

Africa this people's culture is steadily isolating the intellectual and cultural apologists of apartheid. Indeed, the moment is upon us when we shall have to deal with the alternative structures that our people have created and are creating through struggle and sacrifice, as the genuine representatives of these masses in all fields of human activity. Not only should these not be boycotted, but more, they should be supported, encouraged and treated as the democratic counterparts within South Africa of similar institutions and organisations internationally. This means that the ANC, the broad democratic movement in its various formations within South Africa, and the international solidarity movement need to act together.

On these questions John Collins entertained no doubts whatsoever. Having taken positions against racism, discrimination, oppression and war, he accepted that to bring these to an end he must march side by side with those of like mind, against the racists, the oppressors and the war-mongers. His example is eminently worthy of emulation.

Everywhere in our country, and after a year of national state of emergency, the democratic forces are at work to expand and strengthen their ranks and to raise the level and intensity of the offensive against the apartheid regime to new heights. For its part, this regime prepares itself for more atrocities, for the campaign of repression of which PW Botha boasts - as though to shoot and kill children, to imprison and torture them and their parents, to carry out one outrage after another against independent Africa, were the worthiest activities that one could ever imagine.

A terrible collision between ourselves and our opponents is inevitable. Many battles will be fought and many lives will be lost throughout our region. In preparation for this, the Pretoria regime has identified the defeat of the democratic movement as the centrepiece of state policy. Yet the outcome is not in doubt. Having reached the crossroads, the masses of our people have decided that our country must advance as rapidly as possible to the situation where they, black and white, will govern themselves together as equals. Whatever the cost, there is no doubt that we will win.

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TOWARDS A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY: THE UDF VIEW

Below is part of a speech given on behalf of Murphy Morobe, Acting Publicity Secretary of the United Democratic Front (who has since been detained). It was delivered on his behalf to F. Van Zyl Slabbert's Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa in May 1987.

We in the United Democratic Front are engaged in a national democratic struggle. We say we are engaged in a *national* struggle for two reasons. Firstly, we are involved in political struggle on a national, as opposed to a regional or local level.

This national struggle involves all sectors of our people — workers (whether in the factories, unemployed, migrants or rural poor), youth, students, women, and democratic-minded professionals. We also refer to our struggle as national in the sense of seeking to create a new nation out of the historical divisions of apartheid.

We also explain the *democratic* aspect of our struggle in two ways, and this is the main emphasis of my paper today. Firstly, we say that a democratic South Africa is one of the aims or goals of our struggle. This can be summed up in the principal slogan of the Freedom Charter: 'The People Shall Govern'. In the second place, democracy is the means by which we conduct the struggle. This refers to the democratic character of our existing mass-based organisations. It is useful to separate these two levels, but obviously they are also connected. By developing active, mass-based democratic organisations and democratic practices within these organisations, we are laying the basis for a future, democratic South Africa.

The creation of democratic *means* is for us as important as having democratic *goals* as our objective. Too often models of a future democratic South Africa are put forward which bear no relation to existing organisations, practices and traditions of political struggle in this country. What is possible in the future depends on what we are able to create and sustain now. A democratic South Africa will not be fashioned only after transference of political power to the majority has taken place, nor will it be drawn up according to blueprints and plans that are the products of conferences and seminars. The creation of a democratic South Africa can only become a reality with the participation of millions of South Africans in the process — a process which has already begun in the townships, factories and schools of our land.

I have argued that parliament and its related structures are *not* the starting point for a movement towards democracy in South Africa because of: 1) their basic illegitimacy, 2) their lack of real political power and 3) the narrow confines of the political debate that takes place within these structures, which more often than not runs counter to and opposes the political debate that is going on at broader levels. In addition, not only are we opposed to the present parliament because we are excluded, but because parliamentary-type representation in *itself* represents a very limited and narrow idea of democracy.

Millions of South Africans have for decades not only been denied political representation, but have also been oppressed and exploited. Our democratic aim therefore is control over every aspect of our lives, and not just the right (important as it is) to vote for a central government every four to five years.

When we speak of majority rule, we do not mean that black faces must simply replace white faces in parliament. A democratic solution in South Africa involves all South Africans, and in particular the working class, having control over all areas of daily existence — from national policy to housing, from schooling to working conditions, from transport to consumption of food. This for us is the essence of democracy. When we say that the people shall govern, we mean at all levels and in all spheres, and we demand that there be real, effective control on a daily basis.

This understanding of democracy tends to be fundamentally different from the various abstract constitutional models which tend to be put forward as solutions. Most of these are concerned with the question of how central political representation can be arranged so that 'groups' cannot dominate each other, or how what is referred to as the 'tyranny of the majority' can be avoided (many of

these models are still unfortunately caught up in the paradigm which seeks to alter the basis of political representation to a more non-racial basis without any real transference of power away from the small elite which has the present monopoly). This debate gets stuck with the formula which says that democracy = political parties, each representing a different interest group, each jostling for political power.

Now it is important that a democracy contains a plurality of different viewpoints, and I wish to elaborate on this point later on. However, the essence of democracy cannot be limited to debate alone. The key to a democratic system lies in being able to say that the people in our country can not only vote for a representative of their choice, but also feel that they have some direct control over where and how they live, eat, sleep, work, how they get to work, how they and their children are educated, what the content of that education is; and that these things are not done for them by the government of the day, but the people themselves.

In other words, we are talking about direct as opposed to indirect political representation, mass participation rather than passive docility and ignorance, a momentum where ordinary people feel that they can do the job themselves, rather than waiting for their local MP to intercede on their behalf.

Some of these sentiments have been expressed in the words of Nicaraguan Vice President Sergio Ramirez, who said:

Effective democracy, like we intend to practice in Nicaragua, consists of ample popular participation; a permanent dynamic of the people's participation in a variety of political and social tasks; the people who give their opinions and are listened to; the people who suggest, construct and direct, who organise themselves, who attend to community, neighbourhood and national problems; a people who are active in the independence of the country and in the defence of that independence and who also teach and give vaccinations; a daily democracy and not one that takes place every five years; where the people consciously elect the best candidate and not one chosen like a soap or a deodorant, a vote freely made, and not manipulated by an advertising agency . . . for us, democracy is not merely a formal model, but a continual process capable of giving the people that elect and participate in it the real possibility of transforming their living conditions, a democracy which establishes justice and ends exploitation.

The rudimentary *organs of people's power* that have begun to emerge in South Africa (street committees, defence committees, shop-steward structures, student representative councils, parent/teacher/student associations) represent in many ways the beginnings of the kind of democracy that we are striving for.

These structures did not originate out of abstract ideas but out of the real political battles being fought against the existing undemocratic institutions that have traditionally sought to control people's lives. Originally, the slogan of 'ungovernability' was popularised as a political weapon in the hands of people with no access to political power. As a speaker said at one of the rallies in the Transvaal during 1984: 'We must be difficult to control. We must render the instruments of oppression difficult to work. We must escalate all forms of resistance. We must make ourselves ungovernable'.

However, as Zwelake Sisulu has explained: 'In a situation of ungovernability, the government does not have control. But nor do the people. While they have broken the shackles of direct government rule the people have not yet managed to control and direct the situation. There is a power vacuum . . . No matter how ungovernable a township is, unless the people are organised, the gains made by ungovernability

can be rolled back by state repression. Because there is no organised centre of people's power, the people are relatively defenceless and vulnerable . . .

It was out of the battles to wrest control of the townships from the state that the slogan 'Forward to People's Power' was taken up. In many townships, this was actually transferred from a slogan into a reality before the repressive tide of the second state of emergency took its toll.

There are countless details that I could narrate about the street committees of Cradock, New Brighton, Lamontville, Alexandra, Mamelodi, Soweto, the village committees in Sekhukhuneland and KwaNdebele, the shop-stewards committees of the East Rand. Never have our townships seen such debate, such mass participation, such direct representation, not just on the part of political activists, but on the part of ordinary South Africans who, throughout their whole lives, have been pushed around like logs of wood.

While details differ from area to area, the basic unit of people's power that emerged was the street or yard committee. This structure was an executive of ten to twelve people elected at a meeting of all the people on the street, not just those from one political tendency. These street committees, which would meet at least once a week and attend to the social, economic and political issues that cropped up in the street, sent representatives to zone, area or section committees that would represent upwards of twenty-five streets. Finally, a township civic executive would be chosen at a meeting of all the sections, and ratified at mass rallies, which in places like Mamelodi numbered over 25,000 people.

The tasks of these structures included 1) direct political representation, 2) two-way communication of ideas, from mass base to leadership and vice-versa, 3) education and information on what was happening in South Africa, 4) debate over the tactics and strategies of stayaways, consumer and rent boycotts, 5) solving of social disputes through people's courts (as well as actively prohibiting any forms of kangaroo justice that the state has claimed forms the basis of our political practice), and 6) intervention in the running of the townships — building parks, clearing rubble, fighting crime, fixing roads, even collecting rent to build new houses and facilities for township residents. The street committees also began to work closely with the SRCs in the schools in implementing people's educational programs, as well as with the trade unions and shop-stewards councils in building worker power in the factories. It is clear that one of the chief aims of the current state of emergency has been to smash these alternative forms of mass representation, given the direct and severe challenge they pose to the unrepresentative and undemocratic institutions of apartheid.

The difficulties of organising democratically at gunpoint under the state of emergency are surely obvious. Most of our meetings are banned, many of our officials are in jail, on trial or in hiding, and the need for tight security and secrecy obviously puts a strain on the development of a thorough-going, expanding mass-based democratic practice. However, the basic principles of our organisational democracy remain:

1) Elected Leadership. Leadership of our organisations must be elected (at all levels), and re-elections must be held at periodic intervals. No single individual must become irreplaceable. Elected leadership must also be recallable before the end of their term of office if there is indiscipline or misconduct.

2) *Collective Leadership.* We try and practice collective leadership at all levels. There must be continuous, ongoing consultation. Leadership skills, experience and knowledge must be spread, not hoarded.

3) *Mandates and Accountability.* Our leaders and delegates are not free-floating individuals. They always have to operate within the delegated mandates of their positions and delegated duties. This is not to say that we do not encourage individual views to be expressed. Nor that those elected to leadership positions can never take initiatives. On the contrary. We expect all the members of our organisations to think for themselves, to be able to raise and debate their ideas at any time, and have the right to differ with each other. We do not believe that there is only one single 'line' on any issue. However, once a decision has been voted on within an organisation, we expect all our members to act according to that decision, even if they originally voted against it.

4) *Reporting.* Reporting back to organisations, areas, units, etc. is an important dimension of democracy. We expect reports to be accurate, concise and well prepared. We feel very strongly that information is a form of power, and that if it is not shared, it undermines the democratic process. We therefore take care to ensure that language translations occur if necessary, and that reports and debates do not take place at a level of jargon beyond the reach of all our members.

5) *Criticism and Self-criticism.* We do not believe that any of our members are beyond criticism; neither are organisations and strategies beyond reproach. This means that regular evaluations must be held, questions must be asked and constructive criticism is encouraged. Our attitude is one of criticising a comrade as a friend rather than a victim.

Our emphasis on organisational democracy is therefore twofold — the constant need for organisational unity in the face of the enemy onslaught (our organisations cannot descent to the level of debating clubs or warring factions); within this organisational unity, there is the need to make space for differences of opinion, different options and different strategies.

We do not regard these democratic principles as luxuries; rather they are a fundamental weapon of our struggle. Without the fullest organisational democracy, we will never be able to achieve conscious, active and unified participation of the majority of people, and in particular the working class, in our struggle.

I have dealt at some length on the democratic methods that we have adopted within our organisations in order to demonstrate that there are tens of thousands of South Africans who are learning and practicing democracy today, despite the confines of an undemocratic society. Let me conclude by referring to our democratic goals in more detail.

It is clear to us that 300 years of minority rule has created gross inequalities at all levels of our society — not just at the level of political power, but also in terms of land, natural resources, income distribution, in the ownership and control of economic production, and in areas of education, housing, transport, health, sport and culture. Thus for us, any democratic programme of demands cannot be solely concerned with government alone, but must address all the (unequal) relations of power in our society. In other words, both the dismantling of apartheid legislation *and the effects* of 300 years of minority rule must be addressed. A democratic system that does not recognise the need to right the historical injustices of apartheid cannot hope to succeed.

For many of us in the UDF, the Freedom Charter adopted at the Congress of the People in 1955 is one such democratic document that begins to answer some of these questions. The Freedom Charter was created through a democratic process, unprecedented in this country and probably in most other countries of the world. The character of the Charter is not the result of any one original thinker nor even a group of people with fine intellects. Its content derives from the conditions under which black people live in South Africa — in particular national oppression.

There have been a number of debates in a variety of journals as to whether the Charter is a socialist document or not. While some of its economic clauses may seem to some white South Africans to be fairly radical, they are not in fact socialist demands but reflect the undemocratic realities of apartheid. For example, the Charter recognises that national oppression and capitalist economic production are inextricably intertwined. In combination, they have ensured one of the highest rates of profit in the world, and one of the most skewed distribution of income and resources. The demands for the nationalisation of key monopolies and for the transfer of land to those who work it need to be seen in this light. Thus while the Charter is not a socialist document, it puts forward the *democratic* demand for an end to exclusive control of the South African economy by monopoly capital (both national and international).

The Charter is asserting that a democratic solution for South Africa goes beyond the inclusion of black people in existing white structures. It calls for a new education system for all South Africans, with new priorities and emphases, rather than the upgrading of black education to match its white counterpart. And may I add that in calling for a democratic system of tertiary education, we are not merely calling for the opening of our universities, but posing the more fundamental question of what is being taught and whose interests does it serve?

I could go on to describe each clause at length, but I think the point is made, namely, that democracy in South Africa can only survive if it tackles the existing unequal relations of power and privilege as well as the issue of political representation and individual freedom.

How are we to ensure that the democratic process, which has already begun at a mass level within the extra-parliamentary movement, can continue? The UDF has, together with organisations such as COSATU and the NECC, identified several of the key barriers to democracy that exist at present. Our present demands therefore relate to the need to create the necessary conditions for the democratic process to expand. They include the lifting of the state of emergency, the withdrawal of troops and vigilantes from our townships, and the release of detainees; the lifting of the ban on organisations such as the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party and all other banned organisations, the release of our leaders from prison and the safe return of all exiles. In addition, the expansion of the democratic process can only occur with the repeal of all existing security legislation and the reigning-in of the SADF and the SAP. Finally, democracy can only take place in a united, non-racial South Africa. This implies the repeal of divisive legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Land Act, as well as all other racially-exclusive legislation that prohibits freedom of movement and speech on the part of black South Africans.

The realisation of many of these conditions, of course, seem like an impossible dream, especially in the face of a rampant National Party and a strengthened

white-supremacist Conservative Party. Against these odds, it is important to remember that Davids have defeated Goliaths before and will do so again. Few weapons are more powerful than mass participation and unity in action against the common enemy. These fundamental tenants of our struggle are only ensured through a commitment to the democratic process at all times.

COSATU: Towards Disciplined Alliances

Yunus Carrim

The second congress of COSATU, the country's largest and most powerful trade union federation, took place at Wits University from 15 to 18 July. The congress was attended by 1,438 delegates representing 712,231 workers. 'That it took place at all is remarkable', said COSATU general secretary, Jay Naidoo. 'We are in the midst of a state of emergency. COSATU has suffered a severe onslaught from the state, employers and shadowy right-wing elements. Scores of our members have been detained. Our offices throughout the country, including our headquarters, have been bombed. Our daily administration has been severely disrupted. Yet the congress took place without a hitch. It was a major feat of organisation'.

'What is particularly significant', he added, 'was that the congress participants were major industrial unions: we are nearly complete with the process of creating one union per industry through mergers among the 33 affiliates we had at our December 1985 launch. COSATU is now going to be much more democratic, efficient and effective'.

Unions represented at the congress were: National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) (261,901); National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) (130,796); Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) (65,278); Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) (56,000); South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) (34,411); National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) (30,538); Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) (29,859); Construction and Allied Workers Union (CAWU) (26,291); (PWAU) Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union (23,310); Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) (18,281); municipal sector unions (16,967); South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) (9,402); and the National Education and Health Workers Union (NEHAWU) (9,197). Unions had one delegate for every 500 members. Twenty observers were allowed from the National Unemployed Workers Co-ordinating Committee and nine from POTWA (Post Office and Telecommunications Workers Association).

SARHWU and TGWU will form one union in the transport sector, and mergers in the municipal and paper sectors are to take place soon. Problems relating to the merger in the commercial and catering sector have been referred to a special CCAWUSA congress. A COSATU mediating committee will assist in this process.

The unions which have merged still have a long way to go to consolidate their structures. 'We recognise that there are problems', said Naidoo. 'But it is better that these are within one union than between several in one sector. And one should