

We meet at a time when the history of this country passes through one of its most important moments. In South Africa today, the capitalist system together with its organ of power, the racist state, are experiencing a crisis the severity of which mounts by the day. At times like these, it is imperative that all of us who are rallied as an antithetical force against the present regime should analyse thoroughly the objective conditions which shape our lives in this country. We should then reassess our strength and strategies in order to chart scientifically the course of our future struggles.

The democratic movement picks up the reigns of a struggle endowed with rich historical experiences. A synoptic look at our history will reveal that our people through various campaigns have always engaged the enemy on many occasions. When the rulers set up the Union of South Africa in 1910, the people set up their own organisation in the form of the ANC, two years later, in 1912. This organisation was set up to oppose the government and to concretise their national aspiration. 1919 saw the Free State women campaigning against the passes. The 1935-36 Hertzog bills which actually removed the Franchise from the African and Coloured sections did not go without challenge. In 1946, opposition against the Indian Ghetto Acts in Natal was also staged by the massive participation of the people. 1952 brought the initial stages of the boycott campaigns, and later on, when the regime sought to strengthen their position by bolstering Bantu Education, the students registered their categorical rejection in the 1976-1980 boycotts.

Presently, the state is coming with the 'new constitution' and the Koornhof bills' and this whole gimmick of reform, which the democratic movement must attend to.

The democratic movement must in the first instance adopt a particular frame of outlook if it is to face the challenges of its day successfully. That conceptual framework must be a scientific one in which case no amount of tradition and emotion will cloud its analytical processes. The democratic movement is called upon to be flexible in its approach and in this regard recognize the fact that the objective conditions in which it operates are not permanent or static at any given time, but are dynamic. There is the ever present flow and ebb represented by the regimes political twist and turn which the democratic movement must fully analyse and take advantage of.

Great challenges presenting a new set of conditions are presently facing the democratic movement in South Africa. It is imperative that in responding to these conditions, the democratic movement should be able to maintain a proper balance between its principles as against the strategies and tactics applied in order to achieve its objectives. Firstly, principles are essentially fixed and fundamental beliefs around which a general outlook is formed. The form general guides to action but are not the actual action itself. Strategies on the other hand are processes involving the proper timing and planning in order to create conditions that are suitable for the implementation of one's programme at one's own pace, taking into account the material conditions in order to change them. Whereas tactics are mere skillful procedures calculated to gain some end. Principles are therefore long term and are more philosophical and ideological; whereas strategies are more of medium term nature while tactics are actually flexible and short term as they are the tools utilised to achieve our objectives. In order to illustrate this point, let us take an example from a practical situation. As a principle, the democratic movement believes in a non-racial South Africa. The strategy it has adopted is that of opposing the government's constitutional plans. What the conference must now discuss are the various tactics

applicable to implement that strategy in order to achieve our overall principle of non-racialism and democracy. Many other examples could be quoted. It is important for our work that we understand this basic difference between principles on the one hand, and strategies and tactics on the other. It is only when we master this art that we will be able to be flexible in pursuing our objectives without abandoning our principles.

Coming back to the present position of the FRONT. The UDF is a young FRONT. The question of the unity and strength should be of underlying importance to everybody not only in this meeting, but to every democrat and freedom-loving person in South Africa. So that whatever strategy and tactic we apply, these should be weighed not only against our principles, but also against causing schisms, factionalism and cracks that would weaken its effectiveness and strength, while bolstering at attacks from both the left and the right.

In the present discussions continuing concerning the tactics to be adopted on the referendum which was supposed to have been called by the state and its quislings, and was to test the 'Indian' and 'Coloured' people's reaction towards the constitution, it has become clear that the state and its stooges have developed cold feet on this issue. Now PW Botha and his lackeys talk of going ahead with the elections, thus circumventing perhaps an embarrassing situation with regard to the referendum. Now that we shall be discussing the referendum issue, let us look at the crucial questions related to this issue, some of which are the following:

1. The Unity of the FRONT
2. Which tactic would best serve to enhance the Democratic Movement
3. Which tactic would best disorganise the state
4. The best way of preventing/obstructing the implementation of the states constitutional proposals

THE OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Looking at the short track of the UDF ever since the historic launching in Cape Town. It is necessary that we develop some broad operational principles, specially because a set of new conditions are created every day. In this regard, we need:

- a. To strengthen the structure and bond of the Front. Firstly at constituent member basis. Members should not only meet at council meetings, local campaigns on various issues should involve the majority of the constituent members with the working people spearheading the political campaigns.
- b. To intensify our campaigns and in the process we must develop our organisations while we spread and implant the UDF in all areas where no form of activity is taking place.
- c. To isolate the racist government from the people by embarking on an intensified awareness programme aimed at not only uncovering the empty promises of the state, but also at popularising our demands and the Democratic front, while we neutralise the position of reactionaries.
- d. We need to exercise utmost discipline especially now at this moment of unprecedented violent provocations from certain government

protected quarters. We must never allow our detractors and enemies to have reason to disrupt our work and programmes. We have a noble task of mobilising and organising our people into a formidable front that will be able to render the useless plans of the government's reform unworkable.

e. Lastly, we must be initiators and not only reactive. We must constantly study the unfolding political and economic situation so as to keep abreast with all the low powered tricks of the oppressive regime.

In conclusion, let us recall the words of Cabral, when he was addressing the United Nations Special Committee on Territories under Portuguese Administration, when he declared:

"We reject the idea of begging for freedom because it is incompatible with the dignity and sacred right of our people to be free and independent."

Let us therefore reaffirm our steadfast determination irrespective of the sacrifices involved to work tirelessly for a free and non-racial democratic South Africa.