

3 years of united action

1982: The government introduces their "new deal" - the idea of a new constitution and legislation to revamp the community council and administration board systems.

4 Jan 1983: The annual congress of the Labour Party decides to participate in the new constitution. This decision is met by anger and outrage at report back meetings in coloured areas throughout the country.

23 Jan 1983: In the wake of the Labour Party decision there is an urgent need to demonstrate the true position of the coloured and Indian people and of all oppressed people and to reject the new deal in no uncertain terms.

This becomes the major theme at a conference called by the Anti-South African Indian Council Committee (Anti-SAIC) and the Rev Allan Boesak makes a call for the formation of a broad front to oppose the new deal.

A commission appointed at the conference discusses the issue and suggest the formation of a United Democratic Front to oppose the new constitution and Koornhof Bills. The idea is broadly welcomed and a steering committee consisting of representatives from Natal, Transvaal and the Western Cape is set up.

May 1983: The UDF Transvaal and UDF Natal regions are launched.

July 1983: UDF Western Cape is launched, and UDF committees are set up in the Border and Eastern Cape areas.

20 August 1983: The National launch of the UDF is held at Mitchells Plain in Cape Town. It is attended by about 15 000 people from all corners of South Africa.

Over 500 organisations which had affiliated to the Front in the preceding months elect a national executive and adopt a declaration and working principles for the Front.

Archie Gumede, Oscar Mpetha and Albertina Sisulu are elected national presidents, Popo Molefe is elected national secretary and Terror Lekota, national publicity secretary. Among the patrons elected at the launch are Nelson Mandela, Helen Joseph and the Rev Allan Boesak.

7 Sept 1983: UDF campaigns successfully for a boycott of the coloured and Indian management committee elections in the Western Cape. In some instances the poll was less than two percent.

Sept/Oct 1983: Ciskei authorities impose reign of terror in Mdantsane following a successful bus boycott. Saawu is banned in the Ciskei and over 800 people detained, and 100 killed. UDF initiates a "Solidarity with the People of the Ciskei" campaign nationwide, exposing the fraud of bantustan "independence" nationally and helping unite the people of the Ciskei against their despotic rulers.

Nov 1983: The Front campaigns for a boycott of the black

local authorities elections held in 22 townships. Thousands of posters, pamphlets and rallies call on people not to vote in apartheid elections. The UDF warns that the introduction of the black local authorities will intensify the suffering of the people.

4 Dec 1983: Less than 10 percent of eligible voters vote in the black local authority elections.

7 Dec 1983: The UDF Eastern Cape region is launched.

16/17 Dec 1983: UDF holds their first national conference in Port Elizabeth. Delegates discuss whether the UDF should call on the government to hold a referendum in order to demonstrate the support of coloured and Indian people for the so called "new deal." No decision is taken, but it is unanimously decided to boycott the tri-cameral elections.

8 Jan 1984: The Border region of the UDF is launched.

22 Jan 1984: The Million Signature Campaign is launched at a rally in Soshanguve in Pretoria. The aim of the campaign is to take the message of the UDF to the people and educate them about the new deal. Thousands of UDF activists and supporters go door-to-door and stand at bus stops and street corners collecting signatures.

After six months nearly half a million signatures are collected, despite a concerted effort by the state to crush the campaign through the detention of activists, seizing of signature forms and other methods of harassment.

Mar 1984: Money is raised for UDF coffers, UDF's profile is enhanced and signatures are collected at a music festival - the

UDF's People's Festival. A second festival was held in April 1985.

April 1984: The UDF West Coast region is launched.

27 July 1984: UDF receives the Let Live Prize from the Swedish Labour Movement for its contribution to the struggle for freedom.

29 July 1984: The UDF Southern Cape region is launched.

July/Aug 1984: UDF campaigns against the forthcoming elections for the coloured and Indian parliaments. Hundreds of thousands of coloured and Indian people are visited in the big centres and small towns, explained the "new deal" and urged not to vote. Rallies are held in places like Kimberley and the Northern Transvaal for the first time. 10 000 people attend the Northern Transvaal rally.

19 Aug 1984: Simultaneous mass rallies are held in the major centres to culminate the election boycott campaign and celebrate the first anniversary of the launch of the UDF.

21 Aug 1984: UDF leaders in the Transvaal, Natal and the East Cape are arrested and placed under Section 28 - preventative detention.

22 Aug 1984: There is an effective 82,5 % stay away from the polls for the coloured elections - many eligible voters having decided not to register.

29 Aug 1984: There is an even higher boycott in Indian areas - only 15,5% of the Indian population turn out to vote. There

are clashes between UDF supporters and the police at a number of polling stations.

Sept 1984: Six Natal UDF and NIC leaders, who had been released after a Natal judge had declared their Section 28 detention orders invalid, enter the British consulate to avoid further detention.

When they eventually left the consulate several months later, five were re-arrested and later charged with treason and acquitted. A national and international campaign promotes the UDF's profile, creates tension between the British and South African governments and exposes detention without trial.

3 Sept 1984: A stay-away and peaceful protest march against rent hikes in the Vaal turns into a bloody confrontation between residents and the police. In the ensuing conflict four councillors are killed. Conflict spreads throughout the Vaal triangle and 66 people die in the first week.

The Vaal massacre is the first in a number of massacres committed by the police - in Langa on March 21st, Mamelodi in November 1985 and Alexandra in January 1986.

To this day, Vaal residents are still not paying rents, and the events of the 3rd of September are the central focus in the Delmas treason trial of Terror Lekota, UDF publicity secretary, Popo Molefe, UDF national secretary and 20 other activists, many members of the Vaal Civic Association, a UDF affiliate.

Oct 1984: British Labour Party spokesperson on Africa, Donald Anderson visits South Africa at the invitation of the UDF. His two week visit serves to highlight the nature of conflict in South Africa, and increases international pressure on the apartheid regime.

Oct 1984: 7000 SADF troops and SAP invade Sebokeng. In the following year, according to government figures, over 35 000 troops occupy 93 townships. UDF and ECC launch ongoing "Troops Out" campaign.

5 /6 Nov 1984: The largest stay-away in 35 years occurs in the Transvaal. Initiated by the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and supported by the UDF and the entire union movement the demands centred around the education crisis, the presence of the police and army in the townships, increases in rents and taxes and detentions.

10 Dec 1984: Six detained UDF leaders are charged with high treason in Pietermaritzburg. Some of these include the "Consulate six".

Dec 1984: UDF backs a call made by some unions to observe Christmas 1984 as a "Black Christmas". The UDF says that Christmas should be regarded as a time of mourning for those killed, injured or detained as a result of the township uprisings. People are urged to buy only necessities in their own areas.

Jan 1985: UDF decides to commemorate International Year of the Youth. Many new youth structures are formed and UDF youth affiliates run programmes throughout the year to strengthen and build the youth front and facilitate the participation of youth in the broader struggle.

Jan 1985: Senator Edward Kennedy visits South Africa as a guest of UDF patrons Allan Boesak and Bishop Desmond Tutu. He addresses a UDF rally in Cape Town but in Soweto a planned

rally is disrupted by Azapo supporters. On his return to the United States he calls for increased economic and diplomatic isolation of South Africa.

2 Feb 1985: The UDF celebrates the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Bishop Tutu at a mass rally in Soweto. At the same gathering, Zinzi Mandela reads a message from her father, Nelson, to the people of South Africa explaining why he will not agree to renounce the armed struggle in exchange for his freedom.

19 Feb 1985: Over one hundred homes of UDF activists and UDF offices countrywide are raided and leaders Dr Ismail Mohamed, Cas Saloojee, Frank Chikane, Sisa Njikelana, Thozamile Gweta, Isaac Ngobo, Sam Kikini, Albertina Sisulu and Mewa Ramgobin are detained. The following day they are charged together with the six other UDF treason trialists.

A charge sheet accusing them and their organisations, the UDF, NIC, TIC, Release Mandela Committee and Saawu of furthering the aims of a "Revolutionary Alliance" is produced by the state in May. Only after a huge battle are the 16 accused granted bail - some of them having been in detention or taking refuge in the British consulate for over eight months.

21 March 1985: On the anniversary of Sharpeville, 22 people are killed at Langa, Uitenhage during a peaceful march. The massacre was preceded by highly successful stay aways in the Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage area to protest the high cost of living.

March 1985: UDF rallies commemorate the 30th anniversary of the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu)

6 - 7 April 1985: UDF holds its second National General Council in Azaadville, Krugersdorp. 400 delegates elect a new national executive with Curnick Ndlovu as executive chairperson and Archie Gumede and Albertina Sisulu as the two presidents.

Lekota and Molefe - who emerged from hiding - are re-elected national publicity secretary and general secretary. The conference commits itself to implementing the theme: "From mobilisation to organisation - from protest to challenge"

19 April 1985: Terror Lekota and Popo Molefe are detained.

19 Jun 1985: 22 UDF, Vaal Civic Association, church and other leaders are charged with high treason. Their charges relate to the Vaal rents uprising of September 1984. Included amongst the UDF leaders are Lekota, Molefe and past Transvaal regional secretary of the UDF, Moss Chikane. Bail is refused, and all 22 are still being held - some after nearly two years of custody without having been convicted.

Jun 1985: The planned All Blacks Rugby Tour is cancelled after massive protests in New Zealand and court action. The Rev Arnold Stofile, a member of the UDF NEC, had toured New Zealand and given evidence in support of the court application which prevents the tour.

Jun 1985: Three leading members of the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO) go "missing". They are Qqawuli Godolozí, Siphon Hashe and Champion Galela. During 1985, at least 11 known UDF officials and activists went missing or were killed by unknown assailants.

26 June 1985: UDF rallies celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Congress of the People and adoption of the Freedom Charter.

1 Jul 1985: The bodies of four East Cape activists, Mathew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sicela Mhlawula and Thomas Mkonto are found near Port Elizabeth. It appears that they had been murdered after stopping at a road block on their journey home to Cradock.

Mathew Goniwe was a UDF Eastern Cape rural organiser and was fast rising to prominence as a key UDF national leader. His home town, Cradock had been a centre of resistance staging the longest school boycott in the history of South Africa.

21 Jul 1985: A state of emergency is declared on the same day as the mass funeral of the four activists who had been found murdered on 1 July.

At the funeral a call is made for boycotts of white shops, which had begun in Port Elizabeth and other Eastern Cape towns to be spread nationwide. Within the next month, consumer boycotts are launched in Pretoria, the Western Cape, Johannesburg, the Vaal Triangle and East London.

Jul 1985: Thousands of UDF activists including 136 known UDF officials are detained during the state of emergency. Many others go "underground" to avoid detention.

2 Aug 1985: Victoria Mxenge, Natal UDF treasurer, prominent lawyer and women's leader is gunned down by unknown assailants, three years after her husband, Griffiths, was brutally murdered.

Aug 1985: Inkatha attacks on UDF activists and supporters intensifies. Numerous houses of UDF supporters are petrol bombed and at least four UDF activists including two trade unionists are allegedly killed by Inkatha. Many other UDF activists leave their homes to avoid the attacks which take place with the tacit support of the security forces.

26 AUG 1985: In Cape Town, thousands of people gather to march to deliver a message to Nelson Mandela. The march had been called, by amongst others, UDF patron, Allan Boesak and supported by the UDF. Numerous clashes with the security forces happen throughout the day and for the next few months daily street battles between youth and police occur in major Coloured and African areas in the Western Cape. **26 Aug 1985:** The largest UDF affiliate, Cosas is banned. Since then numerous local and regional student congresses such as Trasco, Pesco and Sosco have been set up.

Oct 1986: The Front launches the call: "Forward to People's Power". Street committees and structures for resolving disputes are set up.

29 Nov 1985: The launch of Cosatu is actively supported by the UDF - 15 unions belonging to both structures, while thousands of Cosatu members are also active in UDF youth and civic structures. Close fraternal relations develop between the two organisations.

Dec 1985: Treason charges against 12 of the 16 Pietermaritzburg trialists are dropped. The charges against the remaining four Saawu leaders are dropped in June 1986.

28/29 Dec 1985: The Soweto Parents Crisis Committee hosts a National Consultative Conference to discuss the education crisis. Over 300 parent, teacher and student organisations, the majority UDF affiliates, attend. A decision to return to school and give the government until 31 March to meet their demands is taken.

Feb 1986: Police and army action leave at least 18 people dead in Alexandra in a week which has become known as the "Six day war"

Feb 1986: Northern Transvaal region of UDF is launched.

12 Mar 1986: The partial state of emergency is lifted.

30 Mar 1986: The NECC hold a second national conference in Durban, despite Inkatha violence. Only some of the demands made at the December conference had been met and so the conference decides on national united action by all sectors of the community.

A call is made for May Day to be observed as a public holiday and for a three day national stay away on June 16, 17 and 18. Students return to school and begin to implement programme of People's Education from within the classrooms.

11 April 1986: Peter Nchabeleng, Northern Transvaal UDF President, dies in police custody in Sekhuneland. His death comes after two months of intense conflict in the area including a successful boycott campaign.

1 May 1986: Two million people join the largest ever May Day stay away in South Africa's history. Some bosses began accepting the day as a paid public holiday.

May 1986: UDF runs a "Call to Whites to join UDF" campaign in Johannesburg. The UDF-affiliate, Jodac holds arge public meetings and cultural events. Whites receive a warm welcome from Alexandra residents during a flower laying ceremony in solidarity with the victims of police action.

Jun 1986: The Soweto Civic Association calls for a rent boycott to protests against high rents and to pressurise for the resignation of the town council. Already a number of townships had been on rent boycott and by the end of July, despite the declaration of the emergency, the number had increased to 39.

→ **10 Jun 1986:** UDF formally launches a campaign calling for the unbanning of the ANC- a call which had been gaining prominence through the year. The UDF as well as a number of its affiliates have met with the ANC.

12 Jun 1986: A national state of emergency is declared on the eve of the tenth anniversary of June 16th. According to DPSC figures, over 12 000 people have been detained UDF and its affiliates have been the hardest hit by detentions, banning of meetings and even the banning of public statements in the Western Cape.

Also over the last two years about 2 500 people have been killed in political violence - most by the security forces. Many of those killed have been UDF activists.

In expectation of the inevitable clampdown hundreds of UDF activists go "underground" to avoid detention. This enables many UDF activists to continue their work. Nevertheless over the last ten weeks at least 50 national and regional UDF leaders have been detained.

16 Jun 1986: Despite the declaration of the emergency, there is a massive nationwide stay away.

14 Jul 1986: Black students return to school and are confronted by stringent regulations requiring them to

reregister and carry ID cards. Thousands of students are shut out of classes by not registering in time while many schools are shut down by DET. Other students register and then burn their cards.

The process of people's education continues from within the classrooms despite the presence of the SADF within school grounds.

Jul 1986: UDF launches several successful court applications for the release of its members and for amendments to the emergency regulations.

12 Aug 1986: Plans for KwaNdebele independence are cancelled by the KwaNdebele legislative assembly after a nine month anti-independence campaign in which the UDF played an active role. Over 100 people were killed in the struggle against apartheid vigilantes.

Aug 1986: UDF campaigns for the resignation of Indian and coloured members of parliament.
