POPULAR ALLIANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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The recent history of popular alliances in Africa is bound up with the connections between Europe and Africa and the processes of domination, resistance, class formation, political action, consciousness and an intellectual culture which is still linked to the modern history of working class movements in Western Europe. The implantation of capitalism in Africa with the violence of slavery and violent forms of subjugating local communities had elicited sporadic resistances, defensive alliances and localised alliances across 'national' lines. But the collective power of the European bourgeoisie meant that these alliances and military resistances could not check the social imperatives of partition and domination as part of the project of monopoly capitalism.[1]

Imperialist partition virtually destroyed the elements of pre-colonial societies which aspired towards political self-rule. Whereas imperialism in Latin America and Asia allowed some societies their political independence, in Africa there was the deliberate destruction of any independent social layer which could want to become an ally of colonialism. European overrule whether in the plantation form, in the settler form, in the extraction of mineral wealth or in the form of cash crop production meant that Europeans introduced their own personnel and set up their own governments, (except in the cases of Liberia and Ethiopia). French, British, German, Belgian and Portuguese colonialism in Africa was built up on the experiences and ideology of the Atlantic slave trade, for racism acted as a prop for the regime of forced labour and compulsory crops. In fact, in the words of Walter Rodney, 'South Africa was another laboratory in which the virus of white racism was cultivated.

This racism, chauvinism and plunder which had taken root as part of the political culture of Europe took firmer hold in European society during periods of capitalist depression. For those with colonies, the colonies were areas where part of the burden for recovery could be transferred but in Germany, where its colonies were taken after World War I, the crisis sharpened the ideas of racism and bigotry and this found expression in the rise of fascism. German fascism in the interwar years stood at the apex of a specific form of capitalist ideology and reflected the methods that the German bourgeoisie had developed to defeat the challenges of the organised working class movement.[2] It was in this period of fascism in Germany, Spain, Italy and Portugal that the working

class and its allies sought to develop popular united fronts and popular alliances against fascism. These took two basic forms:

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

The political and theoretical principles of the popular alliances in Europe were inextricably bound up with the struggle for socialism and at that time with the foreign policies of the Soviet Union. The twists and turns of the Comintern on the real content of fascism had hindered the proper mobilisation of all the democratic forces.[4] This vacillation was to prove most disastrous in Europe and the contradictions were to be most evident in the zig zags of the popular alliance which challenged the rise of fascism and authoritarianism in Spain. The experience of the Spanish Civil War showed that the problems of class leadership were derived from the concrete relations of class forces at the levels of organisation, mobilisation and military support for the masses.[5] The battles in Spain were a dress rehearsal for World War II when Europe extended its quest for survival to include the vast majority of the peoples of the globe.

During World War II, the imperatives of Defence Regulations, military conscription compulsory crops, increased taxation and low wages precipitated a wave of anti-colonial struggles in Africa. Those Africans who aspired towards the leadership of the anti-colonial struggle were largely influenced by the political and ideological pre-occupations of the popular alliances which had emerged during World War II. Even before this war, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 had stirred up the spirits of Pan Africanism all across the black world. Pan Africanism as an all class doctrine was embraced by the African dockworkers, students, urban dwellers and those elements who were being slowly drawn into politics. George Padmore provided the key political link between the popular front theories of the Communist International and the later positive action campaigns of the Pan-Africanists. Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta and Hastings Banda were to emerge from this group as future political leaders in Africa.

The political limitations of this educated stratum were evident in the strategies and tactics that they adopted to

challenge colonialism. Timid petitions, letters to the press, telegrams to the United Nations and lobbying sections of the metropolitan bourgeoisie were their forte. It was the poor peasants, dock workers, urban workers, unemployed, traders and youths who pushed the anti-colonial movement forward. Crushed under the crude subjection of forced labour, forced removals, displacement, compulsory crops, whippings, disenfranchisement and racial discrimination, the spontaneous and organised activities of the wretched of the Earth created a popular alliance to confront colonial rule.[6] All over the continent, the emerging educated found that they were unable to advance their interests within the context of colonial society. They had little or no control over production and no means of reproducing themselves. By and large, the most energetic elements were tutored by missionaries and had internalised the principles of bourgeois democracy while studying in France, Britain and the U.S.A. This small group had a capacity for organisation which was an advantage over the rural poor and migrant workers. Moreover, they had been exposed to the agitation and organisation of the oppressed classes in the metropole. These were, then positive attributes and made it possible for this embryonic class to advance their own self interests without conflicting with those of the masses.

The popular alliance of the anti-colonial movement proved to be a very temporary phenomenon, for the granting of independence did not prove to be the liberating process that the popular masses demanded. Monopoly capital assumed new strategies, for scientific and technological changes in the metropoles had expanded the capacity of multinationals so that they continued to extract surplus while adjusting to new juridical patterns of ownership of the means of production. The modification of the classic division of labour which had previously restricted colonial areas to primarily production gave way to import substitution. Consequently, even those who called themselves socialists and nationalised foreign property were controlled through management contracts, patents, transfers of surplusses and international financial control. A slow and developing alliance of the ruling class and transnational capital was at the other end of the scale of the deprivation and demobilisation of the rural poor and the growing urban workforce. Even the most energetic and radical leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure, were part of a ruling class that imposed state control on working class institutions and muzzled popular participation while the new rulers accumulated wealth. African workers, especially the urban section, lacked the social weight and political experience to intervene in a process which led to militarism.[7]

Anti-democratic forms, arbitrary political decisions and the destruction of popular participation and expression followed the trail of militarism as the producers of wealth

were rewarded at less than the cost of their own reproduction. Added to the militarism were those forms of consciousness which were linked to squabbles among the new ruling class. Regionalism, religion and "tribalism" clouded the issues of health, safety, education, housing and welfare of the masses. Famine, drought and desertification compounded the political weakness of the toilers as Africa limped from the period of decolonisation into new forms of subjugation. Foreign 'aid,' regional integrated projects, World Bank initiatives and IMF stabilisation projects all converged to force a devaluation of the return for labour. In a period of long term capitalist crisis since the early seventies, Africa's share of the crisis was mass hunger, poverty, debts and militarism. This was the other side of the trade wars, overproduction, unemployment and financial crisis of the metropolitan capitalist economies. The promise of national liberation and transformation which had emanated from Marxist-Leninist parties, such as FRELIMO of Mozambique, was shattered as the Mozambican leadership sought to protect the state and in the process turned their backs on the vast experience of the rural poor which had vigorously supported the war for national independence.

Apartheid, its Racial and Social Components

It is in the southern cone of Africa where a new popular alliance is being fashioned to challenge the most repressive regime in Africa. The ruthless nature of South African capitalism had precipitated the first major anti-colonial movement as early as 1912 with the formation of the South African Native National Congress. Changing its name to the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923, this political organisation evolved in South Africa and assigned itself the task of creating political movement which transcended regional, nationality and class barriers among the Africans. Because the educated Africans were completely excluded from the circuit of accumulation by the rigid racial segregation, these elements dominated their political organisations.

When the anti-colonial movement signalled a 'wind of change in Africa' the National Party, which had come to power in 1948, pronounced a set of principles which strengthened the racial segregation and domination which since 1910 had entrenched white minority rule and a legal framework of white domination which controlled the mobility and reproduction process among Africans. Apartheid as a doctrine codified and structured the relations of production with the use of brutal force, extra-economic coercion and dispossession to make cheap labour available to the boom in mining which occurred between 1860-1960. A separate administrative structure established in the twenties and the system of African 'reserves' which had been given legal embodiment in the land Acts of 1913 and 1936

ecame the basis of a Bantustan system where 24 million or 72 ercent of the population were coralled into the barren and nfertile 13% of the territory. In a twenty year period up to 984 four million Africans were resettled into so-called omelands, the legal name given to the Bantustans.[8]

By the end of the sixties, when European colonial omination had been forced to change its form to economic xploitation, the South African society was governed by the rudest forms of racist segregation and dehumanisation. A attery of laws and regulations governed the Africans' elations to support a system built in the main on a migratory abour force. Masters and servants ordinances and the pass aws defined the position of Africans in the labour process nd influx control laws regulated their freedom of movement. roup Areas Act, the Native Land Act, Population Registration ct, Reservation and Separate Amenities Act, the Liquor Act nd the Suppression of Communism Act have been part of the egal basis for the super-exploitation of African labour.[9]

Political deprivation and the exclusion of Africans from ll forms of legal assembly and organisation reinforced the ower of racial capitalism. By the eighties, in a society ith over 30 million only 15.5 percent of the population, otally controlled political power and over 87 percent of the and. The 24 million Africans were segregated into Bantustans nd the urban townships from where they sold their labour. he "Coloured" and Indian population were further segregated o solidify a rigid system of racial classification and racial eparation. White workers have been mobilised by the ideology f the Afrikaans ruling class to provide for the complete eparation of Africans and whites in all areas of social eproduction.[19]

The institutionalisation of racism in South Africa had aranteed continuous forms of passive and organised sistance against the oppression of apartheid. Mass action itomised by the campaigns against the pass laws and the fiance Campaigns of the fifties had heightened the nsciousness of the urban workers and gave rise to the ngress Alliance. Out of this temporary alliance of Whites, dians, and "Coloureds," and the ANC, emerged the Freedom arter and a decade of intense anti-apartheid activity in uth Africa.[11] This politics of mass insurgency was attered by Sharpeville and the growing divisions in the rican liberation struggle had led to the formation of the n Africanist Congress of Azania. Underground political work th in the communities and in the building of new cells to osecute an armed struggle replaced the popular and open mpaigns.

International capital gave the Afrikaans' leadership their stamp of approval by increasingly investing in apartheid during the sixties and seventies. Heightened competition between Britain, the USA and West Germany for dominance in the economy led the way for increased flow of capital to South Africa. Total foreign investment in South Africa had reached 3 billion Rands by 1960 and after Sharpeville fell slightly by 1963. But by 1970, foreign investment soared to over R5.8 billion, surpassed R7 billion in 1972 and by 1979 foreign investment totalled R22.8 billion.[12] In the eighties, the USA has become the leading investor in apartheid with over U.S. $14 billion invested in South Africa. The abundant mineral wealth and unlimited supplies of cheap labour attracted capitalists from all over the world.

Foreign investment stimulated greater diversification and expansion of the apartheid economy so that by the end of the seventies, mining was no longer the leading pole of accumulation in South Africa. Although there are over half a million workers employed in the mining sector, manufacturing and finance have become the leading sectors of the economy. The figures of the Gross Domestic Product at the end of 1983 showed:

(Rand Million) at 1975 prices	1982	1983
GOP at factory cost	31,223	30,201
Made up of amongst others		
agriculture	2,385	1,861
mining	3,376	3,313
manufacturing	8,009	7,478
construction	1,298	1,296
Trade, wholesale and retail	3,863	3,891
Financial services	4,164	4,309
Government services	3,109	3,261

Source: Financial Mail 7/12/84

These figures show that by 1982, manufacturing had become twice as important as mining in the South African economy with all the implications for the working people. South Africa had become a booming industrial economy producing steel, motor cars, textiles, plastics, petro-chemicals, and an armanents sector which utilised the most advanced technology available to the major trans-nationals in Western Europe, North America, Brazil and Japan. These corporations supported the efforts of the South African regime to intimidate and repress the peoples of the region and colluded to violate the United Nations Mandatory Arms embargo against the regime.

Self-sufficiency in armanents provided a further spur to economic expansion as the regime embarked on a massive project of arms procurement and manufacturing. A state corporation,

the Armanents Development and Production Corporation - ARMSCOR was established to produce weapons. ARMSCOR with a multi-faceted web of subsidiaries and over 25,000 contractors produced a wide range of weapons from the much heralded 155 mm artillery, a wide range of munitions, air-to-air and sea-to-sea guided missiles, jets, electro-optics, computers, telecommunications equipments, rockets and pyro-technical products. It was from this industrial, scientific and technological base that South Africa developed the hydrogenisation of coal - (SASOL) and with the assistance of the West, built up a nuclear capability. With the open support of the Reagan administration under the failed theory of 'constructive engagement,' by the middle of the eighties South Africa ranked number 10 in the hierarchy of capitalist arms manufacturers.

The very dynamic of industrialisation and technological development which arose out of the ideas of repression, domination and expansion undermined one of the key pillars of apartheid, the migratory system of labour. The military-industrial complex forced a pace of technological change so that the society required a much higher level of skills and training beyond the deformed and entrenched system of job reservation in the mines. Changes in the technical conditions of the labour process called into being a more stable and skilled African labour force and at the same time provided mobility for the white workers who increasingly occupied supervisory roles. This, together with their racist training, sharpened their political and ideological identification with the ruling class.

This affirmation of white "superiority" was more explicit in the areas of social reproduction, in the fields of health, education, housing, transportation, cultural amenities, pensions and social welfare. Apartheid was now becoming a profoundly social question inextricably bound to the race question as the pass laws and forced removal ensured that labour did not really become free in South Africa. These social questions were compounded by the callous neglect of the environment evidenced by the boom in chemical and petro-chemical industries, which polluted the environment and impaired the health of Africans. In the rural areas, hundreds of them have been dying every year as a result of the use of illegal poisons and the mishandling of registered pesticides.[13] It was this totality of exploitation and repression which propelled the present popular alliance.

Prelude to the Alliance: the Self Mobilisation and the Self Organisation of Workers and Students

The changing organic composition of capital led to changes in the composition, size, skill, stability and social weight of the working class. However, the changes at the material level did not reflect itself in political or ideological changes in the ruling class. Vast resources were being allocated to implement pass laws and influx control when the reality was that capital attracted labour to the urban shanties so that by 1980, over 60 percent of the workers were permanent residents in the poverty stricken and overcrowded townships. Report after report detailed the levels of poverty of these townships. Even the most conservative estimates of the poverty datum line showed clearly the abysmal condition of township life.[14] Through defensive actions and other forms of struggles, the urban workers have been struggling for their rights.

Significantly, the exiled liberation movements were battling for their own survival and did not yet develop a programme to clearly champion the struggle around the social question of apartheid. Having conceived of their political programmes before the shift in the leading basis of capital accumulation, the contents of the demand for change remained within the conceptions of the era of nationalist politics. It was in this context that the workers were slowly evolving new forms of self expression and struggles.

From Durban to Soweto

This self organisation and mobilisation of the urban workers arose out of the day-to-day degradation and humiliation at work and at home. Low wages, high prices, exorbitant transport costs are now acknowledged as being at the core of the massive Durban strikes between 1971-1973. These Durban strikes of 1973, in particular, marked a new period of class struggle as over 100,000 African workers struck for higher wages. The strike movement spread rapidly across the country from this industrial area which was a centre for the textile and metal industries.[15] By 1970, there were over 165,000 workers employed in Durban.

These mass strikes won substantial increases in wages and the success stemmed from the organisational strength and techniques used during the confrontations with capital. Strikers refused to elect a leadership thus immunising themselves from the effects of victimisation and cooption. They avoided all formally constituted representative bodies and relied on the sharp demonstrative shock of a short withdrawal

of labour to gain concessions from employers rather than entering negotiations or protracted confrontation.[16]

Far sighted elements in the capitalist class perceived the potentialities of the self organisation of the working class and they spearheaded the call for an industrial framework where African workers could organise freely but with rigid state control of trade unions. This search by capital sharpened after the massive stayaways which formed part of the Soweto uprisings in 1976 and 1977.

Soweto like Sharpeville became a symbol of African liberation struggle after the youths and students took on the armed power of the state to oppose the educational component of apartheid. Numerous accounts of the uprisings testify to the levels of spontaneity and the fact that the leadership came from a new generation which had come to maturity long after Sharpeville.[17] Students' protests in the schools formed part of a wider protest against the social inequalities of the society. Spurred on by the victories of Africans over colonialism in Mozambique and the defeat of the South Africans in Angola in March 1976, in June the students of Orlando West led the opposition to the attempt by the regime to reproduce knowledge through the medium of Afrikaans.

This educational system reproduced the alienation, deformities and racism of the system and the content of education preached the values of individualism and progress through hard work. These ideas and the values stood in direct contradiction to the concrete realities of their existence. A march by students to protest this contradiction and the imposition of Afrikaans was met by armed police and at the end of the day on June 16, 1976 at least a score of youths had been shot down.

The revolt spread rapidly across the society as the police responded with total violence so that by the end of the uprisings, over 284 had been killed and over 2000 injured.[18] The events of "Soweto and its aftermath" are too well documented to bear repetition here. What is of significance are two factors: the growth of the student worker alliance and the impact of African consciousness in South Africa.

It was during this period of the Soweto uprisings that the successes of the stayaways imprinted the strength of the worker-student alliance. Slowly recognising the limits of their own ability to take on the might of the state, the students and youths developed and deepened links with the workers. These links were being fashioned even though the principal intellectual force among the students' consciousness was more occupied with questions of dignity and respect rather than questions of wages, safety, unemployment or compound

housing. This consciousness and its impact on organisations and movements provided the foundation for a divergent understanding of the South African political economy, history and culture and gave rise to various organisations and groupings.[19]

Despite the differences between the ideas of African consciousness and the multi-racial principles of the ANC, many of the youths who fled South Africa joined the ANC and the PAC. The permanance of race consciousness as an aspect of the class consciousness of South African society meant that the ideas found a lasting place in the society. Many students had graduated to become teachers, lawyers, clergymen, trade unionists and journalists and in 1978, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) was formed.[20]

From Soweto to the UDF

Because the alienation based on race and culture which was embedded in the educational system was a permanent feature of apartheid, student protests became a fundamental component of the mass resistance between 1980-1985. During this period, there was not a school term where a major boycott of schools was not in progress. Hundreds of thousands of young people across the country initiated protests against the content of education, boycotted classes, and schools deserted: 1984 was historic. This was the year in which over half a million students in over 60 townships boycotted schools as the call for political and intellectual freedom merged with the generalised resistance against apartheid.[21]

Pupils demanded better and more relevant education, free and compulsory education for all, the end to the use of untrained and undertrained teachers, the scrapping of the age limit, the end to sexual harassment of pupils and the right to democratically elect Student Representative Councils. These demands conflicted with the basic thrust of capitalist education. All over the country, the students through their organisations, the Azanian Students Organisation and Congress of South African students, formed liaison committees to link the struggles of the students to that of the workers. When the UDF was formed, the worker-student alliance had deepened beyond the elementary links of 1976. The police continued to respond with repression to the point where in 1985 they were beginning to arrest 7 and 9 year old pupils.

During the 1985 State of Emergency, the determination of the youths to confront rubber bullets, teargas, and armoured vehicles with sticks and stones helped to define the limits of the military power of the war machine. Unlike the previous generation which had gone into exile after Soweto, this new

social force played the leading role in the insurrectionary violence which swept the society. Guided by an amalgam of ideas, the ANC, the Azapo, black cultural identity, Rasta and socialism, the youths were slowly rising above the regional and nationality differences. Moreover, these youths in forcing the pace of change, were in the forefront of a search for an educational system and an embryonic intellectual culture which reflected their real conditions.

Imperialism has recognised the tremendous energy of the youths and is now working overtime to train a new generation of leaders in the USA and Western Europe. In 1981 the United States Congress passed legislation that provided U.S. $4 million yearly for undergraduate and graduate scholarships in the USA for Africans of South Africa. This hasty programme to train and inculcate the ideas of capitalist individualism into the brains of a selected few has had little impact on the youths as a whole. Yet this project represents an important element of the long term project of imperialism to defuse the intensity of the crisis in South Africa. This attempt to defuse the crisis lies at the core of the reforms and constitutional changes which at the same time sharpens the popular alliance in the society.

The Search for Reforms

Codes of conduct and principles of labour - management relations were part of the thrust of capital which pushed the Afrikaans ruling class to make some reforms in order to stem the massive popular resistance. The Wiehahn Commission and the Riekert Commission were two initiatives by the state to subject the growing African trade union movement to greater legal and administrative control and to control the urban dwellers through definite channels of access to jobs and housing.[23] Billed by the media as reforms, these initiatives were attempts to lamely come to grips with the changing material conditions of the society. The Riekert Commission was explicit in its recommendation to give the rising class of African professionals and traders a stake in the system of repression through community councils. A local authorities act of 1982 was an attempt to cement the administrative and legal links between the state and the growing townships. Many power seeking Africans who embraced this late version of indirect rule and joined the community councils paid with their lives as the uprisings of 1985 rendered the townships ungovernable.[24]

The question of the legal framework for industrial arbitration remains one of the vexing questions of the urban working class. There is still no unanimity between African workers and their trade unions in their response to the

state's decision to bestow legal recognition to African trade unions which were illegal before the enactment of the Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act of 1979 and the Labour Relations Amendment Act of the same year. A recent volume on the South African Organisations has cited the different unions and their reasons for registration. These were major strategic and tactical questions raised by the package of concessions and controls.[25]

The overt and covert attempts to control the trade unions through reforms were part of a wider effort of the Botha regime to develop a package of 'Constitutional Reforms.' This package called a new constitutional dispensation, involved the selective integration of actions of the aspiring Asian and Coloured classes into the state superstructure. A tricameral parliament reflected the set up of racial separation even at the level of parliamentary representation. Real power was however, still to be vested in an executive President who ruled through a defence based State Security Council.

In essence, the reforms were designed to entrench apartheid and race domination and this was most explicit in that the Boers did not even make an attempt to make some room for Africans in this tricameral parliament. As a gesture towards ending international isolation of the regime, these reforms exposed the backwardness of the political culture of the ruling class. But far more significant was the fact that these reforms articulated in 1983, was to be a smokescreen for greater repression and militarisation in a period when the South Africa State had intensified its repression at home and destabilisation abroad. The United Democratic Front which bore the brunt of the repression published a pamphlet Repression in the Midst of Reform to show that in this period, many organisations were banned, thousands were detained under section 28 of the Internal Security Act and more persons were charged with treason than at any other time in the history of South Africa. Heightened repression was one symptom of the deepening political crisis. Popular power in the streets shook the confidence of international bankers. Economic depression, strikes, unemployment and troops on the streets graphically exposed to the world the violence and repression of capitalism. It was in this period that the popular alliance of the oppressed deepened and took organisational form in the formation of the United Democratic Front.

The United Democratic Front

The UDF was formed in response to a nation-wide call for a united opposition to the constitutional proposals. As the social questions had sharpened, so had the organisational capacity of the oppressed. This was demonstrated by the

tremendous outpouring of support for the UDF when it was launched on August 20, 1983. More than 12,000 persons turned out at the mass rally to launch this front at Mitchells Plain, Cape Town. Two thousand delegates representing over 600 grassroots organisations had come together in the biggest rally in over 30 years. This alliance represented a plethora of workers, students, groups, youth groups, civic organisations, religious groups, Free Mandela Committees, womens groups, sports clubs, ratepayers associations and political groups. Guided by the spirit and non-racial imperatives of the Congress Alliance of 1950's, the UDF incorporated this spirit but with the added experiences of the youths and workers whose confidence matured out of Durban and Soweto. The UDF explicitly supported the aims of the Freedom Charter but was never really an arm of the ANC though there were many veterans of the period of the defiance campaign in the ranks of the UDF.

The base of the social composition of the UDF reflected the expansion of the urbanised youth and working class culture which had matured in the townships after 1976. The techniques of organisation and mobilisation, graphic posters, pamphleteering, films, video, mass meetings, and selective use of the media also corresponded to the new skills and confidence of African workers and their allies. In terms of the class outlook of the leaders, the known national leaders were from the budding African and "Coloured" professionals, clergy, trade unionists, journalists, and lawyers. The committment of the leadership ranged from those who were being pushed forward to the militant leaders who were based in the civic associations.

Democratic structures, mass participation and greater accountability were principles formulated in the day-to-day struggles. The UDF used the level of integration of the South African state to maintain a national body but with regional and local autonomy. Each organisation continued to mobilise in its own area and the differing experiences served to strengthen this front. The existence of a national and legal political organisation which had rallied the oppressed and their allies provided a boost for other unorganised sectors of the population such as farm labourers, domestic servants and the so-called squatters. The UDF did not have a clear strategy to organise all these forces and issued a basic strategy calling for: an end to forced removals, the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners, the lifting of the ban on political organisations and persons, an end to police harassment, the building of more homes and schools, etc. This UDF charter called for a democratic, united and non-racial South Africa.The mass democratic character, its broad programme of overt and declared opposition to apartheid, its anti-racist and its anti-capitalist posture led to a new phase of

militant, sustained and organised opposition to the reform proposals. The perceived anti-capitalist posture reflected the strength of the grassroots in this broad front in the effort to liberate South Africa.[26]

In the first year of its formation, the UDF operated as a legal organisation but the state machinery increasingly sought to find ways to wreck the alliance or to divide this alliance politically. When these efforts failed, the state responded by arresting the national leaders of the UDF on charges of treason. The legal battles strengthened the local and international notoreity of the UDF and the efforts of the regime gave the UDF a dynamic character of its own. A successful campaign to boycott and expose the sham elections of Aug. 22, 1984 was followed by massive stayaways in the Vaal triangle. These actions strengthened the collective power of the worker-student alliance and sharpened the links between community organisations, trade unions and cultural groups. Democratic forms of expression in the civic organisations were replacing the community councils and neither the State of Emergency of 1985 nor the unleasing of deathsquads could return the apartheid society to the period before the formation of the UDF.

The UDF and the Grassroots

The question whether the democracy of the UDF was from the formalist point of view paled as the concrete issues in the communities took precedent in the campaigns. The objective of the popular masses was for the rights to democratic participation in all spheres of social existence: the rights to decent housing, the rights to equality before the law, the right to equal education, the right to work, the right to strike without fear of dismissal, freedom of movement, the right to democratic representation, freedom of association, the freedom of expression and ultimately the right to life. In this quest the struggle for democratic rights in South Africa was part of the struggles of oppressed people all over the capitalist world.

Capitalism had recognised that the struggle for democratic rights was a struggle for a new social system; hence there was the initial project to hive off the most articulate and energetic professionals in the urban townships. The Community Councils and the expansion of credit to Africans with collateral were all part of a major strategy to speed the process of class differentiation among them. The local authorities were to speed this process of class formation.

Civic associations developed in a clear response to the State supported community councils. From the outset the UDF

had rejected these councils as part of their opposition to the sham reforms. The campaigns against rent increases were to be major campaigns of the grassroots organs and they strengthened the civic associations in proportion to the strengthening of the UDF. When these civic associations were formed, they were by and large multi-class organisations but it was the determination of the poor which sustained the rent strikes all across the country. This was demonstrated by the capacity to enforce the stayaways in the Transvaal in 1984 and in Port Elizabeth in 1985.

Stayaway involves one of the highest forms of working class action, for it ensures that not only the worker lays down tools but that his whole community is involved in a strike against capital and the state. The successful stayaways reflected the breadth of the organisational capacity of the community leaders and the links which had been cemented between youths, workers, students and trade unions. The September and November stayaways in the Vaal triangle in 1984 were militant protests against rent increases and the increase in transportation costs. This strike hit the industrial heartland of the society to the point where the state deployed over 7000 troops of the SADF. South African soldiers had to be involved in house to house search and were now carrying out police work such as enforcing the hated pass laws. The use of the soldiers was the last call in the arsenal of 'total strategy' for the economic, political and psychological aspects of the war had given way to total militarisation.

And this war generated new forms of combat by the embattled masses. To break the stranglehold of the state in their neighbourhoods, the youths struck at the police, police informers and collaborators of the regime in the townships. Police personnel, rent collectors, police informers and town councillors soon found out that the state could not protect them on a twenty four hour basis. To be effective, the grassroots organisers had mobilised to break the cycle of violence of township life which has been so vividly captured by South African novelists. Sports clubs and interclub rivalry which had in the past been solved through violence were now difused and sport clubs became important affiliates of the UDF.

The confidence generated by the collective actions of the workers and youth during the two day stayaways in November 1984, carried the popular alliance from one level of awareness to the next. Not even the permanent deployment of troops could save the local system of governance as the civic associations became centres of alternative power. By the time the state declared its ultimate weapon, the state of emergency in July 1985, many councillors had fled, resigned or lost their lives. Between September and June 1985, 240 African

officials and 27 mayors had resigned, seeking protection in special centres established to guard them. Those elements in the communities who favoured dialogue with apartheid were isolated and this was most evident in the areas of the Eastern Cape where the state tried to decimate the leadership of the UDF by launching death squads to decimate the grassroots leadership.

The published reports of the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO) showed that this was a community organisation which was spearheaded by worker elements.[27] Its methods of organising and its frequent mass meetings inspired new awareness and broke the mystique of leaderism and respectability which plagued African organisations. PEBCO as one of the principal affiliates of the UDF had developed out of links between the community and striking workers in 1980 and had been firm in the struggles around rents, bus boycotts and school boycotts. Popular resistance and popular struggles in the Cape focused international attention on South Africa as the state massacred "squatters" at cross roads in February and shot down youths in a funeral procession at Uitenhage on March 21, 1985. This massacre on the 25th anniversary of Sharpeville further exposed the limits of the alternatives open to the state for manipulation. By resorting to mass shootings at cross roads and Uitenhage, the regime ensured that funerals would also become venues for mobilisation and organisation.

Funerals as venues of mass mobilisation brought the clergy and religious leaders to the fore as the deathsquads murdered those who were considered the most articulate and effective among the UDF grassroots leadership. This was the case in the assassination of the lawyer Mrs. Victoria Mxenge, the assassination of budding trade union leaders and the kidnapping and murder of four community leaders from the Cradock Residents Association, Mathew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Fort Catala and Sicelo Mhlawuli.[28]

These murders and disappearances showed that in spite of the new organisational strength of the popular alliance, there was no military capability to blunt the full onslaught of the deathsquads of the state. The state of Emergency incarcerated hundereds of grassroots organisers and the deathsquads killed others. A consumer boycott initiated by PEBCO and supported by the UDF in response to the state of emergency became the precusor to a national consumer boycott which affected the retail trade. New leaders emerged as known leaders were killed or imprisoned and as the funerals became the public manifestations of resistance, religious leaders increasingly played leading roles in the UDF.

The Church and the Popular Alliance

Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Rev. Alan Boesak and Dr, Byers Naude are prominent religious leaders who have gained international acclaim from their activities in the popular alliance of the UDF. These church leaders were all part of the mass resistance as they defied the state to officiate in mass funerals. They have been patrons of the UDF even since its formation.

The Christian Church in South Africa, like its counterpart in Latin America found that it could not administer the spiritual needs of Christians without paying attention to their social needs. So, in spite of the fact that the organised church, especially the Dutch Reformed Church, had played an important role in justifying apartheid, the churches have been important centres for opposition to the racial separation of the society. In this opposition, the multiracial churches have been involved in a debate on the significance and meaning of African theology while groping with the issues of liberation theology.[29] Bishop Tutu emerged as one of the more important church leaders out of this discussion. Tutu's elevation to the status of Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg and his award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 placed the South African church at the centre of anti-apartheid politics.

The South African Council of Churches has championed the democratic calls of the alliance but church leaders have been equivocal on the questions of disinvestment and the call for international sanctions against apartheid. This equivocation and uncertainty is even more explicit on the question of violence. Because they were in the main sheltered from the daily violence of the system, they continued to preach non-violence even when they were officiating at mass funerals of youths shot down by the regime. In Latin America where the philosophy of liberation theology has deep roots, there is no equivocation on the part of church leaders as to the need for insurrectionary violence by the oppressed. Archbishop Romero of El Salvador who was himself gunned down in San Salvador said:

> Christians are not afraid to fight. They are capable of fighting but prefer to speak the language of peace. However, when a dictatorship seriously attacks human rights and the Commonealth of nations, when it becomes unbearable and all channels of dialogue, understanding and rationality are closed off; when this happens, the church speaks of the legitimate right to insurrectional violence.[30]

Bishop Tutu in South Africa still had not perceived the right of the masses for military action and his non-violent appeals were given international publicity far out of proportion to the influence of religious leaders in the popular alliance. It was also in part because of the absence of a united front among the working class, or a clear programme from the liberation movements that church leaders as patrons of the UDF seek to influence the pace of this mass resistance.

The UDF and the Workers

From the outset of this alliance, there were over 18 trade unions which affiliated while there were others which felt that the working class should maintain a separate existence. The differences were part of the ongoing differences in the working class movement in the strategies and tactics to be adopted in relation to the popular alliance. The tremendous growth of African trade unions between 1973 and 1983 had imposed a historical task on the working class and their outstanding problem of legal relations with the state continued to affect the quest by seven of the trade unions to form a federation of African trade union members. But the crisis of capitalism did not await a neat resolution of these differences. Arbitrary dismissals, high unemployment, mass retrenchment, low wages and safety conditions precipitated a wave of strikes across the society to the extent that the state statisticians could not keep up with the number of man days lost through strikes as they were undecided whether to include the stayaways in their traditional rooster of legal strikes. Employers who were accustomed to sacking migrant workers attempted to sack skilled workers only to recall them and tryed to victimise 'ring leaders.' This was graphically exposed in the struggle of SASOL workers after the stayaways in the Vaal triangle.

Strikes, stayaways, bus boycotts and consumer boycotts thus became the weapons of the working poor. From the outset, the national leadership of the UDF called for greater worker participation in the leadership to clearly define its programme. The National Publicity Secretary, M.T. Lekota, had in 1984 made an explicit call for workers to give direction to the UDF.[31] Questions over the definition of the UDF and of the links between trade unionism and politics were sharpened by the state of emergency and even more dramatically in the context of the crisis of capitalism where inexperienced trade union leaders had to cope with the militancy of their members and where the growth of union-membership far outstripped the organisational capacities of the Union. One such Union was the National Union of Mine Workers.

The NUM which has been in the forefront of militant ction has emerged as one of the most important unions in outh Africa and in an industry which historically opposed nionisation. With the migratory history of mineworkers, the UM was formed in 1982 and by 1985, it had registered more han 200,000 members. The rapid growth of this union eflected the long overdue need for worker representation in n area of the South African economy where health and safety egulations were arbitrarily implemented. Not a day passes hen two or three miners are not killed through accidents. very year 125 out of every 1000 gold miners die and the death ate among South African miners is 8 times that of British ɔal Miners.

These are the factors which accelerated the pace of nionisation among the miners. This process of organisation nitially came up against the very conservative and White Mine ɔrkers Union which wanted to maintain job reservation long fter the material conditions of the society had undermined is hierarchy in the labour process.[32] However, once the NUM is registered, it could hardly keep pace with the militancy f the workers. There were more strikes in 1984 and 1985 in e mining sector than any other part of the South African conomy. These struggles, the sharp bursts of victories and eversals were acting as the elementary school for a section f the working class which will play a fundamental role in the ture development of the working class movement in South rica.[33]

One section of capital recognised the limits of the gratory system of labour and the attendant backward chnology of the old mines. This fraction of capital led by glo-American Corporation (AAC) has been investing in new chnology since the seventies and this technology requires gher levels of skills and training than that of the present bour force. AAC would like to see a more stable labour rce and thus supports the efforts of the NUM to build a ade union even though it uses its hundred year experience in mbining with other capitalists to drive down the real return r labour. In the strikes of the past two years, striking ners have been exposed to their own share of violence and rest of shop stewards and union organisers.

Because of certain limitations, the trade unions are ill trying to establish themselves, hence the disagreements tween unions on the priorities. The dismissal of striking rkers in South Africa is still a major area of struggle tween the fledgling trade unions and the capitalist class. us in 1985, the NUM retreated from its major strike call to ncentrate its efforts in the industrial court for statutory gal rights to protect striking workers. The reversals of is period also revealed to the NUM the necessity for unity.

It thus broke from the Council of Unions of South Africa - CUSA to join the search for unity among the major trade unions. CUSA is still caught up with the question of multi-racial unions and remains a part of the Azanian Federation of Trade Unions, a body which objects to unity with multi-racial union.

The real differences between the social conditions of African and white workers and levels of stratification in the working class continue to act as a major obstacle to the working class unity in South Africa. Yet in the past ten years, the organised workers - especially the new trade unions have made major advances in a period of economic crisis and political repression. Organisational strength, collective action with students and community groups and militant strikes have served to set apart the workers of South Africa in such a fashion that the power of the state seeks to either control trade unions or buy off the leadership through bureaucratic and state-run trade union federations. International capital and the international labour centres have recognised this alliance and the successes of self-organisation in the past decade, hence the rush to grant scholarship to the rank and file of trade union leaders.

For as long as the workers continue to play an important role in the present popular alliance, this alliance will continue to confront and challenge the social basis of apartheid. It is for this reason that elements of South African capital seek to form an alliance which excludes the working class and the urban poor. Hence the formation of the National Convention Alliance as the search for a political solution to the crisis with the active support of the rising African capitalists, professionals and collaborators. This enterprise, however, needs a political organisation with some historical legitimacy to join this project of political control.

Capitalism is caught in its own contradictions, for the technological advances of the past 25 years have rendered old political forms outmoded. While the capitalists search for alternatives in the experience of other neo-colonial solutions, the liberation movements need to study the concrete lessons of recent popular alliances in order to develop a clear programme for the prolonged struggle for human dignity.

Experience elsewhere in the past two decades has shown that only the struggle for real social change, guided by the needs of the most oppressed sections of the community, can end the kind of repression and violence which now dominate South African society. Two different examples of popular alliances in Iran and in El Salvador have pointed to differing possibilities for popular alliances. These alliances evolved

n the face of repressive regimes and they have both negative nd positive lessons for the South African struggle.

A popular alliance in Iran developed in response to the epressive regime of the Shah and the attempt by the USA to urn the society into the policeman for the Gulf. In spite of massive police/military apparatus and the torture and murder y the SAVAK, the youths, students and workers mobilised hemselves to overthrow the Shah. There was no clarity as to he leading ideological/political line and in this political acuum, Iranian nationalism took a religious form. Religious eaders emerged as the guiding political force when the mass emonstrations led to the resignation of the Shah. State ower and religious fundamentalism equalled new forms of epression as the popular movements and democratic forces were ounded out of the country, driven underground or sentenced to eath by the decisive power of the fundamentalist legal code. he repression of women was even more complete in this regime. o deepen this nationalist/religious fervour, the leaders are rolonging an unnecessary war with Iraq.

In El Salvador on the other hand, a broad alliance eveloped in the teeth of struggle to develop a unified ilitary command to engage the United States supported junta the country. Democratic and revolutionary parties were ble to merge in the process of a protracted military truggle. The alliance which formed the military/political ront was able to transcend political divisions which istorically prevented the full mobilisation of the oppressed. he Democratic Revolutionary Front, FDR, as a front of over 40 abour federation, professional groups, community groups, ural cooperatives and clergy was formed in 1980 as the roadest coalition ever[34] in the long history of popular truggle in El Salvador. This coalition was the political ront of a military alliance which had found the need to unite fter years of different experience in combat pushed them to ool their collective energies against a junta which had rdered 50,000 citizens in four years.[35] The Farabundo Marti itional Liberation Front - FMNL was cemented in 1981 out of a alition of four guerilla groups which had in the past been ivided on political and ideological lines. In the face of the ert attempts by the Reagan administration to crush the DR/FMLM, this political military front developed a clear rogramme of prolonged popular war to carry forward the war ainst the junta.

Two important lessons can be learnt by the youths of the outh African popular alliance, from the El Salvador expe- ence: first, the release of full expression of all demo- atic groups while making allowance for ideological and olitical pluralism; second, the prolonged struggles exposed he section of the social Democrats under Napoleon Duarte

which had earlier supported the masses but became the political servants of the military dictatorship. These lessons are pertinent to South Africa where the quest for political vanguardism is compounded by the legacies of ethnic consciousness among the toiling masses.

Conclusion

This paper has endeavored to demonstrate that the South African masses have collectively stood up for their rights within a new popular alliance. They continue to make tremendous sacrifices, and have in the recent past made significant gains. One of the more important ones has been the unprecedented level of self-expression and self organisation which strengthens the resolve of the poor to confront the apartheid war machine. The other gain has been the growth of the organisational strength of the working class organs whether in the form of civic organisations, youth and student groups or in trade union organisation. These achievements have brought to the fore one of their instruments, UDF as a popular, multi-racial, multi-ethnic anti-apartheid force.

The UDF even though clearly influenced by the symbols, songs and ideas of the period of the Congress Alliance and the ANC has developed its own character and dynamism as the front was pushed into the war in the streets of the townships and the leaders arrested or murdered. In the uprisings and the insurrectionary violence which have rendered the townships ungovernable, spontaneity has been more evident than organisation.

International capital, which saw the limits of the military force in the townships, remains equivocal in its response to this surge of mass popular action. The international media has given prominence to the non-violent pronouncements of Bishop Tutu as part of their own search for a solution to the crisis which would be favourable to the recomposition of capitalism. Social democratic elements in the advanced capitalist countries would like to see the rapid removal of the racial barriers for accumulation to make room for the further deepening of capitalist relations in the region of Southern Africa. A rigid but divided Afrikaans political leadership constrained by the cumulative results of centuries of internalising the ideology of white supremacy continues to stand in the path of the new thrust for political solution.

As the ideas towards power sharing evolve, capital will require the legitimacy of a section of the national liberation movement to give the concept of power sharing any credibility

before youths, workers, students and rural poor. The question is whether the political and ideological development within these movements can prevent their cadres and leaders from being consumed by the lure of the social capital of the society. To advance the struggle of the workers for safety and better living conditions requires new organisational forms which build upon the concrete experiences of the people.

Small areas of racial convergences in the period of the UDF were insufficiently developed to contribute decisively to solidarity among the working people of different races and ethnic groups. The important question which arises at this conjuncture is, whether the crystallization of the working class, the development of class forces and class consciousness is adequate to develop unity among the working people across the barriers created by legal distinctions, racial exclusiveness and the separate trajectories of several important aspects of culture? The answer to this question can only be grasped in the long quest to humanise the environment and to liberate the society from the constraints imposed by the very organisation of the capitalist system of production. Race as a contradiction among the working people cannot be reduced to easy and simplistic materialist categories; nor can the impact on consciousness and the images of self worth be dispensed with by laws or declarations of equality.

This is not to say that the short term objectives of the UDF to dismantle the legal framework of segregation and control will not lead to some changes in the society. It is to reinforce the fact that only the demands of the working poor for changes in the quality of life and the meaning of the purpose of work which can begin to deal with the present contradictions of race or the future politicisation of nationality and region. Imperialism recognises the potential for division even among Africans and hence the tremendous investment in Inkatha.[36]

A social movement and political organisation are now needed which will be able to claim the positive traditions of the Chaka Zulu not as a hero of Inkatha but as an hero of all Africans. Such a movement must be able to inspire racial, ethnic and cultural pluralism in the search for a genuine non-racial society. This must include the harnessing of the rich history and culture of the African past without complexes.

Thus a genuine popular alliance which is truly non-racial must have as one of its principal tasks the unearthing and enriching of different cultural languages and traditions while ensuring racial and ethnic tolerance. Such a task has been difficult even in socialist societies and is ultimately bound up with long term transformation.

The social questions of apartheid require a long term solution and in this process the self emancipation of the working people must be central. New organisational forms are required and must be built in the process of struggle not compromise - for the prolonged popular struggle for social emancipation.

NOTES

[1]W. Rodney, "Lenin and the Imperialist Partition of Africa," Monthly Review, New York, April 1970.

[2]M. Kitchen, Fascism, McMillan, London, 1976.

[3]It was not until the seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935, that this concept of the popular alliance was articulated. This position was that of G. Dimitrov. Before that Stalin had identified social democrats in Europe as allies of fascists. For the position of Dimitrov, see G. Dimitrov, The United Front (New York: International Publishers, 1938).

[4]N. Poulantzas, Fascism and Dictatorship, New Left Books, London 1974.

[5]For a partisan view see Felix Morrar, Revolution and Counter Revolution in Spain. New Park Publications, London 1976.

[6]Joseph Engwenyu, "Labour and Politics in Ghana: The Militant Phase 1947-1950. Canadian Association of African Studies Conference May 1982.

[7]G. Rubiik, "The Social Origins of the 1984 Coup in Guinea," Seminar paper presented at the History Dept., University of Dar es Salaam - August 1985.

[8]B. Rogers, Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans London: International Defence and Aid 1980.

[9]B. Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa. Monthly Review Press, New York 1979.

[10]R. H. Davies, Capital, the State and White Labour in South Africa 1900-1960. Harvester Press, Sussex 1979.

[11]B. Magubane, op cit "The Politics of Mass Insurgency," pp. 297-330.

[12]Apartheid: The Facts by International Defence and Aid, London 1983 pp. 82. Another useful source is the hearings of

the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Activities of Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa and their Collaboration with Racist Minority regimes in that area. New York, UN 1980.

[13]Report in Sunday Tribune - 21/1/1985.

[14]One of the most recent exposures was in the papers presented at the Carnegie Inquiry Into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa which was held in Cape Town in April 1984.

[15]D. Henson, "Trade Unionism and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa." Capital and Class No. 6, London 1978, pp.20.

[16]T. Lodge. Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 Ravan Press 1983.

[17]Lodge in his book examines the documentation of the Soweto uprisings by four or five authors. See also the review of books on the 1976 revolt by Baruch Hirson, Review of African Political Economy Jan.-April 1978. This reviewer made a telling point on the absence of a black intellectual culture in South Africa when he said of the 7 books on the revolt: "All are by Whites, and there has as yet been no news of a book or even an extensive account or personal reminiscences from the pen of an African who took an active part in the revolt. Any such writings will have to come from those who fled into exile and it is these accounts which are most needed if we are to understand many of the problems that were raised by the revolt. These can be little claims to consciousness, 'black' or otherwise, if such analyses do not appear." p. 107.

[18]A. Mafeje, "Soweto and its aftermath" ROAPE No. 11, 1978. p.18.

[19]For one account of the formation and early development of the BCM. See R. Davies, D. O'Meara, and Sipho Dlamini, The Struggle for South Africa: A Reference Guide to Movements, Organisations and Institutions Volumes one and Two, London, Zed Press 1984, pp 302-308.

[20]Ibid., pp. 308-310.

[21]Freedom Mkhwazazi, "Education in Crisis: 1976 and Today" Sechaba, January 1985 pp. 6-10.

[22]K. Danaher, In Whose Interest? A Guide to U.S.-South African Relations. Washington, Institute for Policy Studies 1984, p. 21.

[23]The Struggle for South Africa, pp. 325-328.

[24]O.R. Tambo, 'Render South Africa ungovernable' Sechaba, March 1985 pp. 3-15.

[25]The Struggle for South Africa, p.328.

[26]M. Pheko, Apartheid: The Story of a Dispossessed People. London, Marram Books 1984. pp. 185-187.

[27]The Struggle for South Africa pp 359-361.

[28]See Amnesty International release on the Abduction and murder July 10, 1985.

[29]J. W. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa, Eerdmans, Michigan 1978. See Chapter 4.

[30]Quoted in Voices from El Salvador by Mario Mandoy Rodriquez, Solidarity Publications, San Francisco 1983.

[31]Reported in the Sowetan 21/12/84.

[32]See the three part series on "South African Mine Workers Their Conditions and Rights," Sechaba, Nov. 1984-Jan.1985.

[33]R. Armstrong and Shank, El Salvador The Face of the Revolution, Pluto Press London 1982.

[34]Voices from El Salvador, p. 3.

[35]R. First who was part of this intellectual force of the two stage theory discovered this theory in an exchange with Archie Mafeje over his analysis of 'Soweto and its aftermath" in ROAPE 1978 quoted above. The Study Black Gold was an important intellectual break with the intellectual traditions of dual economy or articulation of modes of production.

[36]Wamba dia Wamba, "Struggles for Democracy in Africa: The Case of the People's Republic of Congo." Philosophy and Social Action, X(1-2) 1984.