



This article, written before the UDF was restricted, examines the question of Organisation in the white areas

Taking the struggle into the ruling bloc

How best to take forward the aims of the UDF in the white community has become a key area of discussion within the democratic movement recently. Events such as the Five Freedoms Forum Conference, and the resulting talk of possible national campaigns and activities, give a new urgency to this debate.

THE NATIONAL SITUATION

New strategies in the white community must be based on an understanding of the national situation as a whole rather than on the white community in isolation.

To summarise our understanding of the national situation: the state lost the strategic initiative in 1984. Mass resistance undermined the Tricameral initiative as well as the town council system. The growth of UDF and COSATU, the increasing power and prestige of the ANC, and the collapse of the government's reforms created confusion, paralysis and divisions in the state and the ruling block. The government is using the State of Emergency to crush mass resistance, weaken the people's organisations, and isolate the white community from information about the townships. Behind this wall of silence Botha is trying to reorganise the unity of the white laager.

In the townships, the government is using the JMCs, township upgrading, RSCs and the National Council to avoid meeting the demands of the people. It is trying to crush the democratic movement, and develop a new "reform" that will include Inkatha and other "moderates", but exclude the democratic movement. Clearly the government is trying to regain the strategic initiative. If the government is successful in rebuilding the unity of the white laager, and creating space for new "reforms", it will be greatly strengthened. The government hopes to be able to sell these reforms to the white community at large as well as to the business sector, and to conservative international forces such as the Western powers.

Overall strategy

The state has not managed to crush the people's organisations and resistance. Conditions are extremely hard and we have definitely suffered setbacks. But we have made many advances too. Our strategy in the white areas is not an alternative to building the mass movement amongst the oppressed people.

These two aspects of our strategy are complementary parts of an overall strategy. Our success in the white community depends on the strength and

support of the mass movement. It is the strength and achievements of mass resistance that have created divisions and confusion in the ruling block, thus creating very favourable conditions for our work in the white areas.

CONDITIONS IN THE RULING BLOC

Botha's strategy of rebuilding the white laager has been directed at whites both to the left and the right of the government. In general, the government's propaganda onslaught has gained broad white support for the state of emergency and increased repression. It has succeeded in cutting the white population off from news about events outside the white areas.

The white elections in May consolidated Botha's gains. The National Party manipulated white fears and promised tougher security action. The white liberal opposition was weakened. On the other hand, right-wing and neo-fascist forces gained more support. Since the elections, the government has continued its repression, supported by the majority of whites.

But a closer look shows serious weaknesses in Botha's laager, weaknesses that add up to a deep political crisis in the ruling block. The crisis is reflected in a number of ways: Firstly, tensions and divisions in the ruling block have produced a number of new groupings to the left of the Nationalists.

The middle ground

Besides the weakened and directionless PFP, there are IDASA, the National Democratic Movement (NDM), independents such as Jan van Eck, the Independent Movement of Worrall, the breakaway Afrikaner intellectuals, students and churchpeople. There is more change, movement and searching for solutions amongst white political forces than ever before. This is what we call the middle ground because it is between the Nationalists and the democratic movement.

Secondly, we must understand the importance of the Afrikaner groupings that have broken away from the Nationalists on the left. They used to be moral

and intellectual leaders in the NP. Their break with the NP shows that it has no vision and no moral conviction. It rules simply from fear and greed.

Thirdly, although most of the white population has swung behind Botha's programme, many are not convinced that the National Party has any long-term answer to the political crisis. They can see that apartheid means war, and many would like to avoid that war. At the moment their support is fragile: they support Botha because they fear the alternatives. However, if we can demonstrate that we have the solution and it is Botha's solution that they should fear, increasing numbers of whites may desert Botha's camp.

Fourthly, even the breakaway of Nationalist supporters to the right wing CP and AWB is a sign of the crisis of legitimacy, since these people have lost faith in the NP's ability to protect their interests, though it would be naive to think that the right wing growth can further our interests in any way.

Fifthly, the crisis of legitimacy is not only national, but international. As a result of local and international pressure, even Botha's western and imperialist supporters are losing faith in his ability to overcome the political crisis.

Seize the Initiative

It is therefore clear that conditions favourable to a fundamental transformation of our society are starting to mature, even within the ruling bloc itself. But transformation will only be possible if we **seize the initiative now**. And we need to seize it in all sectors. In the white sector we can't only rely on the indirect effects of the mass movement to weaken the ruling bloc. We need to take advantage of the government's crumbling legitimacy to **build and extend the legitimacy of and respect for the democratic movement amongst all South African people**. We need to demonstrate that we have the solutions to the current crisis; that we can lead the nation to a new, non-racial democratic South Africa. We need to take that message into the heart of the ruling bloc. If we miss this opportunity, if we do not take the initiative, we leave the way open to the western imperialist powers, to capital, the state, and a range of reactionary forces to retake the initiative and impose their solutions.

WHITES AND THE RULING BLOC

We need to analyse the relation of whites to the ruling bloc if we are to develop an effective strategy.

- Whites form the dominant part of the ruling bloc. When we talk of the ruling bloc we are not only speaking about the government. We are also speaking about all those who maintain the system of white domination. The ruling bloc includes all the various classes and strata of the white population, as well as small groups of black collaborators.
- The Nationalist government depends primarily on whites for its support. The Tricameral Parliament is organised to ensure continued white domination, and the parliament and state machinery remain under the almost exclusive control of whites, despite the multi-racial appearance.
- Big business is entirely in the hands of whites. Production of the nation's wealth is controlled by whites.

There are different class interests amongst whites - white working class, big capital, state bureaucrats and a great range of middle class interests.

The interests of these social forces and classes are not static. Historically, despite differences between them, these forces combined their interests in the system of white minority rule. But now, with the deep political and economic crisis, their interests are shifting and changing, and coming into more and more conflict with each other. Some are seeking new ways to maintain white domination, while others are ready to abandon white minority rule.

This analysis should make it clear that the white constituency is different from any oppressed community. Whites actually form the basis or foundation of state power and capitalist power. Thus, when we talk about a strategy for whites it is completely different from a strategy in oppressed communities.

WORK IN THE WHITE AREAS

Work in the white community is different from work in other areas. Firstly, whites have historically exercised power in the white Parliament. They have a deep respect for the law and Parliament. They are used to a parliamentary style of politics. They are also used to being addressed as a white constituency by the mass media. They do not see themselves as part of a single South African nation. Fear of the black majority and of the future is the central factor in their political consciousness.

Secondly, in the oppressed communities, mobilisation takes place around people's direct class and national interests. In the white community the mobilisation of people against apartheid has historically been against their interests in maintaining white domination. When whites do turn against the government, it is because they see apartheid as morally wrong, or because apartheid is a long term threat to peace and stability. It has always been a tiny minority of whites who oppose apartheid. Thirdly, mass work in the white areas has to be essentially open, public and high profile.

UDF'S STRATEGY

UDF's current strategy towards the white community has developed out of a history of organising in this community. Until 1985, the focus of UDF work was to draw whites directly into the ranks of the democratic movement. The 1986 Call to Whites Campaign was the high point of this phase. Hundreds of whites wanted to join or find out more about the UDF.

However the 1986 Emergency brought harsh repression. This prevented us from consolidating our work. White democratic organisations, like all UDF affiliates, were hard hit and many supporters frightened off. Suddenly we found ourselves becoming cut off from our community, and on the defensive.

This isolation, as well as the positive experiences of work in broad alliances such as Concerned Citizens and the Five Freedoms Forum, forced us to rethink our strategy. We had to face the fact that many whites were hesitant to involve

themselves in the UDF, but at the same time many more were keen to get involved in anti-apartheid work.

The resolution adopted at the National Working Committee Conference of the UDF in May this year took us some of the way. The resolution was based on an analysis of the crisis in the ruling block. It recognised the need and the possibility of reaching a far broader layer of whites than the small minority that was actually joining the democratic movement.

Political fluidity in the white areas

Since the NWC there have been significant developments in white politics, the IDASA "pilgrimage" to the ANC in Dakar, the rise of the Independents, the resignations from and crisis in the PFP and recently, the formation of the NDM. This indicated the degree of political fluidity in the white areas.

Old political alignments were cracking up with a speed and on a scale not seen before. But this range of new anti-Nationalist forces has a variety of political and personal agendas. They lack clarity about their aims and methods, about their attitude to the democratic movement and the central political issues of our time.

We therefore had to clarify our strategy further. Our emphasis is on

- Isolating the core of resistance to change i.e. - the Nationalist government and its closest allies.

 - Building and strengthening the broadest possible front of resistance to apartheid on terms favourable to the democratic movement. This involves building a broad anti-apartheid alliance in the white community with the active involvement of the democratic movement.

 - Strengthening the democratic movement itself by involving whites in progressive organisations both within and outside of the UDF.
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ANTI-NATIONALIST FORCES AND THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

To understand these tasks we must be clear about the distinction between **anti-Nationalist forces** and the democratic movement itself. Anti-Nationalist forces are opposed to the Nationalist government and its injustices, but are not necessarily part of the democratic movement.

Anti-Nationalist forces include the Five Freedoms Forum, ECC, PFP, Black Sash, NDM, IDASA, and various other groupings and individuals. They represent constituencies in the white areas which are an increasingly important **force for change** although they are not part of the democratic movement.

For the first time UDF's white affiliates are confronting the question of how to engage in politics in the ruling bloc with much bigger aims than simply recruiting more support for the UDF. It directly raises the question of alliance politics.

ALLIANCE POLITICS

An alliance means working with forces and groups whose line is not always the same as ours. We enter into these alliances because we believe that we can strengthen the struggle against a common enemy by working together towards particular goals.

When we work in such alliances it is important to commit ourselves to developing a lasting and effective unity, in this way building a more powerful force on agreed goals. A second goal of joining alliances is to gain access to a wider range of people and organisations e.g. Afrikaans youth, church ministers. In this way we can gain new supporters for the democratic movement.

We need to win the respect of our allies by the strength of our organisation, our political maturity and clear vision. If we can do this we will win leadership and broad support for our position **even if our allies never join us or subscribe to our full programme.**

All organisations in an alliance should accept that they have differences, as

long as these are not fundamental differences on the platform of the alliance. When we have differences with our allies we must explain them openly and fully.

Some comrades have raised the possible danger of our struggle being "hi-jacked" and "co-opted" if we work so broadly. We should not be paralysed by such fears.

Direction and Influence

The first point is that one cannot look for absolute guarantees before entering an alliance. The content and direction of an alliance is fought for and won in the course of struggle. Secondly, we simply have to take up the challenge of the new situation which is directly a result of the struggles of our people. The forces which our struggles have unleashed in the white community have the potential either to be harnessed for historical progress, or to be misdirected by those who are enemies of our struggle. We have two choices: either we actively contribute towards shaping political developments in the white areas; or we abdicate and allow developments to possibly work against us - all in the name of "purity".

Thirdly we should not underestimate the influence of the democratic movement. White democrats get their political direction and strength from the democratic movement. It offers a greater degree of political clarity and direction than most other forces operating in the white community. This clarity, plus the fact that it expresses the aspirations of the majority of the people, means that all forces in such an alliance would be likely to seriously consider the views of the democratic movement .

THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT AND OUR STRATEGY IN THE RULING BLOC

The Front has defined its current political tasks very clearly. These tasks are to broaden the Front, as well as deepen it by building coherent political centres. These tasks apply in all areas.

It is very important for comrades in the townships to understand that our developing strategy in white areas corresponds to and is part of overall UDF strategy. Just as comrades in other areas are seeking to broaden the Front in their communities and extend its influence, so comrades in the white areas are doing the same thing.

Firstly, building and broadening the united front in the white sector means increasing the number and membership of affiliates. It means **strengthening the UDF as such in the white areas**. The task of building a broad alliance of anti-apartheid forces does not mean abandoning this task. If anything it enables us to expose more and more whites to the politics of the UDF. Secondly, broadening the Front means uniting with our **natural allies**. We need to strengthen our relationship with other democratic forces that are not UDF affiliates, such as the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), the Five Freedoms Forum (FFF) and the Black Sash.

Broad front of anti-apartheid forces

Thirdly, broadening the front means extending the political and moral influence of the UDF to the widest possible range of South Africans. In the townships and rural areas this means working with sporting, religious and cultural groupings, small businessmen and progressive chiefs etc. In the case of the white community we must extend our influence by working with white opposition groupings such as the NDM, white youth who are worried about the future, and dissident Afrikaner intellectuals. We can achieve this by building a broad front of anti-apartheid forces, and winning respect and even leadership in such a movement.

In addition to broadening the front in these ways, our strategy in the ruling bloc must include **strengthening and supporting each and every initiative which weakens the main enemy, that is, the Nationalist Party, the government, and the neo-fascist right wing forces**.

Our tasks in the white areas must not be seen as the responsibility of the white comrades only. These tasks are the responsibility of the democratic movement as a whole. While the main work will be done by white democrats, it is important for the democratic movement as a whole to support and guide our work. White

democrats have to be able to show that they are part of a non-racial movement, and that they have the support of the people. That gives us strength and wins respect from other anti-apartheid forces.

THE NEEDS OF THE MOMENT

We should not think of our work in the ruling bloc only in terms of educating whites, broadening our alliance, winning over certain groups and dividing the ruling bloc. We must think more boldly than that.

We need to build a powerful anti-apartheid campaign in the white areas. Such a campaign, based on the broadest possible anti-apartheid front, will directly confront and put pressure on the government. We need to build a campaign that will prevent the government from regaining the strategic initiative, that will limit the choices open to it and force it in a particular direction. We need a campaign that will expose the government's moral and political bankruptcy; increase the division and confusion in government structures, in the NP, and amongst its supporters; and make it impossible for its local and imperialist allies to support it. These are the urgent and critical tasks facing us at this time. Comrades need to discuss seriously what sort of campaign can achieve these aims.

Organisations who would like to have further discussions about the issue of organising whites raised in this paper are encouraged to contact the white UDF affiliates in their area. Discussions, seminars or workshops can be arranged.
