

UDF holds national conference

FIGHTING FOR PEACE

There can be no peace in South Africa while there is apartheid. This was said in a statement adopted by the National General Council of the United Democratic Front.

The UDF said that the meeting of more than 300 delegates, representing millions of people throughout the country, was proof of the strength of the UDF as a mass organisation.

In the context of the worst state of repression in the past twenty-five years and on the basis of overwhelming popular support throughout the country, the UDF still represents and articulates the genuine needs and demands of all democratic South Africans.

There is still time for the racist minority regime to consult with the real leaders of the people to speedily and effectively dismantle apartheid and transfer power to the people.

If we want peace in this country, the evil apartheid system should be removed. That is why we say that our struggle for liberation is a struggle for peace.

If these conditions are met not one more drop of blood need be shed, not one more family need live in misery and starvation, no man or woman need go without work and not one more family need go without shelter.

The state and its agents are letting blood flow in the townships, billions of rand are spent maintaining apartheid structures; while subsidies for essential food are reduced or withdrawn, raised GST pays for SADF aggressions. Instead of homes at affordable rent, adequate recreational facilities, equal, democratic education, the people experience ever increased misery and oppression.

We also meet at a time of unequalled world-wide support from ordinary men and women, organisations in all countries

more than 300 delegates from all over the country attended the National General Council of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in Alexandra, Krugersdorp, over the Easter weekend.

The conference started with a public meeting on Good Friday, addressed by the general secretary of the Namibian Council of Churches, Dr A Shajwala, UDF Treasurer vice-president Dr R A M Sobolewe and publicity secretary Patrick "Terro" Lekota.

On the Saturday and Sunday, delegates shared ideas and planned how to tackle the problems facing South Africa - from unemployment, high cost of living and the education crisis to the black local authorities and the tricameral parliament.

committed to doing away with racism, and of most governments throughout the world. Against this massive show of international solidarity, the right wing Reagan/ Thatcher/ Kohl axis and their allies continue to bolster the apartheid regime.

"We have looked at our weaknesses and our shortcomings. We will try in the coming years to increase the effectiveness and democracy of our organisations, to raise the quality of our activists and leadership, to translate our living experiences among the people during struggle into viable programmes and to overcome the constraints of racialist differences.

"We recognise the need to encourage the increased and dynamic participation of progressive trade unions within our Front and to build the UDF so that it accurately reflects the continuity and leadership of the African masses in our struggle.

"Finally we pledge to organize the

masses of our people to effectively challenge the apartheid state by frustrating its efforts, preventing its advance, forcing its retreat and if possible to cut off all its lines of retreat.

"We therefore make the following immediate demands as the beginning of a process of transition from the prevailing oppressive and exploitative order to a democratic state:

- the immediate scrapping of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts and all Group Areas Laws, and an end to any form of forced removals
- doing away with bantustans and ending the migratory labour system
- the scrapping of the tri-cameral parliament and all other puppet bodies created under the Black Local Authorities Act and other instruments of racist rule
- a unified and democratic education system
- the repeal of the pass laws and all other restrictions on freedom of movement
- the right of workers to freely organise in trade unions, to collectively bargain and the right to strike without being penalised, the right to security of employment, housing, social welfare, pensions and maternity benefits, as laid down in the United Nations Human Rights Covenant and the Charter of the International Labour Organisation
- the release of all political prisoners, the unbanning of the banned, the lifting of all restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly
- the disbanding of the SADF, Koois, the SAP and all other repressive apparatus
- the scrapping of all barbaric 'security' laws which violate the fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Albertus Soke and Archie Gwede, who



THE UDF's executive chairperson, Curmick Ndlovu, is carried shoulder high after his election.

'The people's servants'

"The National Executive Committee are the servants of the people and can only work properly if they have the support of the people."

These words were spoken by Curmick Ndlovu. He was elected executive chairperson of the UDF at its national general council.

Mr Ndlovu was a prominent member of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in the 1950s. He spent 20 years on Robben Island and was released last year.

Albertus Soke and Archie Gwede, who

are both detained and face charges of high treason, were re-elected national presidents.

National general secretary Pepo Madole and publicity secretary Patrick "Terro" Lekota were also re-elected. Adur Cachilis of the Transvaal was elected national treasurer.

Other members of the national executive include Trevor Manuel and Noli Madidi (Western Cape), Steve Tshwete and Reverend M Soofie (Eastern Cape), Yaxus Mohamed and Reverend M Nunda (Natal), Edgar Ngeyi and Derek Swartz (Eastern Cape), and Mohammed Valli and Irwin Mofalo (Transvaal).

'Botha we will resist!'

DESPITE government repression, the United Democratic Front remained the organisation of the people, publicity secretary Terro Lekota has said.

He was speaking at the opening night of the UDF's national general council.

After a standing ovation and to continued applause, Mr Lekota said that he and other UDF officials had not been able to go into the UDF head office in Johannesburg since February 19, after the arrest of eight UDF leaders.

"Since then we have had to run our organisation from the corners of streets, dark rooms and buses.

"But still the UDF has survived. The UDF must survive. The UDF is the people and it has a massive task to perform.

'THEY REMAIN DEAF'

"The government's actions - detentions and other repression - are acts of aggression, to provoke the anger of the masses.

"We must warn those in Pretoria and those who support apartheid. They must stop their bloody policies. They are pushing our country to a civil war which is going to cost many lives, black and white.

"The people of South Africa are not guilty. The blame must be put at the door of those who support apartheid.

"For many years our people have appealed to them, but they remain deaf."

Mr Lekota said the government tried to make criminals out of those fighting against apartheid.

"It is not a crime for us to defy the laws of apartheid and this government, because the government has no democratic approval of the people. It is a crime for them to impose their laws on us.

Mr Lekota said the UDF had to show the government clear demands for the dismantling of apartheid.

RIGHT TO RESIST

"The issue is not whether we can beat them in battle but whether they can solve the country's problems without bloodshed."

The UDF also had to give clear direction to the mass action to challenge the government's new constitution.

"It was at first a mistake for the government to impose its new constitution on us. It is no longer a mistake, it is now a crime."

Mr Lekota saluted "all the friends of the struggle in South Africa." He spoke out against US president Ronald Reagan.

"Reagan must be stopped. We must urge the American people to protest as never before against constructive engagement."

Mr Lekota said many had sacrificed in the fight against apartheid.

"If they want to take our lives, the state do so, but they must realise that the last thing we have is our right to resist them."



TERROR LEKOTA speaks at the opening night of the UDF's National General Council.



THE banner says it all.

UDF takes decisions on issues facing the country

SEVERAL important resolutions were taken at the UDF's national general council. These included resolutions on education, Namibia, cost of living, unemployment, international youth year, the treason trial and the government's 'new deal'.



EDUCATION SRC's for democracy

THE conference noted the inferior nature of education, the attempts by the SADF to win the hearts and minds of students, the repression of progressive teachers and students and the lack of effective ways to represent student interests in schools.

It believed that democratically elected SRCs were the only bodies able to peacefully articulate students' long term demands at schools.

"It is the right of students and teachers to improve the conditions in their schools and communities." Conference resolved to continue

NAMIBIA 'ONE STRUGGLE'

"WE support the Namibians in their rejection of conscription in the SWAFT," said the UDF conference.

"The struggle of the Namibian people is linked to the struggle of the people of South Africa to get rid of apartheid. We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the SADF troops from Namibia and the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 435," said the conference.



IMPERIALISM Reagan condemned

THE UDF conference condemned the support for the South African government shown by US president Ronald Reagan.

It demanded the immediate end to US and British collaboration with the SA government and an end to exploitation of the people and the national wealth of South Africa by foreign investors.

"Foreign investors do not benefit the oppressed and exploited of South Africa.

"We pledge our solidarity with all oppressed people in their struggle against imperialism and must warn the accomplices in the crimes of apartheid that we will leave no stone unturned in winning support throughout the world to expose and end their ruthless treachery."

Conference called on the American people to "intensely and struggle against constructive engagement and to compel the American government to abandon this policy and to support the just struggle of the people of South Africa for liberation from apartheid."



TRADE UNIONS 'Worker unity a necessity'

"WORK RS unite" was the call of the UDF conference.

"The unity of the working people is a goal which all progressive people of our country desire.

"This unity had never been so desperately required as in the present state of economic duress."

"We commit the UDF to the ideal of a united progressive trade union movement.

"We will support all the independent and progressive trade unions in building up their organisations in realising the goals of a single trade union &

action."

UNEMPLOYMENT 'Living wage for all'

THE working people bear the brunt of the present economic crisis, said the UDF conference.

"There can be no solution to poverty wages and unemployment until workers have control over every aspect of their lives, and the economy is directed by need and not by greed.

"We will struggle for an end to unemployment and demand useful work for all. We will work for pensions, disability grants, paid maternity leave, job security and unemployment benefits.

"We will support all the independent and progressive trade unions in building up their organisations in realising the goals of a single trade union & action."

TREASON TRIAL 'We stand by our leaders'

THE treason trial and the refusal of bail to UDF leaders, effectively detained them, said the conference.

Repression against the UDF had taken the form of brutal police and SADF violence against peaceful protests, harassment of people, organisations and leaders through detentions, trials, raids, beatings and the assassination of activists struggling against puppet structures.

The conference demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and called on the state to "cease its violence and other attacks on the people's organisations."

NEW DEAL 'The people shall govern'

THE tricameral parliament, community council, the government proposed black forum and the black local authorities are all totally rejected at the conference as "instruments of the people."

"Only a government based on the will of all the people has a right to govern. And only a government based on the will of all the people and the total eradication of apartheid and all forms of exploitation can resolve the basic needs, hardships and suffering of our people."

"We will intensify the struggle for a non-racial democratic state based on the will of all our people," said the conference.

The conference said the local authorities have been totally rejected because they were illegitimate and could not solve the people's problems.

"It is the democratic right of all people to create any organisations to represent their interests and to have direct control over all matters affecting their lives including such matters as housing, health and transport."

The conference also decided to look at a programme of action against the pass laws and the government's deinstitutionalisation policy.



YOUTH YEAR 'Youth must unite'

THE South African government had no right to represent South Africa's youth internationally, said the UDF conference.

The conference decided that youth should, through the IYV campaign, play an important role in building opposition to apartheid, both inside South Africa and abroad.