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SOUTH AFRICA 1985

the organisation
of power
in
black and white

S. THOMPSON
N. ABRAHAM

"South Africa! South Africa!" - Tottenham rioters.
"Tottenham! Tottenham!" - shouted at Anti-Apartheid mini-riot, Nov. 2nd.

"We want Johannesburg to remain the beautiful and thriving city that it is now. Therefore, we are willing to maintain separate living until there are enough new employment opportunities and new homes to allow blacks to move into Johannesburg with dignity."

— NELSON MANDELA.

INTRODUCTION

The police stations are surrounded by sandbags and barbed wire. They look like trenches in a battlefield. The police buildings are flanked by Saracens & Hippos. Black and white policemen, armed with automatic rifles, come in and out. There are massive vehicles; army vehicles adapted to riot conditions. There are funny looking tear-gas machines.

Many shops have gone up in smoke. Houses have been destroyed. The burnt-out shells of cars, lorries and buses litter the streets.

Black policemen no longer live in their homes. Those who have not been killed have fled, living either on police property or elsewhere in hiding. All local black councillors are objects of attack because of their collaboration with the state. Being a town councillor is like committing suicide. Those who have not yet been killed live in constant fear. When they move around they are escorted by soldiers.

Every day there are clashes between soldiers and police on the one hand and the people on the other. Tear gas explodes in the sky. Rifles crack. Rubber bullets and bird shot fly. People are injured. People are killed. Crowds of hundreds, often thousands are scattered and dispersed. Then they play cat and mouse with the authorities; shouting slogans, throwing stones, hurling petrol bombs, looting cars, burning shops, killing anyone they suspect of collaboration with the government or even white business, or anyone who disobeys the mood of the people on the streets.

The soldiers are everywhere. So are the police. They attack people indiscriminately. They have the guns and ammunition. They ride in armoured cars. They have batons, whips and tear gas. The people are not cowed. They get angrier and angrier.

This is the situation in Langa, New Brighton, Kwa Nobuhle, Kwazakhele, Little Soweto, Fort Beaufort, Lingelihle in the Eastern Cape. This is the situation in Duduza, Daveyton, Sebokeng, Evaton, Tembisa, Kwathema and Katlehong in the Transvaal.

The army and the police have a massive presence in these townships. UDF organisations are very active. Its leaders have taken a high profile and they have paid the price by being cut down left and right by the system and its paid assassins. On a lesser scale, but no less aggressively and desperately, AZAPO is taking militant steps. Even some ANC infiltrators are operating clandestinely. But in reality no one controls these townships.

The army and the police intimidate and cordon using everything from drag-nets to death squads to provoke fear and uncertainty. They do not attempt to establish order. UDF and AZAPO organise tirelessly, but fail to establish these areas as zones under their leadership.

The townships are battlegrounds between the system and just about anybody who is on the streets on any given day. The people of the townships are fighting because they are bitter and angry, because they want to end their oppression, but mostly because they have to. If you are on the streets when the police and army arrive you have three choices: to collaborate with the system and then face the risk of a violent death at the hands of people in the community; or you can run away and hide in your home where you are still not safe from the bullets, the teargas, and the spies; or otherwise, you go with the flow and you fight back, in whichever way you can - with rocks and with petrol bombs, with fists and with fire.

The situation makes people defiant and courageous. They are not armed, but they are the toughest, most politicised, most rebellious proletariat in the world today. The youth are engaged in a potlatch, flaunting their fearlessness, dancing and gyrating through the ruins of their ghettos, in an effusion of intensity, defiance and libido.

This is what is happening on the streets of South Africa's townships. It is shaping the everyday reality of life in South Africa, of life in a country where a revolution is raging.

At the same time another war is being waged. It is a war of ideology and propaganda. It is a battle for hierarchical power, not a battle against it. At the moment there are five major protagonists. Each warrants close examination.

THE STATE

As beleaguered as it might be, the white apartheid government is still very much in power.

Most of the faces in the government, with a few important exceptions, are the same today as they were a decade ago.

The state has effectively dealt with the military threat from outside its borders. In spite of increased terrorist attacks this year, the ANC was dealt a severe blow militarily by the Nkomati Accord signed in 1983. South Africa has rendered the ANC guerilla war even more ridiculous than ever before. It has simply bullied into submission the frontline states, on whom the ANC is dependant for bases & for launching pads for its attacks.

Inside its borders the state has sporadically stumbled upon the path of some reforms required for the improved functioning of large capital. The expansion of a black middle class was not exclusively a political creation, but also responded to a real need for a stable skilled workforce in the private sector.

Despite obvious reluctance, complete disinclination, and having bitten off more than it could chew, the state legalised black trade unions, giving capital a more predictable context in which to operate. At the same time this answered a pressing political need from black workers who were already forming unions, legally or not.

In short, the state has adjusted its methods of control.

Internationally, the battle against external pressure has, for the most part, resolved itself in a stalemate. A stalemate is exactly what Pretoria wants, and, at any rate, is the best it can hope for. Minor statutory and social concessions are broadcast at full volume internationally, in order to promote the image of reform. But beyond this, the attitudes of foreign governments are relatively low on the state's list of priorities. First and foremost, it must stop revolution. Satisfying the needs of domestic capital is second in line. Foreign capital already in the country is far more important than Pretoria's popularity rating in the capitals of the western world, and is even expendable if the 'worst comes to the worst'.

The current international outcry against the South African regime is presented to the western public as a moral reaction.

Since World War II virtually every nation in the world except South Africa has rejected racism as official policy. Power has discovered that there is more mileage to be gained from criticising racism than there is from organising it.

The international sympathisers, motivated by a moral outlook, sooner or later evoke the same plea as their heads of state; if something isn't done, things will get really bad. They say they fear bloodshed, which they propose to stop by asking some authority or other to do something. What they all really fear is revolution. And not only in South Africa.

Internal revolution is the arsenic in the government's bootwors. It can try whatever it likes. A point has been reached where just about any step the government takes, either by means of increased repression or by means of reform, merely incurs the wrath of young black South Africans. The state sets up a tricameral parliament; all participants from the coloured and Indian communities instantly lose credibility. It gives more power to local black councillors in the townships. More power doesn't save the government lackeys from petrol bombings and from lynchings.

The police and the army march through the townships in a show of force, shooting and arresting people virtually at random. All that does is increase the anger in the black community, galvanising into action people who were previously unpoliticised.

The declaration of a state of emergency on 20th July did not give the police, and the military much in the way of new powers. It simply gave them the go-ahead to freely use the powers they already enjoy, and which, as a *necessary complement to reform*, have built up to an unprecedented level over the last ten years.

The mass arrests and intensified intimidation have most definitely had a serious impact on the affected black communities.

The shaky balance between reform and repression, has, for the present, been tipped towards the latter.

The state of emergency also gave some foreign bureaucracies a convenient opportunity to suspend relations, and, at the same stroke, to expunge the bad image of having been there in the first place.

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"There are, of course, two characteristic snags with which we are constantly confronted; the conflicting requirements of a total strategy and a democratic system of government. The fact is that strategy is dynamic and requires constant and continued adaptation. A 'game-plan' is, of course, the theoretical ideal. We are working towards something like it within the restrictions inherent in our democratic institutions..."

The time for a 'rethink' of all our national resources is now. This 'rethink' definitely does not mean changes in the Constitution or social system, but it aims at a reorientation of activities within the framework of the prevailing order... For whites, moderate blacks and co-operative tribal leaders, the issue at stake is survival..."

—General Magnus Malan, South African Minister Of Defence.

THE CLERGY

Certain denominations of the church in South Africa are trying to make miracles, but no one who makes a practical difference is taking them very seriously. South Africa's holy trinity of Desmond Tutu, Byers Naude and Allan Boesak rattle their teeth throughout the land, preaching non-violence at the daily funerals of black people killed by the police.

Strictly speaking these three clerics are enemies of the South African State. But in every crisis they exert themselves to dissuade violence, and sometimes even to prevent it. From the government's point of view this means dissuading or preventing any effective action whatever. Besides, they are calling upon whites to repent or be damned, Tutu emphasising the repentance bit because he is Anglican, Boesak and Naude stressing damnation, a predilection they share because of their Afrikaans background. Surely the government and the whites find these men a lot less dangerous than the people all three of them are urging to be non-violent.

"Obviously, those who advocate peaceful change will have their credibility very drastically eroded because they have nothing to show for all their advocacy. We ought to be jettisoned very quickly. We are merely saying that our people must accept they have to be victims of this vicious policy."

— Bishop Desmond Tutu.

In the summer of this year ('85) Tutu was acclaimed by the international media for intervening amongst an angry crowd to save the life of an informer. Not for nothing is this cop in sheep's clothing known by other blacks in South Africa as 'The Clown Of Exploitation'. In the summer he promised to leave South Africa if the anti-State violence didn't stop; unfortunately, as everyone knows, Nobel Peace Prize winners, and other Christians, never keep their promises.

Meanwhile, the only real influence this clown has is on those outsiders who con themselves into believing he could possibly have some influence on the real struggle in the townships, the streets & the factories.

THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC)

For the past quarter century, the ANC has been the foremost surrogate government of South Africa. It has earned a name for its rhetoric and its ravings, and has been over-generous with its praises for the Russian bureaucracy. But beneath the ideological bombast, it has developed a bureaucracy more capable than any other of replacing the apartheid state and of successfully negotiating in the international corridors of power.

For decades, the ANC advocated guerilla war as the only viable salvation for black South Africans. During the uprisings of 1976-7 and 1980, the ANC was conspicuously absent from the heat of struggle. ANC even went so far as to minimise the importance of these struggles as leaderless, anarchic and even infantile.

The events of the last year have led ANC to abruptly change its tune: it now recognises internal revolt as *the* threat to the white state, and the only viable avenue for an ascent to power. This recognition coincides with an admission by the State that the centre of its problems lie within the country, not outside.

A number of factors combined to allow ANC to keep its hat in the ring despite its ineffectiveness.

No small credit can be given to the South African government, which, for 20 years defined the ANC as *the* enemy, both for self-serving reasons and because of the government's own illusions.

The prestige of being the oldest liberation movement, with well-known figures and martyrs, played a part.

The hope of blacks for an outside solution, similar to the hope of religious people for salvation from on high, also had a role. Along with this often futile, constantly frustrated desire for arms. Weapons came not in a flood but a trickle, always in the hands of loyal cadres, and mostly squandered on terrorist acts. But although desperate people saw no significant delivery of the goods, ANC remained the only potential game in town.

Though bitter enemies, with profoundly opposing interests, the ANC and the white state are united in at least this:
the infrastructure of the economy must be saved.
Ownership, personnel and the style of administration
are what is at stake here.

For the ANC to come to power in South Africa then, at some point in time and preferably somewhere, the revolution must stop.

Though the build-up of a bureaucracy inevitably goes hand in hand with calcified, hierarchical thinking, the ANC managed to avoid the fate of the Pan-African Congress, which committed suicide by choking on its own dogma.

The ANC has not lost sight of its sole real practical objective: the seizure of power in South Africa. This is the fundamental requirement of an effective leninist organisation. ANC has crossed many bridges but burnt very few. One example of this is that, despite its relationships with the Stalinists of the eastern bloc, it has remained foremost a nationalist group. There is no doubt that the ANC would be internally Stalinist in the unlikely event of a coup, negotiated or otherwise. But that an ANC government would become a simple Russian satellite, along the lines of MPLA in Angola, is rather implausible.

It is wrong to say that events "forced" the ANC to do anything. The new ANC outlook is an opportunistic move, notable not for being opportunistic, but for being successfully so.

The success has been spectacular. After years of hollow claims and dirty deeds, all is forgotten and ANC is very much in the running again. It is gaining confidence almost to the point of euphoria. For the first time, there is evidence among those actually fighting the police of a significant spontaneous support for ANC. Passive support is at an all-time high. It is the only oppositional organisation with a highly developed bureaucracy and widescale international recognition. Best of all, it must only prescribe activities to the masses *after they have already happened* in order to maintain its position. The townships have become ungovernable? The ANC must only announce the slogan, "Make the townships ungovernable," and its popularity skyrockets.

ANC will continue to conduct terrorist activities and even intensify them if it can. It must maintain a visible profile, and keep up morale and dedication amongst its armed wing. But for most of those in the ANC military camps, the future after the glorious event, if it comes, is more mundane: as the elite of the ANC police.

As is the case with the State, ANC does not know where it will be swept in the course of revolution. In spite of a definite growth in support, ANC finds events out of its control. Wild speculation abounds about navigating from London and Lusaka to Pretoria. But some basic points can and must be made.

In a particularly revealing moment, the mystical Nelson Mandela, jailed demigod of the ANC, recently said: "We want Johannesburg to remain the beautiful and thriving city that it is now. Therefore, we are willing to maintain separate living until there are enough new employment opportunities and new homes to allow blacks to move into Johannesburg with dignity."

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THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT

The history of AZAPO and UDF, and the reality of what they are today cannot be understood without recalling the origins of Black Consciousness, whose legacy AZAPO claims to inherit, and whose form of organisation and whose political prominence UDF has usurped.

When Steve Biko launched Black Consciousness with the proclamation, "Black man - you are on your own" he came up with a master stroke of strategy. The impasse of fifteen years of waiting for the ANC was thrust aside. Biko restored radical subjectivity to the revolutionary terrain by switching the focus from the passive waiting for liberation from outside to the realm of individual consciousness.

Clearly, this was not consciousness according to the academic notion of what you think when someone asks you. It was inseparably linked to *action*, on the

level that is accessible to everyone: that of his or her own daily life. Political struggle was not denied, but rather, put back on its feet. Action in daily life was posed not as a substitute for political action, but as the foundation that makes contesting power conceivable. Biko posed a simple question: how can one oppose apartheid and the white State when one, everyday, gives in to the most basic humiliations? How can a person who is constantly ready to say, "Ja, my baas," effectively confront the entire social system?

The initial Black Consciousness decision not to co-operate with white opponents of apartheid must be understood in this precise context. Though Biko and his associates recognised that certain whites had come to play a role in, for instance, the Congress of Democrats leadership far out of proportion to the Congress's constituency, this was not the primary focus of their decision. The point was not to create an ideology, tactic or programme that was attractive to blacks, or even to create an all-black leadership. Rather, it was a *by-product* of the very centre of Black Consciousness thinking, its focus on the individual black man & his need to begin from a positive self-definition, based on his own situation as he himself determined it.

The early Black Consciousness organisations, e.g. SASO, were limited in scope and were often specific to particular projects, as in BCP. No sort of comprehensive organisation which might compete with ANC was envisaged. It is worth noting in this context that Biko himself made a continual effort to avoid any sort of personality cult, any role that would make him indispensable to the fulfillment of the outlook which he did so much to develop.

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This is not to say that the partisans of Black Consciousness definitively broke with the notion of a hierarchical, leninist-type organisation. It is more accurate to say that they proceeded not against it, but *without* it. This was in large part a tactical choice, to avoid leaders being singled out and eliminated by the State.

During the early 1970s, a Black Consciousness organisational framework began to take shape. The number of Black Consciousness organisations increased. Some of them grew out of the struggle itself. Existing groups increased rapidly in size. Co-ordination of these groups was loosely formalised in the notion of an 'umbrella' structure. Each member group was allowed to conduct its activities free of centralised control. But though explicitly not monolithic or dogmatic, the umbrella notion added a decisive new element to Black Consciousness.

One began to hear more and more of the Black Consciousness Movement. This referred at once to the general social unrest sweeping the country and to the organisations formally united in the Black Consciousness umbrella. A tension between these conceptions emerged and in time developed. On the one hand, Black Consciousness was a "way of life", reflecting and, in some vague sense, uniting the actions of autonomous individuals in their struggles at all levels. On the other hand, Black Consciousness was becoming a separate entity, not merely the general movement but a distinct, organised part of it. The tendency became for the BCM leaders to see the unorganised movement *in the terms* of the organised one, where what was 'autonomous' was no longer the *individual*, but rather, the various *organisations*.

The duality between the two conceptions of Black Consciousness was solidified with the BCM leaders' new ideology of "mass support". This ideology developed something like this. First, there was the fact of parallel and even joint action between the organised and unorganised elements of the "movement".

Second, in the general upheaval, the division between formal BCM activists and the actions of others blurred to the point of invisibility, notably in the eyes of the State. Third, there was widespread popularity of the notion of Black Consciousness in the broadest sense.

The ideology of "mass support" turned these realisations upside down. While apparently reaffirming the non-authoritarian nature of Black Consciousness, it recast the "masses" in the terms of organisational forms. No longer were the actions of unorganised blacks merely distinct from the organised BCM, in importance if not administratively.

Biko said, in one of his "Frank Talk" articles, that as the struggle progresses, we need to talk more and more of blacks and less of whites. But by the time BCM was banned, the watchword had become, we need to talk more and more of organisations, and less of individual blacks!

This was roughly the situation at the time the BCM was banned in 1977. When the State cut things short, the Black People's Convention was already setting itself up as an elite of cadres, the bureaucratic centre of BCM both administratively and in terms of establishing an explicit ideological programme.

AZAPO

AZAPO was founded in 1977, after the existing Black Consciousness groups were banned. Many BCM activists joined AZAPO then. If AZAPO is in some sense what it claims to be, the inheritor of Black Consciousness, then it is in this sense: AZAPO assumed the legacy of the bureaucratic tendencies that were developing in BCM at the time of the banning.

With the gradual restoration of order in South Africa in 1977, any number of superficial critiques of What Went Wrong emerged. One of the most frequent and vocal of these was the struggles of '76-'77 lacked organisation, and more specifically, a professional, disciplined leadership. This is a predictable response that has followed almost every proletarian explosion the world over, made mostly by aspiring bureaucrats who have at best led nothing.

The actual formation of AZAPO, with its cadres of committed and unswervingly loyal militants, was the practical crystallisation of this sad outlook.

One of AZAPO's appeals was, no doubt, that it scrapped some of the baggage that had been awkwardly carried along in the loose umbrella structure of BCM. Whereas sheep in wolves clothing like Buthelezi and Motlana had been able to dress their sorry reformism in Black Consciousness attire, AZAPO sent them packing.

Already in 1977, the Black Consciousness philosophy had lost much of its initial practical basis. Thousands upon thousands of black South Africans had in the past two years become prepared to fight the State, angry and angrily conscious of their situation. Today, in 1985, the black man who cries "Ja baas" to the white man's face and then curses him in the toilet belongs to an endangered species.

"Black Consciousness" in the hands of AZAPO has become a simple programmatic label. It provides a reassuring link with past struggles, with which many people identify in some sense. But, most of all, it serves to distinguish AZAPO from other organisations with whom it is engaged in a power struggle for the imagined proprietorship of the South African revolution. AZAPO clings to black exclusiveness not from theoretical strategy but for tactical reasons: it figures this will have a broad appeal. It also counts on this exclusiveness to help maintain commitment and militancy within its ranks of believers.

AZAPO's ideological programme, in keeping with its practical outlook, is slightly more militant and daring than those of its principal rivals ANC and UDF. It is basically an amalgam of shop-worn leninist phraseology, heavily emphasising the working class, with the usual paeons to anti-racism and anti-imperialism. It explicitly calls for popular control of the means of production. Black Consciousness is reworked into an anemic pan-Africanist nationalism. But all this has little practical impact. AZAPO is at root an organisational form in search of a content.

not comfortably live with. If UDF and ANC tone down their propaganda bit, it's because of a different tactical approach, not a different theoretical one.

The widely publicised attacks by AZAPO militants on UDF militants and vice versa initially served the interests more of AZAPO than UDF. This is simply because UDF is by far the stronger organisation, which is graphically demonstrated by the fact that the State of Emergency has seen hundreds of UDF militants rounded up by the police and almost no members of AZAPO. One on one battles give AZAPO the appearance of being on a more equal footing with UDF than is actually the case. For a period of time, the relative militancy of AZAPO cadres can, in direct battles, compensate for the far greater number of UDF supporters.

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Almost everyone who has publically commented on the matter has pointed out that the UDF v. AZAPO attacks have as their main beneficiary the white State. In the sense that this has allowed the State to murder UDF members and blame AZAPO, this is tragically true.

But in general, those who have decried the attacks have done so from the point of view of a hollow black unity. This viewpoint contains a fundamental misunderstanding. The proletariat is not weak because it is divided; it is divided because it is weak. Though perhaps stronger today than ever before, the South African proletariat has still not yet shown itself strong enough to throw off the chains of bureaucratic opposition to capitalism. The greatest tragedy of the UDF - AZAPO conflict and the violence that has accompanied it, is that it hasn't brought the oppressed one millimetre closer to greater clarity, to new forms of struggle, to the critical self-evaluation that is needed so desperately. It's all been lost in a power struggle between rival bureaucracies.

THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF)

In January 1982, a steering committee was set up to establish the United Democratic Front. This had been prompted by a call from Dr Allan Boesak, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, for progressive forces to unite in resistance against the government's constitutional plans.

In the months of May, June and July, general councils of the UDF were established in Natal, the Transvaal and the Cape Province.

The aim of the UDF was to achieve maximum unity among 'all democratic peace-loving people', as a response to the government's plans to divide people and entrench apartheid.

At a press conference in early August, the national interim executive of the UDF emphasised that while it articulated the viewpoint of a broad cross-section of people, it accepted that the main burden of exploitation and discrimination fell on the working class.

On August 20th, the UDF was launched nationally when a thousand delegates, representing some 575 organisations, met at Mitchell's Plain in the Western Cape. Many highly visible organisations were in attendance. These included: AZASO (Azanian Students Organisation), TIC (Transvaal Indian Congress), COSAS (Congress of SA students), SAAWU (South African Allied Workers Union), Federation of SA Women, Black Sash, Soweto Committee of Ten, DPSC (Detainees Parents Support Committee), Release Mandela Committee, SASPU (SA Students Press Union) and hundreds of youth organisations and action committees.

The UDF conference adopted a declaration which stated as its aim the creation

"The principal of organisation does not lie in a determined accord between determined activities; it does not translate the really organisable element of individuals' activity, but is the inversion of this point of view: it is real and potential global activity, the very substance of individuals, working to organise the organisation." - Daniel Denevert, 1976.

of a united democratic South Africa, free of bantustans and group areas & based on the will of the people. The need for 'unity in struggle through which all democrats, regardless of race, religion or colour shall take part together' was recognised.

The UDF pledged to organise community, women's, students', religious, sporting and other organisations, to build and strengthen these organisations, to consult with people regularly to represent their views, to educate people about the 'coming dangers', and to 'unite in action' against the constitution and other day-to-day problems of the people.

As a front rather than an organisation UDF exerts an ephemeral control over its affiliates, and does not make them tow a particular line. Nevertheless, a common ideological thread that more or less binds all UDF groups together is the tacit acceptance of the Freedom Charter as a policy manifesto. The Freedom Charter serves several important functions for the UDF. It gives some ideological content to the UDF's organisational form. It is sufficiently diluted to appease the moderates in its broad coalition, and just vaguely socialist enough not to be rejected by the more militant. Since the Freedom Charter was a Congress of Democrats manifesto, & the ANC belonged to the COD, by waving it as a banner the UDF enforces its image of following in the line of historical liberation movements. The UDF does not claim to be the same as the ANC simply because it isn't. It does, however, want to make it quite clear that it is of the same pedigree, and it is true that both organisations have to some degree relied upon the image of the other for their current credibility.

Unlike its immediate historical predecessor, the Black Consciousness Movement, which was rooted in the activity of the masses at the level of their everyday life, UDF starts out at the level of the organisation. UDF is the product of a more classical form of organisation. Its specific form is a federation of active and visible mini-parties, many of whom enjoy an intimate and immediate interaction with their constituents. Superimposed upon this umbrella structure is a bureaucracy with no other reason for existing other than to supervise the unity of the front.

Since UDF has, until recently, operated in a relatively tolerant political climate, it has used ritualised symbols from an earlier epoch as an ideological glue. Much

The process of proletarian revolution is not neat and even. Mistakes are made. Hesitations occur. Impasses are met. The enemy is formidable and not only in arms. The state is being increasingly intelligent in defending its stupidity. Criticism is needed. Not grandiose treatises or manifestos, but practical consciousness that will put the pitfalls behind; and develop forms of struggle that will overcome odds which seem to overwhelm those who gamble on freedom.

of this symbolism does not belong to the history of the proletariat as much as it belongs to the history of the ANC. UDF is not a screen for the ANC, but by trotting out old ANC symbols and by using these symbols to help set itself up as mediator between anti-government groups, the UDF has given the ANC a desperately needed shot in the arm.

The adoption, implicit or otherwise, of the Freedom Charter was not the first tie that bound together affiliates of the UDF. The first alloy was a far more pragmatic one. It was opposition to the government's constitutional proposals. That, however, was an organisational tactic, destined at birth to be short-lived, since the issue of constitutional dispensation was to be resolved practically.

By the time the campaign against the constitutional reforms was over two of the most pathetic bunches of Uncle Toms the world has ever seen were exercising their vocal cords in the non-white Houses of Parliament, as well as the 7% mandate given them by their respective coloured and Indian constituencies.

The original rationale for the creation of a united democratic front was dead and buried in two tiers of the South African government. But UDF did not dissolve. New and more permanent reasons for its self-perpetuation were already in place.

The Black Consciousness Movement was able to lay claim to all revolutionary acts during 1976/7 because all blacks who were willing to oppose the system could identify immediately with its message which was pitched at the level of daily life. UDF, on the other hand, did not have any popular philosophy which it could use to claim the right to become the liberation organisation of South Africa. What it did have was a reformist political climate in which to operate. This enabled it from the start to use symbols, tactics and allusions that no-one would have dared to use in the 1960s and the 1970s.

It is impossible not to be angered by the spinechilling fate that UDF leaders have experienced at the hands of the State and its cohorts. There is a barbarism to the acts of detention, disappearance and death that no string of adjectives can describe. The intention is not to downplay the agony of the victims. Rather the point is to refuse to make them into something more than they are.

If the State of Emergency has shown anything, it is just how dispensable UDF is. The momentum and intensity of the struggle against apartheid is not being generated by the leaders of UDF.

Out on the streets is a mass of young rebels. Growing up in the townships, they have never known a "normal existence". Rebellion has been a way of life from the earliest years. They have little interest in ideology. They do not think of revolt as a political or economic act, but rather as a necessary and unavoidable response to the constraints imposed upon them by power.

For the past ten years the children of the townships have shown their maturity. They have zeroed in on their enemies with uncanny accuracy. They attack with equal vigour the state and its collaborators. They show no respect for private property. They do not allow leaders to control their actions. They refuse to participate in a dialogue with power. They set no goals for themselves other than their total emancipation.

Many obstacles remain. The frantic optimism expressed by the ANC, for example, is precisely the kind of attitude that must be done away with. The process of proletarian revolution is not neat and even. Mistakes are made. Hesitations occur. Impasses are met. The enemy is formidable and not only in arms. The state is being increasingly intelligent in defending its stupidity.

Criticism is needed. Not grandiose treatises or manifestos, but practical consciousness that will put the pitfalls behind; and develop forms of struggle that will overcome odds which seem to overwhelm those who gamble on freedom.

Society does not develop in a continuous way, free from setbacks, but through conflicts and antagonisms. While the working class battle is widening in scope, the enemy's strength is increasing. Uncertainty about the way to be followed constantly and repeatedly troubles the minds of the combatants; and doubt is a factor in division, of internal quarrels and conflicts within the workers' movement.

"It is useless to deplore these conflicts as creating a pernicious situation that should not exist and which is making the working class powerless. As has often been pointed out, the working class is not weak because it is divided; on the contrary, it is divided because it is weak. And the reason why the proletariat ought to seek new ways is that the enemy has strength of such a kind that the old methods are ineffectual. The working class will not secure these ways by magic, but through a great effort, deep reflection, through the clash of divergent opinions and the conflict of impassioned ideas. It is incumbent upon it to find its own way, and precisely therein is the *raison d'être* of the internal differences and conflicts. It is forced to renounce outmoded ideas and old chimeras, and it is indeed the difficulty of this task that engenders such big divisions."