

A The Arrests and Treason Charges

Following its examination of the arrests and charges of treason brought against sixteen of the UDF leaders, the National Executive Committee of the Front reached the following conclusions:-

1. That the treason trial is a means of reducing the efficiency of the UDF and its affiliates by depriving it of the daily performance of its competent leaders;
2. That the state is only prepared to accommodate the UDF as a weak organisation whose existence can be exploited by state propaganda agents as a sign that it is democratic and allows for public opposition to its policies;
3. That the state is avoiding overtly repressive measures such as banning and restriction orders, but instead criminalises anti-apartheid activists in order to give the international community a false impression that only law-breakers are punished;
4. That the detention of UDF leaders is intended to create an opportunity to build credibility for the unpopular Bantustan leaders, Black town councillors, members of the house of delegates and representatives;
5. That this trial will be used to further smear the UDF as a subversive and violent organisation as an attempt to isolate it from the people of South Africa;
6. That the arbitrary arrests together with mysterious violent attacks on the homes of UDF members are intended to intimidate the people away from associating with the UDF. And finally,
7. That because the UDF has already pronounced against participation in the State president's informal forum, there is a concerted effort to smash the Front in advance so that it cannot actively campaign against this sham forum.

From the above it can be clearly seen that the Nationalists are not earnest when they profess commitment to a peaceful and negotiated resolution to South Africa's problems. It is difficult to understand how a government that is offering Nelson Mandela and the ANC negotiations, if they abandon armed struggle, can simultaneously arrest and charge Archie Gumede and Mrs A. Sisulu (both presidents of the non-violent UDF) precisely for their non-violent demand for a peaceful change to democracy,

**B** Peaceful Change Now or Never

Since its inception the UDF has constantly called for a peaceful solution to the South African problem. We have never and shall never turn our backs on peaceful methods. What we reject most emphatically is for the Nationalist Party to unilaterally dictate the conditions and terms of such negotiations. In our 1983 letter to Mr P.W. Botha, we stated:

- i that a meaningful process of change must be based on the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other imprisoned leaders of the people;
- ii that the banned and restricted should be unbanned;
- iii that Oliver Tambo and all the exiled should be allowed to return home unconditionally, and
- iv that such Apartheid structures as bantustans must be dismantled to allow for a non-racial and democratic constitution to be worked out.

Whilst we hold no brief for the ANC we must make the point that any solution that excludes the participation of that organisation and its followers has no future. This is because such a settlement would not be terminating the present armed confrontation between the state and a growing portion of the country's population.

**C** We demand: "Release Our Leaders!"

Progressive people around the world have called for the "charging or release" of opponents to Apartheid. Most of those who have used and/or joined this call have done so in good faith, armed with an unquestionable commitment to the struggle against Apartheid. But we insist that the call should be for an unconditional "Release Our Leaders and All Opponents of Apartheid!"

In doing so the N.E.C. of the UDF draws attention to the fact that the present regime with its sweeping security laws has no legitimacy to rule over the people of South Africa because of its undemocratic origins. To call for the indictment of opponents of this codified racial order lends legitimacy to a social system that has long since been declared a crime against humanity by progressive nations of the world.

And insofar as the people of South Africa are the ones who shoulder the burden of the struggle against Apartheid, it is important for those who support this struggle to take the cue from the victims. This will make for better co-ordination and do away with conflicting demands.

**D** There is No Justice in Apartheid

The announcement that our leaders are being charged with treason brought sighs of relief in many international quarters as it was felt that the accused would be able to defend themselves. And at least one employee of the South African state went so far as

to claim that the accused would receive a fair and just trial before an impartial court. But we of the UDF find no solace in this notion for a number of reasons:-

1. The minority racist regime used its monopoly of political power to arm itself with sweeping racial and security laws and now arrests those who challenge these racial laws;
2. The judiciary in this country is appointed by the same men who pass the laws at issue and, it enforces these apartheid laws strictly;
3. In passing judgement on our leaders the courts will be applying laws which decree that opposition, even peaceful opposition such as the UDF is involved in, may be construed as treasonable behaviour and, therefore, a punishable crime;
4. The judiciary, without exception, consists of whites who perforce will uphold these laws. They have never in the past, nor do we expect in the future, held that any law is unjust. And by unjust we mean those laws which civilized nations throughout the world consider barbaric.

In the light of these and other considerations we cannot be reconciled to the thought and expectation of a fair and just trial for our leaders and, secondly, we insist that the present South African government, with its undemocratic origins and orientation has no legitimate right to put on trial and pass judgement on our leaders.