

# ISIZWE

## THE NATION



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THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED

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The views expressed in ISIZWE are not the official views of the UDF or any section of the Front. They are designed to encourage discussion, debate and education within our ranks.

If there are any issues which comrades would like ISIZWE to discuss, or if you are unclear or unhappy about what we have said so far, write to ISIZWE through your organisation or local UDF office.

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# Introduction

The UDF has just marked its third anniversary. In the short space of three years our presence has spread to every corner of our country, into the smallest rural villiages. In 1984, the apartheid government boasted that it would "crush the UDF in six months". But they have failed. In the words of our acting national publicity secretary, Murphy Morobe, "Today to silence the UDF, you would have to gag a whole nation."

At the end of ISIZWE, we present a short summary of some of the main events in the life of the UDF. In the short space of three years, we have travelled a long road, the struggling masses have brought the day of liberation within reach.

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# Disinvestment debate

The strangest thing about the disinvestment debate is the sudden concern by a range of people for the suffering of black South Africans. Louis Nel, Deputy Minister of foreign affairs, tells us: "Disinvestment, successfully employed, is an act of violence against blacks". This comes from a person in the very same apartheid government that daily sends its troops into our townships!

Harry Oppenheimer says that many of those who argue for disinvestment, white and black, "are not concerned with freedom and justice in Africa". Last year, of course, big business and Oppenheimer himself, came out in support of PW Botha's declaration of the state of emergency. That is how concerned Oppenheimer and his fellow bosses are about our people's freedom.

Even more "concerned" are leaders like Reagan and Thatcher. At the click of a finger, Reagan bombs Libya and calls for sanctions. Reagan has got sanctions against 20 other countries

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but when it comes to apartheid South Africa, suddenly he argues that sanctions don't work.

Then, we also have all sorts of liberals - from the PFP, to Gatsha Buthelezi and university professors - actively promoting foreign investment, in the name of suffering blacks in South Africa. Some do this out of political belief, others are being paid very nicely for their services. They go overseas to undermine the international solidarity campaigns. They say most South Africans are against disinvestment. They do this knowing full well the difficulty inside the country of arguing for disinvestment. Apartheid laws give their arguments one sided protection.

What makes all these "concerned" individuals so fearful is that the disinvestment campaign has in fact been gathering strength. It is a powerful campaign of solidarity with South Africa's oppressed. It has mobilised millions of ordinary workers and others who hate apartheid in the capitalist countries of Europe and America. The panic of the bosses and their propogandists in the face of this campaign is no accident. Like our consumer boycotts, the disinvestment campaign has the power to hit the ruling class where it hurts - in their pockets!

All the major progressive organisations of the oppressed have supported, in one way or another, the campaigns of international solidarity to bring pressure on the apartheid government. But many of us are still not very clear about the real facts of the matter. Does foreign investment really benefit South Africa's people?

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How do we ensure that we achieve the Freedom Charter's demand that "The national wealth of the country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people"?

### THE BEGINNINGS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CAPITALISM

South Africa has the oldest liberation movement in Africa. There have been some of the most intense struggles of the African continent by the oppressed here in our country. The reason why our victory has not been won is due to the strength of the ruling classes. In the first place, South Africa is not ruled by a foreign colonial power. Unlike Mozambique, Kenya or Ghana, for instance, white minority rule in South Africa cannot pack up and go home. In South Africa there is a powerful, local white bloc. The bedrock of its power is a sophisticated and modern capitalist economy, the strongest in Africa.

This economy was founded and grew up as an imperialist economy. That is, capitalism in South Africa first developed under the control of big, foreign capitalists. When the white settlers found out that there was gold in South Africa, it was the large foreign companies that took control of the gold fields. They shaped South Africa to meet their own needs. Thus, the mine bosses got Britain to fight a war against the Boers (1899 - 1902) to establish a unified state that could serve capitalist interests. This state was a white minority state that then conducted an assault on black people in order to secure a cheap and plentiful supply of labour.

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It was the mine bosses who pushed for the 1913 Land Act, that pushed 80% of the people onto 13% of the land. It was the mine bosses who pushed for taxes, for pass laws, for compounds, for migrant labour. In other words, foreign investment, the growth of capitalism and the national oppression of black South Africans went hand in hand from the beginning.

The early development of capitalism in South Africa meant wealth for a small minority of white capitalists, and poverty for the black majority. It also meant an imbalanced and distorted economy. It was an economy that relied on a few basic farming and mining products that were needed by the foreign imperialists, rather than an economy that was directed to the needs of South Africa as a whole. In the first stage of its development, South African capitalism rested heavily on mines and farms. Most of the products were for export. At this stage, factories were small scale and not very advanced.

Then, after World War 2, there was a rapid growth of manufacturing industry (factories). A small group of very big South African bosses (what we call monopoly capitalists) began to develop. But these monopoly capitalists also depended on foreign investments. They used large scale new machinery to compete with capitalists in Europe and North America. This advanced technology was especially important in new fields like chemicals, metals, and electrical goods. But this machinery could not be made in South Africa. It had to be imported at a great cost. This meant that the South African bosses worked closely with foreign imperialists.

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In fact, foreign investors controlled the supply of machinery, which most companies in South Africa needed. As a result, foreign manufacturing companies, working hand in hand with local big bosses, flooded the country. They were able to control the production processes in South Africa. Foreign companies were in key strategic sectors of the economy, including banks, armaments and nuclear power. Even SASOL, supposedly a local pride and joy, relies heavily on a US contracting engineer. The same applies to Atlantic Diesel Engines, which is supposed to be so South African. In fact, the company is half owned by Mercedes Benz, a German company. There are many similar examples.

Foreign companies have come here because they can make vast profits. They flooded in especially after the banning of the ANC in 1960. Their greatest profits were made in the years of the heaviest repression. In the 1960's the Group Areas, the bantustan system, the pass laws, and apartheid generally were being tightened up. All this time there was not a murmur from foreign investors about the suffering of black workers.

### THE EFFECTS OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

While the South African bosses and the apartheid government have worked hand in hand with this foreign investment, it has not benefitted South Africa as a whole. There are a number of factors involved:

1. Imported machinery is very expensive. Money earned by our mines and farms is to be spent on this foreign technology.
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This has caused a balance-of-payments problem - that is, South Africa is often spending more on foreign markets than it is selling. So more and more, South Africa's economic growth depends on finding foreign markets for South Africa's products. Most of what South African workers produce is not available to them, even if they could afford to buy with the starvation wages they are paid.

2. Foreign companies bring technology to South Africa, not money. The money that Ford, General Motors, AECL, etc, spend on their factories is mostly profits they make from South African workers. It is just a part of the wealth created by South Africans, that foreigners have decided to spend here. In fact, foreign companies take much wealth out of South Africa - in charges for machinery, in licence and management fees, in payouts to foreign shareholders, and in profits sent back to head offices in London, Bonn or New York.
  
  3. Foreign companies have wasted South African resources. For example, until recently there were at least seven motor manufacturing companies, all trying to keep a share of the market. Do we need 15 different models of fancy motor cars, when the really basic problem is one of safe public transport? In the same way drug companies use fancy brand names when simpler and cheaper medicines are available as substitutes. These wasters of our resources, of our energy, our labour and our minerals are here for profits not to serve South Africa's people.
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4. Lastly, the high-tech machinery of foreign investors puts workers out of jobs. This machinery needs fewer workers. So even though South Africa's economy was the fastest growing in the world in the 1960's, unemployment remained at a high 19%! The technology is not suited to a situation where employment of workers is a top priority.

It is clear, then, that the majority of South Africans have not generally benefitted from foreign, imperialist investment in our country. But for the big South African bosses, who work with imperialists, it is a different story. They have been able to share in the super profits. Apart from these economic gains, the big South African bosses and the apartheid government also benefit politically from imperialist investment in this country. This investment means that foreign imperialists have a stake in South Africa. They want "law and order" and a "stable climate" for their investments. This is why Botha's closest allies include the representatives of the biggest imperialist countries - Reagan and Thatcher. This is why they are so keen on "constructive engagement" with apartheid, and why they are always giving Botha "more time".

### THE GROWTH OF THE DISINVESTMENT CAMPAIGN

Since the 1970's a powerful movement has grown up, calling for disinvestment. In the US for example, there are many disinvestment demonstrations and pickets. On campuses many students have been arrested. US dock workers have refused to handle South African goods.

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Many states and cities have refused to invest in companies with interests in South Africa. This disinvestment campaign has brought massive awareness and solidarity in many countries overseas. It has been part of the overall campaign to isolate the apartheid regime, diplomatically, culturally and politically.

But will this campaign not harm the oppressed in South Africa, the very people it is meant to help? We can provide two kinds of answers to this question:

1. In the first place, the destruction of apartheid as soon as possible, is crucial - apartheid daily harms people. The deaths and shootings, the cost of the SADF hippos and SAP casspirs, the cost of the tri-cameral parliament with all its pay-outs to collaborators, mismanagement of the economy, starvation in the bantustans... the end of apartheid is a matter of life and death for the majority of South Africa's people. We have shown that we are prepared to make short term sacrifices so that we do not suffer forever. In our consumer boycotts we have shown a determination to even pay higher prices in township shops from our meagre wages, in order to pressure the big white bosses. Even a short term loss of jobs might be worth it if we can guarantee jobs in the long term for our people. This is the first answer: the majority of South Africans are prepared to make sacrifices for their freedom.
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2. But this is only part of the answer to the question. There are also sound economic answers to the question "won't blacks suffer more from disinvestment?" As we have already seen, the high-tech investment that is in question in fact puts many workers out of their jobs and onto the streets. Last year Ford layed-off 6000 workers at the drop of a hat, to guarantee its profits. Foreign companies are not committed to South Africa, they will go to places anywhere in the world where profits are high. Tomorrow they might prefer Chile or Grenada to South Africa. They are no safe guarantee of security of employment.

*In fact, disinvestment may even create jobs! All sorts of goods that South Africa used to buy overseas, will have to be made locally. Over 100000 jobs were created in the armaments industry after the international arms boycott of South Africa. It will be up to the workers to demand that useful products get made in the new factories from the wealth that they have created.*

Disinvestment will nevertheless hit the economy hard. Prices will rise; there will be less money to waste on luxuries and useless apartheid schemes. Someone will have to sacrifice. If the democratic movement is strong enough, than it can ensure that that these sacrifices do not come out of the people's pockets. Let the government and bosses show their concern for black workers by cutting back on their own extravagant lifestyles, and not expect the people to pay for apartheid's disastrous policies.

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One very positive result of the disinvestment debate is that it forces us to look very hard at the kind of economy we want. The Freedom Charter demands that the people should own the mines, monopoly business and banks. The wealth of the country and its natural resources belong to South Africans, and not overseas investors who have profitted from the people's misery. Above all, it is these long term issues that really scare the government and bosses about the disinvestment debate: the direction of the economy, and how it serves the people, is no longer in the hands of a contented and wealthy minority.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In this article it says that the USA has imposed sanctions against 20 countries. Among these 20 are countries like Poland, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Why does Reagan apply sanctions against these countries, while arguing so heavily against anti-apartheid sanctions?
  2. Does disinvestment mean that the factories of the big multinational companies in South Africa have to close down?
  3. What kind of economy do we want to build in the new South Africa?
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# Errors of workerism

Workerism is an ideology that has existed at different times in different parts of the world. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, workerism was one of the false approaches that the new, international workers' movement had to deal with and criticise. There were many important debates within workers' parties, trade unions and later with national liberation movements concerning workerism. We in South Africa can learn a great deal from a study of these historical criticisms. In this article we will be more concerned with local versions of workerism.

As the name shows, workerism concentrates more or less narrowly on the working class.

Workerism correctly states that this class is the most progressive class in capitalist societies. But workerism then clings to this truth in a very mechanical, one-sided way.

Depending on the time or place, workerism has some or all of the following features. In the first place workerism is suspicious of all issues that are not "pure" working class issues. What is more, workerism tends to have a very narrow idea of working class concerns.

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It tends to think mainly of factory based struggles over wages and working conditions. These are the really important problems for workerism. Insofar as other issues, beyond the point of production (beyond the factory) are taken up, these are seen as secondary matters. This means that workerism tends to under-rate the very important struggle for state power. By state power we mean control over the police, army, courts, parliament and administration.

Workerism also tends to be highly suspicious of any kind of popular alliance; and of any struggle that involves more than just the working class. In fact nowhere in the world has the working class achieved victory without large numbers of allies among other groups. Where the working class has won power, it has always had to fight against the ideology of workerism, which seeks to isolate the workers. Despite this history, and despite many examples of its weaknesses, workerism still lifts its head from time to time.

In the last 10 to 15 years we have seen the emergence of a fairly strong workerist current in South Africa. Before we look more closely at this tendency, we need to understand the particular, historical conditions that made this development possible.

#### RE - EMERGENCE OF PROGRESSIVE TRADE UNIONS

It was the progressive trade unions that were the first genuine mass-based, progressive organisations to emerge in South Africa after the terrible repression of the 1960's.

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The beginnings of this re-emergence date back to 1973. In that year a 100 000 workers went on strike in the Durban area. This wave of strikes set the pace. Unions began to re-emerge over the next years in all the major urban centres.

The main participants in these developments were :

1. The workers themselves;
2. Veteran worker leaders from the earlier SACTU period some of whom at that time had recently been released from political imprisonment;
3. Young intellectuals, many (but not all) white, coming from the universities.

In considering the development of workerism, this third group needs to be looked at more closely. These young intellectuals made an important contribution in the early years of rebuilding progressive trade unions. They assisted with advice, research, resources and organisational skills. The ideological background of many of these intellectuals was an "academic" or "legal marxism". This brand of "marxism" had been learnt from university books, and not been sharpened and tested in mass struggle. (Of course this was not the fault of the intellectuals in question. It was not easy for them to develop progressive ideas, except through small reading groups in the heavy repression of the early 1970's). This "academic marxism" was very European in character. It was not rooted in the South African struggle. Looking back, one person from that time has said: "I read many thick marxist books. They were about Britain and France. I knew all about difficult economic theories before I had even heard about the Freedom Charter, or of SACTU's pound-a-day campaign of the 1950's."

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As mass union organisation grew in the late 1970's some intellectuals in this group changed and deepened their outlook. They came to understand the history of our struggle, its traditions, and its strategies and tactics. But the outlook of some others continued to be heavily marked by their university background. It was this last group that became the most active ideologists of workerism.

### DEBATES WITHIN THE TRADE UNIONS

A number of debates happened in the mid 1970's in and around the new trade unions. One debate concerned the question of trade unions and political involvement. Some argued that the re-emerged trade unions should not get involved in politics. They said that trade unions' best chance of survival and of growth was to concentrate narrowly on labour issues.

We must remember in this period of the early 1970's, the apartheid regime and the bosses were going all out to smash the new emerging trade unions. They were trying to impose instead dummy liason committees. At this time, the progressive trade unions were quite small and inexperienced.

After the massive country wide struggles 1976-1977, the apartheid government retreated on the trade union front. The government and the bosses were scared that the popular militancy, especially of the youth, would "infect" the new trade union movement.

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The ruling class abandoned the liason committees and went for a different approach. They decided to recognise the new trade unions, and in this way they hoped to tame them. They hoped that by recognising the trade unions it would keep them free from politics.

In fact, this new approach did not really work. Instead it made a lot more space for progressive trade union work. It was, in practice, an important victory for the South African working class and its organisations.

For some workerists, this victory was seen as a victory for the strategy of narrow trade union work, by slowly pushing back the government and bosses by the careful building of trade union structures, and by not getting involved in "political adventures". Of course what argument this completely ignores is the massive effect that the 1976-77 uprisings had on forcing the apartheid government and bosses back into making some reforms. Over 1000 people, mostly students and young workers, died in the struggles of 1976-77. The emerging trade union movement is one of the living monuments to these matyrs.

This newly opened space on the labour front was used effectively by the workers and their trade union leadership. By 1979, a new national trade union federation, FOSATU, was launched. Alongside FOSATU, SAAWU and many other trade unions also grew in strength.

The main feature of this short background history is that the working class movement re-emerged largely as a trade union movement.

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This happened in a situation where there was little, if any, open mass-based political organisations in the people's camp. It was only in the early 1980's that progressive civics, youth congresses and women's organisations began to emerge. It was only in August 1983, with the launch of the UDF, that a truly national, political voice existed at an open level. By this stage, the re-emerged trade union movement had been in existence for some 10 years. It was in this situation, with a labour movement operating more or less independently of mass political struggle, that workerism developed.

### A WARNING

A word of warning before we look more closely at the details of workerism. Too often we use the words "populism" and "workerism" as loose, sectarian slogans. Too often we label someone, or some group or organisation "workerist" and then we imagine we can dismiss them. But this is not so.

In fact, individuals and organisations with workerist tendencies have made contributions to our struggle in the last 15 years. In criticising the errors of workerism, we must also learn what we can from the strong points in theory and in organisation of those who have workerist tendencies. We must seek to win them over to our position.

It is also important to note that when we use the word "tendency", we mean exactly that. Today you will find only a few pure workerists. But you will find the outlook and errors of workerism creeping in as a tendency in quite a few places. Our own UDF ranks have not been free of workerist tendencies.

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There have been three broad forms of workerism in South Africa over the last 15 years.

### 1. WORKERISM AS ECONOMISM

We have already spoken of 1973 and the debates that surrounded the new trade unions. The debates were whether the unions should get involved in politics. Some, but not all intellectuals associated with trade unions argued that the unions should not get involved. Generally, at this stage, this view was presented as a tactic for the particular time. It was, as we have said, a period when the unions were still weak and small. It is possible that this low profile, narrow trade union, factory floor approach was, then, the correct tactic. In any case, as long as this approach was seen, strictly, as a tactic and not as a general principle, then it is not really correct to describe it as workerism.

But many of those pushing this tactic of "independence" for trade unions in the early 1970's, soon began to develop a more elaborated theory - this was the ideology of economism.

By economism, we mean that brand of workerism that has argued that the "economy" is the key to everything. This position argues that in a capitalist economy like South Africa everything can be explained by capitalist relations of production - that is, by the exploitation of workers by bosses.

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Now, there is a lot of truth in this view. Unfortunately, this important truth is advanced by economism as if it were the whole truth, and the only truth. As a result, it argues that the only real important struggle is on the factory floor. It is in the factory that the workers and bosses confront each other most purely. This struggle is the key to everything else.

Workerists who advance this brand of economism tend to dismiss the political struggle as not so important. They see apartheid oppression as simply a mask behind which capitalist exploitation is hidden. For these workerists, struggles around who shall govern, and against apartheid oppression generally are not really important. They say such struggles have the danger of misleading workers away from the "real" struggle, the "pure" class struggle in the factory. Insofar as these more political struggles are taken up, they are useful only if they uncover to the workers the truth about capitalist exploitation. It is in production, they say, that the real power is located. If workers can change the system of production, if they can take over the factories and get rid of the bosses, then the apartheid government will crumble.

This economistic workerism is not all wrong. It is true that the power of the ruling class, of the bosses, rests very much on the exploitation of the workers at the point of production, in the factories. It is also true that meaningful change in our country will not come simply by removing apartheid. Full democracy for South Africa depends importantly on removing exploitation from our economy.

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(This, incidently, is why the UDF has committed itself to fighting all forms of oppression and exploitation).

But economism takes these truths and turns them into the whole truth. In this way, it tends to ignore the great importance of political questions. The factory is not the only place where the ruling class has power. Without an oppressive political machinery (police, army, courts, jails, administration) the bosses would not be able to continue for one single day their exploitation of the workers in the factory. In our country apartheid oppression; (things like gutter education, pass laws, job reservations, the bantustans) deepen the capitalist exploitation and control over workers, and also over all the oppressed.

While factory based struggles are of great importance, a complete strategy for change cannot simply rest at this level. What does it help a worker to win wage increases, if these are wiped out by more sales tax and higher rents introduced by the white minority regime?

Even from a "pure" working class and economic position, it is completely wrong to limit workers to factory based issues. The questions of politics, of who holds state power, of who makes the laws, of who controls the police, the courts, the army, prisons and administration cannot be ignored. Without addressing these questions the factory-based gains made by the workers will always be in danger of being wiped out.

With the upsurge of massive political struggles in South Africa over the last two years, the weaknesses of economism have been widely understood by workers, and most other progressives.

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While economism still lingers on in some places, it has generally been abandoned, or adapted and reformed. One reformed brand of economism can be called syndicalism.

## 2. WORKERISM AS SYNDICALISM

This syndicalist brand of workerism does not deny the need for workers to get involved in wider political issues. But it sees the trade union as the main, or even as the only organisational base for this political involvement.

There are some reformist as well as more militant versions of this syndicalism. The reformist version hopes for some movement or party modelled on the British Labour Party to emerge. The trade union movement would be the main participant in such a labour movement. For the reformists, struggle is limited to the struggle to improve conditions, without ending our enslavement. More militant versions of this syndicalism see the trade unions as the spearhead of attack on the apartheid government and bourgeois rule. In this case the chosen strategy is the general strike. In fact, the general strike tends to be stressed by these militant syndicalists to the exclusion of all other weapons of struggle. The general strike is seen in isolation from all other strategies and tactics.

Both the reformist and militant versions of syndicalism have one thing in common. They both think that the leading role of the working class means the leading role of the progressive trade unions.

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But the leading role of the working class in our struggle is not the same thing as the leading role of the progressive trade unions. To understand why we say this, and to understand more clearly the errors of syndicalism, we need to look at the strengths and weaknesses of trade unions

### THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions have made, and they will continue to make, a great contribution to the whole liberation movement. It is often within trade unions that workers begin to learn of their collective strength as a class. The trade union struggles enable workers to understand more clearly that their interests and those of the bosses are fundamentally opposed. In democratic trade unions, hundreds of thousands of South African workers get organisational training. They take part in discussions, elections, mandating and representing. The trade unions are a great school of struggle for workers. It is in the interest of the UDF and the whole national democratic struggle in South Africa that the maximum number of workers is organised into democratic, national, industrial trade unions.

The trade unions are also more than just a school of struggle. They are in their own right, powerful weapons, enabling workers to strike heavy blows against the bosses and against the whole apartheid system.

But trade unions have limitations. The first aim of a trade union is to organise the maximum number of workers in a factory, and eventually within an industry.

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Its major means of mobilisation and organisation is around the immediate factory floor issues - like wages and working conditions. If this is the first aim of a progressive trade union, then it would be incorrect to exclude workers who say they are "not interested in politics", or who have many different, even confused political views. In South Africa, the progressive trade unions often include many ordinary workers who are not political, or who are, for instance, Inkatha members. Many of these workers are, nevertheless, loyal union members.

It is completely correct that the progressive trade unions should throw their net wide. They would be failing in their task if they excluded an ordinary worker because he or she has confused political views. This is not to say that trade unions should make no effort to educate their members politically. But this is a process, something that can take time. By throwing their net wide, and by exposing thousands of workers to democratic organisation and collective, militant struggle, the trade unions can act as a major link between the working class and political organisations and struggle.

What we have just said about trade unions shows why unions have political limitations. This is not the fault of trade unions. They would, in fact, be failing in their political tasks if they tried to become political parties open only to the most politically advanced workers with the same programme and outlook.

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Because they recruit widely, trade unions are often not able to move quickly and effectively in day to day political struggles. The political mandates of officials are often more limited than those of political organisations, where the voluntary members have already agreed to a political programme.

But we must not take this argument too far!

Over the years, the progressive trade unions in South Africa have played an important political role. Unfortunately the political contribution of trade unions in the last period could sometimes have been much greater. The reasons for this have not always been the fundamental limitations of trade unions themselves. Often workerism has held back the fullest participation of the organised workers in our struggles. However, since the launch of COSATU at the end of last year, we have seen a bolder political approach. This represents a very big gain for the whole struggle.

So far, we have considered two brands of workerism - economism and syndicalism. We have suggested that these forms of workerism have been closely associated with certain intellectuals linked to the trade union movement. The soil for the development of this workerist outlook has been a trade union movement emerging in the absence of a large, open political organisation. But the errors of workerism are not confined to some of those who have been closely associated with the trade unions over the last period. There is a third, watered down version of workerism that we need finally to consider.

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### 3. WORKERISM IN NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CLOTHING

This brand of watered down workerism is found within our own UDF ranks, and elsewhere. This brand of workerism shares many of the errors of the other brands of workerism, but in a watered down, not so strong form.

We are thinking here of those who pay lip service to our broad strategy of national democratic struggle. That is, those who say : "Yes, the popular struggle, NDS is important". But they do not really believe these words in their hearts. For these watered down workerists the national democratic struggle is simply a tactic of the moment. For them the broad front of the UDF is an unfortunate and temporary structure. Our talk about national democratic struggle is " merely a concession to the traditions and culture of the masses in South Africa". These workerists in NDS clothing would like to see the UDF become a socialist, workers' party. They would like to see the petty bourgeoisie and all those democrats who are not socialist "weeded out" from our ranks.

Those who still argue in this way have learnt very little from the experience of the past two years. In the short space of its existence, the UDF has paved the way for countrywide mass mobilisation, and organisation. These lessons have confirmed once more, in the hard school of struggle, the correctness of our broad strategy of national democratic struggle. The UDF sees as its main task the mobilisation and organisation of all South Africans committed to non-racial, majority rule in an undivided South Africa. On the basis of this fundamental goal we have achieved major victories.

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For those within our ranks who are committed to socialism, these victories have created the space and possibilities of raising the question of socialism not within the confines of a narrow, small sect, but at a mass level. But there are also other patriotic democrats, who are not necessarily socialist, who are making a large contribution to the struggle. While encouraging debate and discussion about the nature of change in a future South Africa, we must also safeguard and deepen our unity.

The golden rule in a political struggle is always to isolate the most dangerous enemy, while at the same time strengthening to the maximum the progressive camp. In South African conditions, the broad strategy of national democratic struggle is the route to the most far-reaching and rapid changes in our country. It is not an unfortunate or delaying tactic, it is a broad strategy that we consider with the utmost seriousness.

There are many practical ways in which we can illustrate the strategic weakness of the watered down version of workerism. Let us take just one example. The watered down workerist have a very defeatist, passive attitude towards the oppressed, black petty bourgeoisie, and middle strata in our country. In the last few years these workerists have argued that the government's tricameral parliament and its Black Local Authorities system is designed to create a large collaborating "black middle class". This is true. But from this correct understanding, these workerists have concluded that we must concentrate all our efforts on black workers.

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In other words, because it is the government and bosses' intention to create a large, collaborating "black middle class", we are asked to believe that such a group must already exist. These workerists want to hand this victory over to the government and bosses without a fight!

Fortunately, the majority view within the UDF has not been swayed by this view. Guided by the broad strategy of national democratic struggle - in our million signature campaign, in our anti-election struggles, for instance - we have mobilised, informed and organised all classes and groups among the oppressed. We have to refuse to confine ourselves to factories and working class areas in the townships. Because of this, the government failed miserably in its attempts to gain significant support for its reforms among the black middle strata. It is true that there are some sell-outs and collaborators, but they are a small minority, and they are generally very isolated within our communities. We can say, confidently, that on this front, the government and bosses are further away from realising their dreams of a large collaborating group than they were in 1983.

### THE LEADING ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS

We have looked at three brands of workerism that have developed over the last 15 years. We have also looked at some of the errors and weaknesses within these three brands of workerism. In conclusion we need to consider the question of the leading role of the working class.

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This is a point that all workerists stress a great deal. It is also on this point that they are most confused.

The workerists are not alone in calling for the leading role of the working class in our struggle. The entire UDF (in its national resolutions), COSATU, the ANC and many other organisations have recognised the need for working class leadership. For the UDF the problem with the workerists is not their correct call for worker leadership, but rather what they understand by this.

The economistic brand of workerism fails to realise that working class leadership must be exerted in all fields of struggle. The position, outlook and discipline of the workers must provide direction not just within the confines of the factory - but also in the political struggles, in struggles against gutter education, and community oppression.

Likewise, the syndicalist brand of workerism tends to hold back workers from the fullest involvement in popular organisations and alliances. It is strange that the same workerists intellectuals who, in theory, praise the automatic wisdom of the working class, often have a very patronising view of workers in practice. In practice, these workerists think of the working class as weak and ignorant, constantly threatened by "populism" and "petty bourgeois nationalism". This is often the underlying reason for their syndicalism. They want to lock workers safely up within "pure working class" trade unions, holding them in quarantine until they are "sufficiently educated" to be able to stand up to the threats of "populism".

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Insofar as workerists have succeeded in this aim of isolating workers within trade unions, they have achieved two negative results:

- a) they have deprived workers of political experience, of the chance to learn in and through political practice. It is not in standing off in isolation that workers will learn the strengths and weaknesses, the possibilities and limitations of other potential allies;
- b) they have deprived the national democratic struggle of strong worker leadership.

Fortunately, the attempt to fence organised workers inside a syndicalist compound has generally not succeeded. The two negative results have not been as far reaching as they might have been.

Finally, the most fundamental error of workerism in all three of its varieties, is its failure to understand that in South African conditions the working class can, and needs to exert its leadership over the broadest popular unity. Nowhere in the capitalist world, in a country with so many features of advanced capitalism, are the medium term prospects of the working class so good. In South Africa, the ruling bloc is able to secure support only from a small minority of our people. The special combination of racial oppression and capitalist exploitation has created a vast people's camp struggling to remove all forms of oppression and exploitation from our land.

To ensure that our struggle is advanced to the maximum, the working class needs increasingly to provide leadership not

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just to its own members - but to all democratic and oppressed South Africans - to the black middle strata, to the rural masses, to the unemployed, and to the youth. The errors of workerism (whether it is economism or syndicalism, or a watered down lip service to the national democratic struggle) holds us all back. But above all, it holds back the working class itself, from the fullest realisation of its important tasks.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the similarities and differences between workerism as economism and workerism as syndicalism?
  2. What do you understand by the leading role of the working class in our struggle? Why do we call for this leadership?
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## **2 emergencies - 1960 & 1986**

The state of emergency imposed nationally by PW Botha has been a vicious assault on the people of South Africa and their organisations. More than 12 000 people have been detained. Scores have disappeared, allegedly released by the police. Yet it is clear that the spirit of resistance has not been broken.

Although it is difficult, organisations are still working. The UDF is still holding its structures together, from deep inside the community to the level of the NEC. There is still national co-ordination taking place. Other organisations such as COSATU have also been able to withstand the crackdown.

The resistance of the people runs very deep. Many townships in the country remain no-go areas for all but armed convoys. Significantly, this applies also to some of the rural areas in and around the bantustans of the Transvaal. In many townships, the street committees structures remain intact and have not been broken.

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New people are put forward to replace those who have been taken. The state has admitted that it is losing R 30 million a month as residents in 41 townships refuse to pay rents.

Workers in hundreds of factories and shops organised by COSATU unions have gone on strike. A central demand has been the release of their organisers or fellow workers from detention. In the schools, students have not accepted the ID system or the presence of police in school grounds. Students have successfully held numerous boycotts and stay aways. The state has responded by closing down at least 30 schools.

The apartheid government has also run into a number of legal problems with the various emergency regulations. Many of these regulations have been challenged by organisations and thrown out by the courts. This has meant that the state has not been able to turn the screws as it would like to on the people.

The state of emergency of 1986 has been more vicious than that of 1960. But has it been as effective? What is different now to then? We need to look at some of the points of similarity and some of the differences.

The apartheid government responded in both 1960 and 1986 with an emergency after there had been a period of continuous resistance on a massive scale.

In 1960 it was after a decade which saw the Congress Alliance engage in the Defiance Campaign, the campaigns against bantu education and passes; for a national wage of a pound a day for

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all workers; the bus and potato boycotts; as well as the Congress of the People campaign and the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955. There had also been many strikes and successful national stay aways from work.

In 1986, the emergency has been imposed after the people have similarly engaged in mass action. After the army entered the townships of Sebokeng and Sharpeville in September 1984, people throughout the country began the process of making townships ungovernable for the state, and replacing state structures with those controlled by the people themselves. There have been large-scale boycotts of bantu and coloured education, and the consumer boycotts. The regional stay aways have been extended on a national scale as with 1 May and 16 June. There have been more strikes in the first few months of 1986 than at any other time.

In 1960, the state used the emergency to detain thousands, to leave organisations without our leaders and to break communication between activists and the people. The government banned the ANC and PAC and then followed up the six months of the emergency with four years of trials. Thousands of comrades were either jailed, banned or forced into exile. The main triumph for the state came with the Rivonia Trial, when they sent the leadership of MK to life imprisonment.

Similarly the emergency of 1986 was imposed after the apartheid regime could no longer hold off the pressure on them from people's organisations.

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For the past few years, it has detained thousands under the various security laws. It has used many different tactics (treason trials, vigilantes, etc) to disrupt and break the people's organisations. When these measures did not work, the government imposed a partial emergency in 1985. Still, this has not been enough to make PW Botha feel secure. For Botha it was clear that he could only stay in power if he unleashed his armed forces.

But does this mean, as in the 1960's that the government will smash the democratic movement? Because they succeeded in the 1960's in creating a period of lull, can they do this again? There are many differences between then and now that tilt the balance in favour of the struggling people. This does not mean that the emergency does not affect the ability of the people to continue organising. It has indeed struck many heavy blows, but the objective conditions are in favour of the people in the long term.

Let us now look at some of the major differences between 1960 and 1986.

### 1. POLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE RULING BLOC

In 1948 the Nationalist Party came to power on the basis of its proposed apartheid programme. By 1960, the Nats had a clear political strategy. They wanted to consolidate the various apartheid laws they had begun to implement during the 1950's but which were massively rejected by the people. This policy included some of the following: the development of the bantustans; the strict imposition of influx control; the implementation of Bantu education; Group Areas removals;

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the removal of "black spots" and many other apartheid measures. The government used the emergency to smash resistance so that they could impose these apartheid laws.

However, by 1986 the ruling bloc as a whole has very little coherent political strategy. It is clear that, although the government responds to popular pressure with brute force, it has no political alternative. In 1960 the emergency was imposed so that the state could implement its apartheid policies. In 1986 the emergency came because the state no longer has any clear long term political strategy to defend.

Today, many of PW Botha's closest friends have been forced to call on him to reverse the process his party started in 1960. They are now calling for the release of Mandela and other political prisoners, and for the unbanning of the ANC. The original aim of the imperialist countries' "constructive engagement" was to bargain with Botha for a few cosmetic "reforms", while completely ignoring the leading liberation movement in South Africa, the ANC. Now, even Thatcher and Reagan have been forced to retreat, at least a little, from this approach.

Within South Africa, powerful elements in the broad ruling bloc are also having to adjust. Some leading businessmen and the PFP are beginning to realise that they will have to acknowledge the major leadership and organisation of the majority of South Africans. Delegations from both these groupings have visited the ANC in Lusaka.

Obviously, today there are still major differences between mass-based organisations, committed to ending all forms

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of oppression and exploitation, like UDF, and these liberal groupings within the ruling bloc. Nonetheless, there is at least an agreement that the way forward lies through the unbanning of the ANC and the release of political prisoners.

Today, PW Botha finds himself under pressure politically, even from his imperialist friends and significant sections of the South African ruling bloc.

## 2. ORGANISED STRENGTH OF THE POPULAR MOVEMENT

There is a big difference between 1960 and 1986 and the strength of the broad popular forces. This strength can be seen both in the larger numbers of people involved, as well as the greater experience activists and organisations now have.

In 1960, after the emergency and the banning of the ANC, the leadership of what had been open, legal organisations were forced overnight to operate in conditions of illegality. There was little experience of clandestine or underground styles of work. This often made it easy for the police to monitor and led to heavy blows to the new underground movement.

By 1986 a different set of conditions apply. Various organisations have been working underground in conditions of illegality for 26 years. (In the case of the SACP this has been

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for over 30 years.) If the state were to succeed in smashing UDF and COSATU (which it can't), this might hamper the work happening at other levels, but it would not break it.

In addition, in 1986 mass based organisation is generally more advanced than it was in 1960. Already the rudimentary organs of people's power, in the form of street committees, etc, are in existence and have not been broken by Botha's armed forces. Also, and importantly, the trade unions are better organised than they were. The working class has grown substantially and the percentage of workers organised into democratic unions has increased. This puts additional pressure on the bosses and the apartheid government.

### 3. ACTIVISTS AND MASS PREPAREDNESS

When the state launched its attack in 1986, activists and leaders were ready and prepared. A number of precautions had been taken and built into the style of work. Networks of communication were established, making it possible for areas to co-ordinate work as well as for regions to meet and keep in touch nationally. This national contact has been maintained under extremely harsh conditions.

In the 1960's leadership, and, more especially, the broadest layers of activists were surprised and unprepared for the ferocity with which the system struck. They only then became aware of the new brutal torture and interrogation methods. These the South African police had newly learned,

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especially from the French colonial police in Algeria.

#### 4. WORLD CAPITALIST ECONOMIC SITUATION

There was a major economic boom in the whole of the capitalist world, including South Africa, from the early 1960's to the early 1970's. The repression of the early 1960's was followed by a period of rapid economic growth in South Africa. This then seemed to justify the very heavy measures in many quarters - eg various liberal groupings, big business and the international community.

In 1986, however, the world capitalist system has been in a chronic crisis that goes back more than ten years. South Africa, along with other middle size economies on the edge of the main capitalist bloc, like Argentina and Mexico, has been very hard hit. So the attempt by the state to employ mass repression has important economic limitations. There is no money for the state to push through far reaching reforms which could buy them significant middle-strata support.

But there is another important development. There are big chunks of South African big business who are very worried as to whether they will survive in the long term. Their attempts to ensure this have led some of them to consult with the ANC in Lusaka, and to disagree (in words, if not action) with the state a bit more than they did in 1960.

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## 5. THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

The international community responded to the emergency in 1960 with a very small voice. This has changed. Today there is international condemnation of the apartheid regime. The differences among international forces centre on what strategies to employ to force Botha to alter his policies.

Many South Africans were forced into exile in 1960. They did not stop working for the struggle. They have spent years helping to build a large, anti-apartheid solidarity front in most of the Western capitalist countries. This has limited the support the government's of those countries can give to Botha. Some, like those of Reagan and Thatcher have tried every trick in the book to do this, and are still continuing to seek out new ways of doing so.

The number of countries belonging to the non-aligned bloc and the socialist bloc has increased greatly in the past 20 years. This has increased their ability to put anti-apartheid pressure on the Western capitalist countries through the United Nations.

Thus in 1986, the South African ruling bloc finds itself severely constrained because of international political and economic isolation. This makes it harder for the government to move in to smash completely the national mass liberation movement.

## 6. REGIONAL SITUATION

The situation in Southern Africa as a region has also altered greatly. In 1960 the Portuguese colonialists still occupied

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Angola and Mozambique. Rhodesia was soon to declare itself "independent" under the minority Smith regime. Today, only Namibia, a South African colony, stands as a buffer zone between South Africa and the newly independent countries.

These frontline states are harassed and destabilised by South Africa. Today South Africa stands internationally condemned for its role in creating and supplying arms to UNITA in Angola and MNR in Mozambique, whose goal is to disrupt the lives of thousands of Angolans and Mozambicans and to prevent them from reconstructing their economies in a socialist direction. But these acts of aggression and destabilisation cost the apartheid regime a lot. The continued occupation of Namibia alone cost South Africa R 3 million a day.

The combined effects of this regional situation are to stretch the armed forces of the South African state and to further drain the economy. Thus despite problems in the frontline states, the regional situation is less favourable to the apartheid regime today, than it was in 1960.

These are all gains for the oppressed majority in South Africa. However, there is at least one negative factor which should also be looked at. The South African state is today better armed and equipped militarily than at any other time in its history. The army and police have a range of weapons and an arms industry to combat the pressure of international arms embargoes and sanctions. The South African armed forces have also gained many years of experience fighting bush wars - in Rhodesia, Namibia and along South Africa's borders. Since 1976 they have also developed experience of

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handling urban insurrectionary-type struggles. On the other hand, much the same can be said for the mass of people. Between 1960 and 1986 the national liberation movement has also gained experience in a great variety of strategies and tactics. At a mass level, several generations of youth have been steeled in the most intense struggles.

### CONCLUSION

In this article we have looked at some of the similarities, and especially at some important differences between the state of emergency in 1960 and the present state of emergency. We have argued that in many ways the concrete, national conditions today are much more favourable to the broad national democratic movement. It is important for us to know this, but it is also important for all of us to know that, on their own, objective conditions do not guarantee victory. The conditions are there, but it remains for all of us to use our skills and creativity to exploit them to the maximum.

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## **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.

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**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

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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

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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

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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.

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**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

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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)

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**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.

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**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.

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**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

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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.

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