground. In addition, 119 organisations are prohibited from holding any meetings or publishing statements of any form.

J. The Northern Transvaal People's Organisation (NOTPECO)

1984 High school students in Lebowa and students at the University of the North (Turfloop) join the COSAS-initiated country-wide boycott in demand for democratically elected SRCs. Parents Crisis Committees are formed in response to the school crisis while a number of youth organisations emerge. In the middle of the year students from Turfloop, UDF activists, and members of COSATU unions organise meetings for students, the youth and the community leading to the formation of community organisations.

1985 In the middle of the year police assault a group of marching students demanding the reopening of schools in Lebowa. This sparks a wave of arson attacks on government property and calls for the isolation of Lebowa police. In September plans are finalised for the incorporation of Moutse into KwaNdebele. These plans are rejected at mass meetings in October, on December 15, and December 22. Numerous village meetings give rise to village committees which unite to form the Moutse Civic Association. Moutse is incorporated on 31 December.

1986 Vigilantes from KwaNdebele attack the residents of Moutse on January 1. Throughout the year, residents of Moutse are forcibly removed to Lebowa. The Northern Transvaal Region of the UDF is launched in February. The unrest in Lebowa continues and spreads to smaller towns between February and April. In late March three Sekhukhune Members of Parliament announce their resignation and pledge their support for the UDF. On April 11, the regional chairman of the UDF dies in detention. Twenty-thousand mourners at his funeral on May 4 decide to boycott white-owned businesses. During May the SAP and SADF enter southern Lebowa and occupy the homeland after the declaration of the emergency, bringing the revolt to an end. Between May and August, residents of KwaNdebele engage in a sustained school boycott, a two-day stayaway by the civil service, and a three-day stayaway by workers to oppose independence plans. Resistance begins at a mass meeting at the Royal Kraal in May, following an announcement on May 7 that KwaNdebele would become independent in December. On May 13, police and soldiers invade nearly all 25 villages in KwaNdebele after hundreds of youths go on the rampage at a funeral of an activist killed by the police. On 12 August the KwaNdebele Legislative Assembly cancels independence plans. NOTPECO is formed in August to draw together the numerous village committees into an umbrella organisation. The KwaNdebele government renews its crackdown on anti-independence organisations and by October most of the leading opponents of independence were in hiding.

1987 The KwaNdebele government renews its attempts to gain independence and, in March, house-to-house raids, detention of scholars and vigilante attacks are

intensified, while the police and army invade the villages. In June the government of KwaNdebele requests the Pretoria government to grant the homeland independence. The repression of opposition groups take their toll and by May the momentum of the anti-independence movement is reversed. However, the Pretoria government rejects the request for independence. The increasing militancy of the youth and their domination of politics in the region overshadows the activities of other community organisations. A sustained crackdown in reaction to the militancy of the youth results in the collapse of the youth movement by the middle of the year.

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