Mobilization, Conflict and Repression: The United Democratic Front and Political Struggles in the Pietermaritzburg region, 1983-1991.

BY

NGQABUTHO NHLANGANISO BHEBHE

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Historical Studies, University of Natal.

Pietermaritzburg July 1996.

DEDICATION

To My Family

I dedicate this thesis to my father R. Hlanganiso and to my mother K. Rawuwe. To my sisters, Nominenhle and Lindiwe, and my brothers, Duduzani, Dumile and Vumani, thanks for your patience and unwavering support.

ABSTRACT

In the eight years of its existence, from 1983 to 1991, the United Democratic Front had a major impact on the pace and direction of political struggles in South Africa. The UDF was a loose alliance of organizations, whose strength was determined by the nature of the organizations affiliated to it. This thesis explores the nature of the problems faced by the UDF in the Pietermaritzburg region, and how it sought to respond to them. Chapter one covers the period from 1976 to 1984. This chapter surveys the political context in which the UDF was formed, beginning with the Soweto uprising of 1976, and continuing with the growth of extra-parliamentary organizations in the late 1970s and early 1980s, leading up to the formation of the UDF in 1983. This chapter ends with emergence of organized extra-parliamentary activities in Pietermaritzburg in 1984. Chapter two assesses the period between 1984 and mid-1986. This was the time when the UDF activists began to mobilize in the region, and it was during this period that UDF structures were set up. This period also witnessed growing tensions between youth and parents, and between UDF and Inkatha supporters. The chapter ends when the state clamped down on extra-parliamentary activities by declaring a national state of emergency in June 1986. Chapter three assesses the period between mid-1986 and the second half of 1989. This was the period when the South African state and Inkatha came out in full force to suppress the UDF. Through the use of emergency regulations, the state detained and restricted UDF activists, and in February 1988 eventually banned organization. During this period, the UDF and Inkatha supporters were engaged in violent clashes. These struggles took on the proportion of a civil war in the region, particularly in 1987. However, political events took another turn in the second half of 1989, when extra-parliamentary organizations resurfaced and embarked on mass defiance campaigns. Extra-parliamentary organizations, organized these campaigns under the mantle of the Mass Democratic Movement. Chapter four starts by assessing the impact of the mass defiance campaigns and ends at the time when the UDF was officially disbanded in August 1991. These last two years were dramatic for the UDF, nationally and regionally. In Pietermaritzburg, immediately after a series of successful mass demonstrations, UDF activists began a programme of restructuring the

Front. The process was short-lived because in February 1990, when the South African government unbanned previously banned political organizations, including the UDF, African National Congress, Pan Africanist Congress, and others, the UDF had to begin to redefine its political role. Most UDF activists crossed over to the ANC, and in 1991 the leaders of the UDF decided to dissolve the organization. In the Pietermaritzburg region the UDF disbanded more quickly than in other regions, largely because of the particular problems that the Front had experienced in this region.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who made this project not only enjoyable but possible. In particular, my thanks go to Dr. Timothy Nuttall and Prof. John Wright who supervised me in this project. Their questions and comments helped to sharpen the text considerably. I would also like to thank the staff in the Historical Studies Department at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, for their encouragement. I mention with gratitude the always helpful encouragement of A. S Chetty, Sobhuza Dlamini, Peter Kerchhoff, Cassius Lubisi, Jorry Mohamed, Isaac Selepe and Jabulani Sithole, who followed this project from its beginning to its conclusion. I would also like to thank R. Maharaj at the University of Natal library for providing me with a dictaphone, the staff at the Natal Witness library, Radley Keys at the Democratic Party office who allowed me to use the party's Resource Centre, and the staff of the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Social Awareness (PACSA) who always welcomed me with open arms when I wanted to use their Resource Centre. Likewise I must gratefully acknowledge the help I got from all those I interviewed, friends, and students with whom I had informal discussions, especially Linley House students (1994-5) who gave me names of contacts.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC - African National Congress

ANCYL - African National Congress Youth League

AZACTU - Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions

AZAPO - Azanian People's Organization

AZASO - Azanian Students' Organization

BUF - Black Unity Front

COSAS - Congress of South African Students

CP - Conservative Party

CUSA - Council of Unions of South Africa

DET - Department of Education and Training

EDEYO - Edendale Youth Organization

FedSem - Federal Theological Seminary

FY - Forward Youth

ICA - Imbali Civic Association

IFP - Inkatha Freedom Party

IYO - Imbali Youth Organization

JORAC - Joint Rent Action Committee

KZT - KwaZulu Transport

MAWU - Metal and Allied Workers' Union

MDM - Mass Democratic Movement

NEC - National Executive Council

NEUM - Non-European Unity Movement

NF - National Forum

NIC - Natal Indian Congress

PACSA - Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness

PDA - Pietermaritzburg Democratic Association

PNAB - Port Natal Administration Board

PWV - Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging

REC - Regional Executive Council

RGC - Regional General Council

RMC - Release Mandela Committee/ Campaign

SABA - South African Black Alliance

SACP - South African Communist Party

SANCO - South African National Civic Organization

SANSCO - South African National Students' Congress

SASM - South African Students' Movement

SASO - South African Students' Organization

SAYCO - South African Youth Congress

SDU - Self Defence Units

SOYO - Sobantu Youth Organization

SSRC - Soweto Students' Representative Council

TGWU - Trade and General Workers' Union

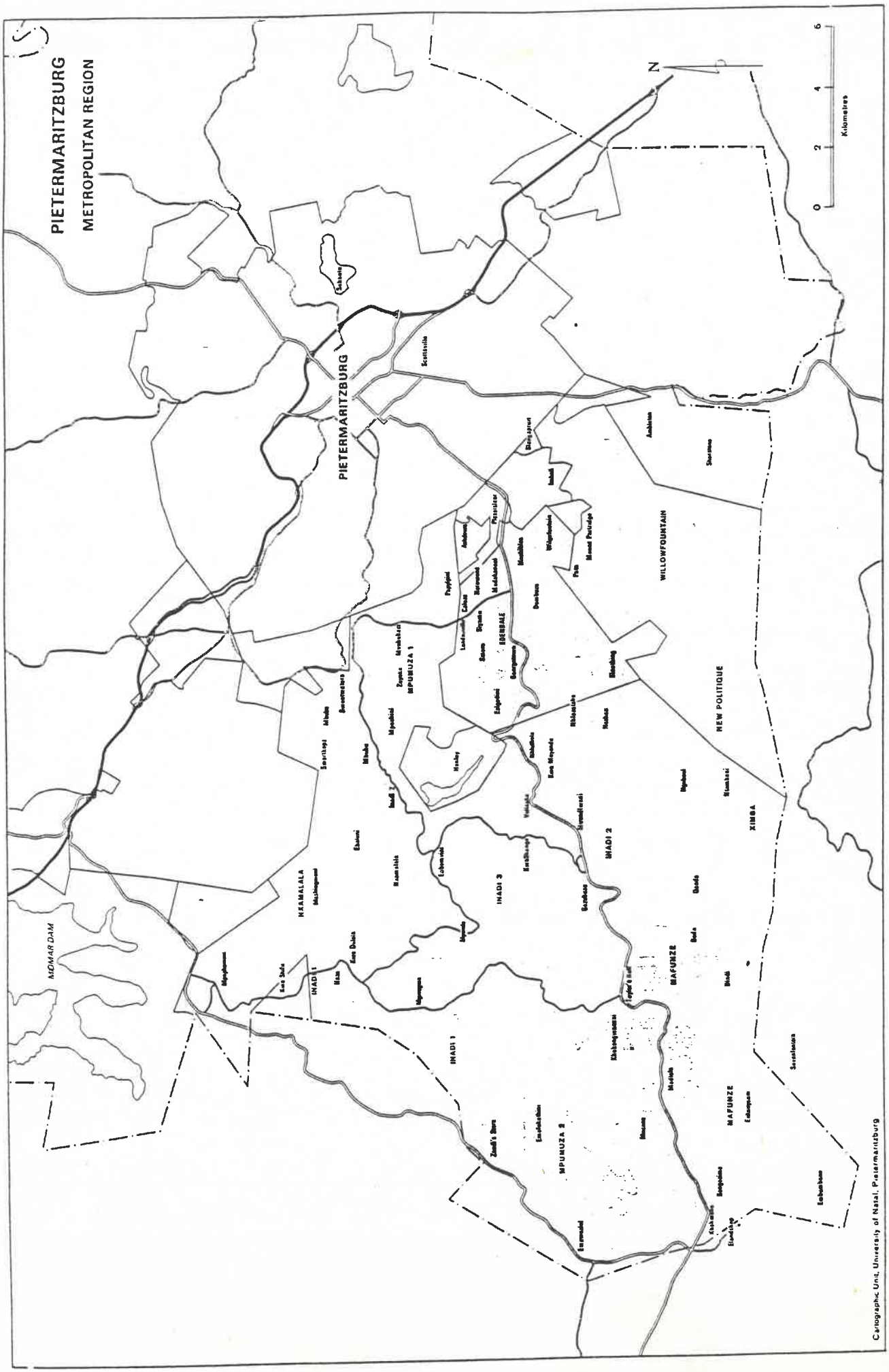
UDF - United Democratic Front

UNISA - University of South Africa

UNP - University of Natal Pietermaritzburg

UWUSA - United Workers' Union of South Africa

The Pietermaritzburg region



Cartographic Unit, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the role of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the political struggles in the Pietermaritzburg region from the time of its formation in 1983 to the time of its dissolution in 1991. The thesis starts with the Soweto uprising of 1976-77 to give an historical context in which the UDF was formed. The Soweto uprising marked a watershed in South African history. In 1976 active political resistance to apartheid, which had been suppressed by the state in the early 1960s, began to resurface. The uprising completely transformed the political environment.[1] It gave a new-found determination to black people, particularly the youth (young people at schools and school-leavers), not to accept South African society as unchanging or unchangeable, and it created a psychological readiness to act in this cause.[2] Although the Soweto uprising had no immediate impact in Pietermaritzburg, its aftermath was felt in every corner of the country. Events that followed the Soweto uprising culminated in the resurgence of black trade unions, community organizations, student movements, Black Consciousness organization, and the formation of the United Democratic Front in 1983.

The formation of the United Democratic Front specifically to oppose the National Party government's proposed constitutional reforms marked the beginning of an important phase in the politics of resistance in South Africa. The UDF was to be a `Front' of organizations that were, among other things, opposed to apartheid and to the bantustan policy, that aspired to be non-racial and democratic in organization, and that believed in mass action as a means of carrying political struggles forward. Essentially the UDF was an umbrella

---

[1] Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983), p. 330.

[2] John Brewer, After Soweto: An Unfinished Journey (Oxford, Clarendon, 1986), p. 413.

organization, which individuals could not join directly but only through affiliate organizations.[3]

The founding of the UDF at a time when the country was experiencing socio-economic upheavals led to the rebirth of a number of black organizations, and put hundreds of local community issues into a national political context.[4] Although the call for the formation of the UDF was first articulated in the Transvaal, its appeal rapidly became nation-wide. Former ANC supporters and people from various religious groups, trade unions, community groups, including those who were not comfortable with the tight ideological parameters of Black Consciousness, rallied to the UDF's banner.[5] From the time of its launching in August 1983, the UDF moved towards the Congress strand of politics.

The first few months of the UDF's existence were relatively trouble-free, except in the Transvaal region, where a number of UDF activists were detained for a short time and several meetings banned.[6] Those who were detained belonged to certain civic organizations and were involved in organizing either protest marches against the passing of the South African Constitutional Act or rent boycotts. It appears that the government was initially cautious in its approach to the UDF. Possibly the government wished to avoid a repetition of the worldwide condemnation that had followed the

---

[3] Steven McDonald, `A guide to black politics in South Africa', in Helen Kitchen (eds.), South Africa: Transition to What? (New York, Praeger, 1988), p. 47.

[4] Steven Mufson, Fighting Years: Black Resistance and the Struggle for a New South Africa (Boston, Beacon, 1990), p. 61.

[5] McDonald, 'A guide to black politics in South Africa', p. 47.

[6] Ibid, p. 55.

banning and detention of Black Consciousness leadership in 1977.[7] On the other hand, tolerance of the UDF, and allowing it to function freely, could be viewed as a demonstration of the government's new reformist politics.[8] But black aspirations quickly outran any possible programmes of government-led reform. The government's acceptance of the principle that there was a need to reform itself acted as a spur of hope for anti-apartheid activists that the iron grip of apartheid could be broken at last, and served to stimulate the resurgence of popular political opposition.[9]

A change in the government's attitude towards the UDF began in 1984-85. This was after the leaders of the Front began to take the initiative in leading protest campaigns and stayaways. Rent increases, bus fare hikes, election boycotts on the part of coloureds and Indians, protest against whites-only elections, enactment of the South African Constitutional Act in September 1984, black students' protests about lack of proper education facilities at their schools, and strikes by various black trade unions usually sparked the stayaways. Most of the protests in 1983-4 were concentrated in the Transvaal region; by 1985, most other regions had followed suit, including Pietermaritzburg. By 1985 state monitoring of the UDF was becoming stricter, as the Front was clearly winning support across much of the country, and becoming a stumbling block to the government's reform initiatives.

The 1980s also witnessed growing divisions within black communities. Terms like `collaborators' and `sellouts' were used by anti-apartheid activists to label those who in one way or another supported government policy, while the latter labelled anti-apartheid activists as `radicals'. An important topic in this thesis is the intensification

---

[7] Ibid.

[8] Thabo Thulo, `Violence in Pietermaritzburg', in Fatima Meer (ed.), Resistance in the Townships (Durban, Madiba, 1989), p. 203.

[9] Ken Owen, `A fundamental shift in South African politics?', in Kitchen (ed.), South Africa :In Transition to What?, p. 142.

of struggles between black communities in the Pietermaritzburg region from the early 1980s onwards. Pietermaritzburg was the scene of ferocious conflicts between the UDF and Inkatha. The thesis gives an analysis of how the struggles began, what intensified them, and how they were conducted. The struggles which took place in the Pietermaritzburg region in the 1980s can be analyzed from three angles. Firstly, they can be seen as conflicts between `collaborators' (Inkatha supporters) and `radicals' (UDF supporters). Secondly, they can be analyzed as conflicts between `radicals' and the state, and thirdly, they can be analyzed in broad social terms as conflicts between `progressives' and `reactionaries'. Unlike the situation in other regions, where the `radicals' were usually superior in strength to the `collaborators', in Pietermaritzburg and in other Natal regions the `collaborators' often matched the `radicals' in strength on the ground.

To some extent Inkatha supporters were acting in the cause of serving their (ruling) party and its administrative structure, the KwaZulu government. If Inkatha had successfully suppressed the UDF in the region, this would have been a source of relief for the South African government for two reasons. Firstly, it would have reduced the state's expenditure on checking the UDF in Natal. Secondly, the state would have felt confident that the `progressive' organizations in Natal would be permanently checked.

A central question that the thesis attempts to address is how the UDF managed to survived Inkatha and the state onslaughts. In this region the struggles took on the proportions of a civil war in 1987. Elsewhere in the country the emergency regulations had managed to silence extra-parliamentary activists.

This study also assesses the strengths and the weaknesses of the UDF in Pietermaritzburg's politics. The fact that the UDF was a Front (a loose federation), and not a tightly organized political party, led to several complications in its functioning. The thesis assesses the manner in which the UDF functioned in the region, the relationship between UDF national and regional structures, and between the organization and its affiliates. It explores the complications that were caused by the fact

that the UDF, whether at national or regional level, could not impose its policies on its affiliates. The affiliates could take up UDF campaigns in ways they thought suitable for their constituencies.[10] Although some UDF national or regional campaigns were successful, the word `united' at times seemed to be reflective of wishful thinking rather than of political realities.[11] I will analyze this weakness of the UDF through assessing the internal struggles that constantly kept those who were supposed to be in the leadership of the Front at loggerheads in the region.

The Front's organizational structure meant that its functioning was beset with problems. For instance, voting powers were not proportional to the size of the affiliates. Each affiliate had an equal say, whatever its size. This gave more power and voice to the student and youth groups that dominated the UDF. The Front also faced procedural difficulties in dealing with urgent situations. Its decisions were supposed to be reached by consensus, and as a result major decisions took a long time to be made, while the government, by contrast, could act swiftly and decisively.[12] With these difficulties and complications in mind, a question that the thesis tries to address is how effective the UDF was in handling problems that confronted it (combatting the emergency regulations). Was it the ineffectiveness of the Front in handling its problems that led to the emergence of the `cabal'? This was a group of UDF activists who allegedly took decisions on behalf of the Front in the region without consulting other members. Was the Front a real threat to the state or it was only a psychological threat? To answer these questions, the thesis assesses the manner in which the UDF managed to mobilize and organize its supporters in the region. The thesis also tries to analyze the extent to which the programmes of the Front were distorted by state agents through intimidation, and campaigns that were aimed at discrediting the UDF.[13]

---

[10] Mufson, Fighting Years, p. 58.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Stephen Davis, Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War (London, Yale University Press, 1987), p. 93.

Also important to note is that, although the UDF had a substantial number of supporters among Indians in the Pietermaritzburg region, this study will mainly focus on developments in the African townships. This is mainly because most of the struggles which characterized UDF politics in the region from 1984 to 1991 took place in African townships of the Edendale valley, Imbali, Sobantu, and others, and in the Vulindlela area. Analysis of the pattern of political struggles in the Pietermaritzburg region reveals that Imbali was the focal point. The struggle started in this township and then shifted to Sobantu and other townships, and to the peri-urban areas of Vulindlela.

However, some Indian activists contributed to struggles in the African townships by acting as role models in establishing street committees and civic organizations. Some Indian `comrades' even went to the extent of regularly visiting black townships and encouraging communities to form organizational structures. Among youth organizations, interaction between Indians and Africans was minimal. It was only a few Indian youth leaders, mainly at the University of Natal, who fully interacted with African youth organizations in the townships. Most of these Indian youth leaders came from the Bombay Heights Youth Organization.[14] A few whites interacted with the organizations in the townships. Otherwise most whites learned of the struggles in the townships only through media reports or when a maid, gardener or black factory worker did not attend work, or at times when there was a protest march in town.

There are few secondary sources that cover the subject of this study. As a result, it is largely based on interviews. I made efforts to interview key UDF activists in Pietermaritzburg region. However, some had left Pietermaritzburg, some I could not meet because of their busy schedules, and sadly some have died because of political conflict. I have checked my interviews as far as possible. Since the study focuses mainly on the UDF, I have not gone into detail about other organizations or groups in

---

[14] Author's interview with Jorry Mohamed (UNP, 28 May 1995).

the region that were not directly involved in conflicts with the UDF. This thesis therefore constitutes a preliminary study.

Detailed treatment of the thesis topic begins in 1984 because this was when the UDF began to organize and mobilize people in the region. Four chapters follow this introduction. The first chapter discusses the socio-economic and political context in which the UDF was formed. It develops a chronology from the 1976 Soweto uprising to 1984. The central issues discussed are the formation of radical student movements, the surge in black trade unionism after the report of the Wiehahn Commission of 1979, the social reforms after the report of the Riekert Commission in 1979, the Black Local Authority Act of 1983 and the Constitutional Reform Act of 1983, the economic recession of the early 1980s, the formation of the UDF in 1983, and the impact of these changes in the Pietermaritzburg region. The chapter ends when opponents of the government in the region were beginning to become actively involved in the politics of resistance in 1984. This was the period when youth organizations that later affiliated to the UDF were formed in the region, and high-school students began to participate actively in the politics of the Front. The increase in the number of radical youths is an important theme because the youth played a prominent role in UDF politics in the region. Youth and students (high school and university students nationwide from 1976, and in Pietermaritzburg from the 1980s) openly spoke out against the passivity of their parents, and this sparked generational friction. It was during this period that the UDF began to take a lead in organizing and mobilizing people in the region.

Chapter two begins with the formation of the UDF as a regional organization in the Pietermaritzburg area. The chapter explores how the UDF structures in Pietermaritzburg related to other UDF structures, particularly national ones. This chapter looks at the organizational aspects of the Front, focusing on how the Front mobilized people to support its cause. The areas that were exposed to UDF activities became far more politicized and militant than before. Imbali township is an example of where this `radicalization' occurred. The militancy and radicalism that took root in Imbali spilled over to Sobantu, Edendale and Vulindlela.

Chapter two also assesses the problems that the UDF faced in the region. It makes a critical assessment of the reaction of the state and Inkatha to the emergence of the UDF in the region. A detailed assessment of the state's role during the 1986 state of emergency is given. The relationship between the UDF and Inkatha is analyzed through examination of the education crisis that involved the student movements, and through analysing the struggle between Inkatha-vigilante groups and the Imbali civic association (ICA), a UDF affiliate. The chapter also looks at how Inkatha forged links with vigilante groups in the region and why the UDF became an opponent of these groups.

The emergence of COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Union) in 1985, and its role in shaping politics in the Natal Midlands, are also discussed in this chapter. COSATU's federal structure, like that of the UDF, served to instill among black workers a sense of their power as a united body. Labour had for the first time fashioned a national administrative structure, focusing workers' attention on apartheid as the ultimate source of shopfloor discontent.[15] Nevertheless, the federal, decentralized nature of COSATU imposed a political culture of negotiations and compromise that made the federation vulnerable in a turbulent situation like the one in Natal. No matter how urgent the matter at hand, decisions were slow in coming, dependent as they were on each major partner finding and representing its own union consensus to the executive.[16]

The chapter ends by highlighting how the 1986 national state of emergency managed to suppress most extra-parliamentary opposition in the region and in the country as a whole. UDF activists were arrested and detained, and some went into hiding. These actions taken by the state disorganized the Front. The year saw the imposition of a blanket of silence on extra-parliamentary organizations in the whole country. In the

---

[15] Davis, Apartheid's Rebels, p. 93.

[16] Ibid.

Natal Midlands, however, the paradox is that the new phase was marked by intensification of the struggles between the UDF and Inkatha.

The third chapter assesses the period between 1986 and 1989. The chapter covers the period from the state of emergency imposed on 12 June 1986 to the Mass Defiance Campaigns in late 1989. Late 1989 witnessed the resurfacing of extra-parliamentary activists with new vigour. This chapter also assesses the tactics adopted by the UDF, Inkatha and the state during the political struggles of the period in the Pietermaritzburg region. The UDF, Inkatha and the state followed several different strategies. On a number of occasions the UDF and Inkatha held peace talks. However, the talks failed because of differences in the views and interests of these two groups. UDF supporters often viewed proposals made by the state and Inkatha with suspicion, while Inkatha and state representatives, in the form of the police, viewed UDF proposals as `radical' demands (demands for revolutionary change).

When there was progress, the state intervened to scuttle the peace talks by arresting key UDF activists. The state continuously strove to suppress the UDF through deployment of `kitskonstabels', legislating measures to suppress UDF activity, and placing restrictions on some UDF activists, and detaining others. The chapter tries to explore how effective these steps were in suppressing resistance. It also looks at the ways in which they exacerbated political conflict. The chapter also assesses the role of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce in its attempts to achieve a peaceful solution among the warring parties.

Furthermore, the chapter explores UDF activities during this conflict, assessing whether the state and Inkatha weakened the Front or whether there were other factors that weakened it. Activities of UDF affiliates like the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) and the Release Mandela Committee (RMC) are assessed because they formed an important component of the Front's grassroots organization. The chapter also looks at the manner in which the Mass Democratic Movement (a loose alliance of progressive organization which emerged during the state of emergency years)

coordinated the mass defiance campaigns of 1989. These campaigns transformed the political scene in the region and even nationally. This chapter ends when the mass defiance campaigns began.

The fourth chapter begins at the time when the mass defiance campaigns were taking-off. The chapter assesses the impact and the aftermath of the mass defiance campaigns of 1989. The chapter looks at the release of political prisoners and the surge in political activities of extra-parliamentary. Also, the chapter assesses the restructuring process attempted in 1989 and 1990 by the UDF and SAYCO in the Natal Midlands. Furthermore, the chapter assesses the move by the South African government to meet the demands made to it by extra-parliamentary political organizations.

However, the government's unbanning of political organizations in February 1990 marked a turning-point for the UDF. It had to redefine its role in the new political context that came into being. The MDM disappeared without a formal decision being taken. The chapter examines in depth the relationship between the UDF and the ANC in the region. Also, this chapter analyzes the conflict in 1990 between the UDF-ANC and Inkatha supporters in the Edendale Valley, that culminated in what is now called the Seven Days War. Finally, the discussion focuses on the disbandment of the United Democratic Front after eight years in the politics of resistance.

CHAPTER ONE

`SAYING NO TO APARTHEID': FROM SOWETO TO THE FORMATION OF THE UDF

Introduction

This chapter will examine the historical context in which the United Democratic Front was formed on 20 August 1983. The upsurge of youth politics at the end of the 1970s is the obvious starting point because it marked the revival of resistance politics in several forms. These included the increased articulation of black political thought opposing apartheid, the emergence of a strong and politically militant labour movement, and a successful quasi-military offensive (on the part of liberation movements) that deprived the government of the control of the black townships.[1] The economic recession of the early 1980s intensified black political militancy. The recession that began to set in during the first quarter of 1982 not only undermined real wage levels, but also fuelled protest and resistance from a large sector of African people. This is because it limited the state's capacity to subsidize transport and bread prices, to finance housing construction and the provision of urban services, and to upgrade education and health facilities.[2] Furthermore, this black resurgence gathered momentum in the face of determined government efforts to squash it through repressive measures, and to undermine it through limited reforms, like accommodating individuals from the oppressed communities who were prepared to work with the authorities. The state tried to modernise apartheid through its reform programme, called `total strategy'. As Ken Owen argues, these reforms did not have the

---

[1] R. Hunt Davis, Apartheid Unravels (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1991), p. 2.

[2] Kumi Naidoo, `The politics of youth resistance in the 1980s: The dilemmas of a differentiated Durban', Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), p. 149.

envisaged effects, but instead `they acted as a spur of hope for the extra-parliamentary activists that the iron grip of apartheid could at last be broken.'[3]

The Soweto uprising marked a watershed in South African history. In 1976 political activities similar to those of the 1950s and 1960s, which repressive laws had silenced, began to resurface, but now with a more radical approach to protest and defiance. The uprising completely transformed the political environment.[4] It gave a new-found determination to African people, particularly the youth, not to accept South African society as unchanging or unchangeable, and it created a psychological readiness to act in this cause.[5] The patterns of resurgence varied from region to region.

The period from 1976 to 1983 witnessed several fundamental social changes. First it witnessed the collapse of the widespread belief in the white community that the Verwoerdian idea of apartheid would bring peace and security.[6] Secondly, it witnessed a much more substantial and sustained black challenge to white political domination. Thirdly it saw the first efforts by the ruling class to expand its base, through attempts to accommodate a black elite politically.[7]

---

[3] Ken Owen, `A fundamental shift in South African politics?', in Helen Kitchen (ed.), South Africa: In Transition to What? (New York, Praeger, 1988), p. 142.

[4] Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983), p. 330.

[5] John Brewer, After Soweto: An Unfinished Journey (Oxford, Clarendon, 1986), p. 413.

[6] Hermann Giliomee, The Parting of the Ways: South African Politics 1976-82 (Cape Town, David Philip, 1982), p. 10.

[7] Ibid.

The resurgence of black politics, 1976 - 1983

The Soweto uprising saw the emergence of new forms of protest. The passive resistance of the late 1950s was transformed into physical confrontation. The burning of the `dompas' was replaced by the burning of cars, homes, administrative offices, shops and beer halls. Soweto students were the engineers of the protest, which spread to all the Reef townships within a short time. There were outbreaks too in places far from the Reef and from one another, such as Nelspruit in the Eastern Transvaal, Jouberton township near Klerksdorp in the south-western Transvaal, Bothaville in the Orange Free State, Galeshewe near Kimberley in the northern Cape, Langa and Nyanga in Cape Town, and at the Universities of the North (Turfloop) and Zululand.[8] Students tended to be more organized than ever before, as they used their schools for assembling and debating political issues. Schools became laboratories and fortresses of resistance, providing raw political education to the pupils passing through them, and serving as focal points for physical mobilization.[9]

Also important to note is that after the 1976 uprising, two distinct groups of political organizations emerged among the youth. There were those who aligned themselves with the Congress tradition in the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), and there were those who belonged to the Black Consciousness camp in the Azanian Students Organization (AZASO), which was a student wing of the Black Consciousness political party AZAPO (Azanian Peoples Organization).

`Youth' as a word and as a political idea and category has raised some debate, for it is very difficult to define the exact ages of the people whom one could confidently call `the youth'. Several academics have written about the youth, among them J. Kane-Berman, K. Naidoo and J. Seekings, and their understanding and uses of the word in

---

[8] John Kane-Berman, Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1978), p. 2.

[9] Shaun Johnson, South Africa: No Turning Back (London, Macmillan, 1988), p. 96.

their works vary.[10] What is clear from their work is that in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising the youth formed a distinct sector of the population in terms of mobilization and organization. From the late 1970s the term `youth' was reconstructed by South African communities and it was imbued with liberatory intentions. The term cohered around those of a younger generation who were impatient with their parents' responses to apartheid.

This new generation of school students, who were toddlers at the time of Sharpeville, had not directly experienced the political trauma of the post-Sharpeville repression.[11] They were energetic in organizing and mobilizing themselves, and volatile when the state did not give attention to their demands or when the state tried to enforce repressive laws on them. For instance imposing Afrikaans as a compulsory medium of instruction, enforcing enrolment by age-group at schools, and preventing pupils from organizing protests led to protests at schools. This generation was the product of the alienated environment of the sprawling, impoverished townships, a system of education that was designed to train them for wage labour, an economy that could no longer provide them with sufficient job opportunities, and a culture of political quiescence that they had begun to reject.[12] They fought vigorously against anything that was associated with the apartheid regime.

---

[10] Kane Berman, Soweto: Black Revolt White Reaction; Kumi Naidoo, `The politics of youth resistance in the 1980s: the dilemmas of a differentiated Durban', vol.18, no 1. (1991); Jeremy Seekings, Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1993).

[11] Robert Price, The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa 1975-1990 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 49.

[12] Mark Swilling. `The politics of stalemate', in Frankel. T. et al. (eds.), State Resistance and Change in South Africa (Johannesburg, Southern, 1988), p. 4.

As the immediate cause of the uprising was the imposition of Afrikaans in Transvaal schools, its geographical impact was limited. In Natal, for instance, the imposition of Afrikaans was not an issue, and the province as a whole remained calm. The one exception was the University of Zululand, where the students participated in protests.[13] But the general psychological impact of the uprising should not be underestimated, as the period witnessed a dramatic increase in the numbers of students at various schools across the country who began to participate in the politics of resistance. The effects of this spilt over South Africa's borders. Some parents transferred their children to places that were politically `quiet', mainly to Natal and Swaziland. Students who had been in Soweto, or in other places that experienced the uprising, continued to preach the gospel of the Soweto uprising at their new schools. The exodus of students to schools elsewhere led to overcrowded classrooms and a lack of adequate teaching facilities, and this provided a stimulus for further protest.

As people became more politically aware they became even more rebellious, particularly the urban dwellers. The government became even more repressive. In 1977 various students bodies were banned. These included SASM (South African Student Movement), SSRC (Soweto Students Representative Council), and SASO (South African Students Organization). But the events of 1976 had shown the students how important it was to have structures which would articulate their particular grievances and enable them to mobilize against Bantu education and the injustices of the apartheid regime.

In April 1978, a new black consciousness organization called the Azanian People's Organization (Azapo) was formed.[14] In 1979 COSAS (Congress of South African Students) was formed to unite students across the country in their demands for free,

---

[13] Kane-Berman, Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction, p. 2.

[14] Kane-Berman, Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction, p. 2-6.

dynamic, compulsory and non-racial education for all.[15] In styling itself a `congress' it was self-consciously identifying itself with the Congress tradition of the ANC, and looking for political inspiration not to the recent past but fully a quarter of a century back.[16] Its focus on the `past quarter of the century' could be explained by the fact that COSAS was the first mass organization since the crushing of internal resistance in the early 1960s to embrace the Freedom Charter of 1955.[17]

The formation of youth organizations coincided with, and to an extent provided the impetus for, the growth of like-minded community organizations catering for a range of interests, including civic associations, religious organizations and trade unions.[18] Extra-parliamentary political organizations increased in strength and in numbers. With the legalization of African trade unions in 1979, black workers became influential in the politics of change in South Africa. Their workplace struggles were frequently connected with community campaigns, and so contributed to the development of community organizations outside the workplace.[19] These workplace and community struggles steadily consolidated a political culture that articulated the principles of non-collaboration with government institutions, of non-racialism, of democracy and mass-based direct action aimed at transforming urban living conditions and challenging white minority rule.[20]

---

[15] Ann Harries, The Child is Not Dead: Youth Resistance in South Africa 1976-86 (London, British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1986), p. 21.

[16] Johnson, South Africa: No Turning Back, p. 106.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 109.

[19] M. Swilling, `The politics of stalemate', in Frankel et al. (ed.), State Resistance and Change in South Africa, p. 91.

[20] Ibid.

With the upsurge in numbers of militant and independent black trade unions in the late 1970s, the state intervened. Two commissions were appointed, the Wiehahn Commission to investigate industrial relations, and the Riekert Commission to investigate the movement of black workers and to revise the influx control laws. The findings of the commissions were basically that the apartheid state needed to be restructured. The 1979 Industrial Conciliation Act was passed, aimed at trying to check the growing powers of black trade unions. The unions were to operate legally, but they were required to register officially and to disclose their sources of income. In response to the Riekert Commission findings,' `section 10' rights were extended, so that Africans could stay in `white' South Africa with their families if they were employed. Families that were not covered by `section 10' rights were not allowed to stay for longer than 72 hours in `white' areas without a permit.

The 1979 Industrial Act was amended in 1981. The new Act led to an increase in the numbers of black workers who joined trade unions, and dropped the most overtly racist aspects of previous legislation.[21] The effects of these industrial changes were that Black trade unions grew rapidly, with a 200% surge in membership between 1980 and 1983 (from 220 000 to 670 000).[22] These reform programmes led the National Party to split into two in 1982, with Dr. Andries Treurnicht leading the break-away, ultra-right wing, Conservative Party (CP).[23] In a speech during the budget debate in April 1982, CP members singled out the Labour Minister, Fanie Botha, for bitter criticism, pointing out that Botha and his labour legislation had alienated white workers and betrayed the NP's principle of protecting white workers.[24]

---

[21] Martin Plaut and David Ward, Black Trade Unions in South Africa (Nottingham, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1982), p. 12.

[22] Ken Owen, `A fundamental shift in South African politics', p. 52.

[23] Martin Plaut and David Ward, Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 12.

[24] Ibid.

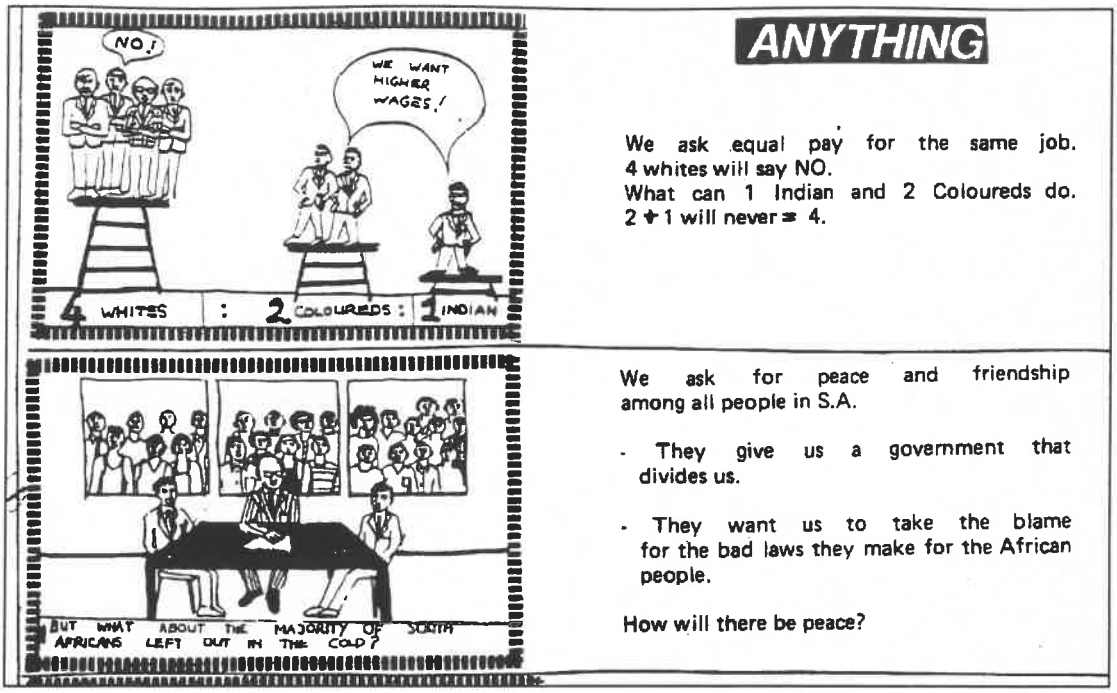
From the late 1970s, the state's reform programmes also aimed at co-opting `moderate' black individuals into the apartheid system. `Moderates' were those individuals who were prepared to work with the apartheid government. In the early 1980s P.W. Botha's National Party government tried to modernize the apartheid system by passing two Acts. The first was the Black Local Authorities Act, which came into effect on 1 August 1983. This act led to the establishment of township councillors in African townships. The Republic Constitutional Reform Act of 1983 followed, and came into effect in September 1984. This provided for the inclusion of Coloured and Indian representatives in a subordinate role in a tricameral parliament.[25] These reforms represented an attempt by the state to co-opt sections of the Indian, Coloured and urban African middle class.[26] The cartoon on the next page illustrates the imbalances and contradictions of the Constitutional Act of 1983.

With heightened extra-parliamentary activities on one hand and worsening socio-economic conditions on the other, the politics of resistance became very popular among Africans. Against this background, the formation of the UDF provided hope and a channel for political aspirations for many black people.

---

[25] Jeremy Seekings, `Trailing behind the masses: The UDF and township politics in the PWV Region 1983-4', Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), p. 45.

[26] Ibid.



[From Natal Indian Congress Newsletter, October 1983].

The formation of the United Democratic Front

In this tense political situation, on the 28 January 1983, the Natal and the Transvaal Indian Congresses called a conference in the Transvaal to oppose the creation of the South African Indian Council. The creation of this council was one of the packages which Indians were promised in the new Constitution. Rev. Allan Boesak, Assessor of the *Sendingkerk* branch of the Dutch Reformed Church and newly elected president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, called for the formation of a `united front' against the government's plans.[27] At the same meeting Boesak said that `the politics of refusal needs a united front, and there was a need to form some umbrella organizational structure to resist apartheid repression and reform.'[28] At this time resistance leaders felt that it was strategic not to form a political party, because

---

[27] Martin Meredith, In The Name Of Apartheid: South Africa in the Post War Era (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1988), p. 192.

[28] Ukusa, October 1983, p. 9.

political parties on the left stood a great risk of being banned by the government.[29] What was needed, in their opinion was a broader front, which could mobilize as many people as possible.

Three months after Boesak's call, regional branches of the United Democratic Front were launched. The launching of the regional branches was before the national launching, because the UDF was to be front of various organizations, as a result different organizations were to organize themselves before the launch of the national structure. The UDF was to be a Front of organizations and not an organization on its own. The organizational initiative was taken by various religious, civic, workers', students', and community organizations. When one organization thought of an initiative, the procedure was that it would consult other organizations, usually through the Local General Council (a regional UDF structure in which all affiliates were represented), and then the respective representatives would inform their members and discuss the proposals.[30] This was the general pattern in which the UDF took off.[31] The organizational role was not a responsibility assigned to any specific organization, but each affiliate had a duty to organize its members.

The first UDF branch was launched in Durban on 8 May 1983. On 24 May 1983 the Western Cape UDF was launched with 21 affiliated organizations, and on 31 May 31 organizations launched the Transvaal UDF branch. On 20 August 1983 about 15 000 people launched the United Democratic Front nationally at Rocklands Civic Centre, Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town.

---

[29] Author's interview with A.S. Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 October 1994).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

The UDF was therefore born out of a challenge to the regime at a specific moment on specific issues.[32] Its main perspective was rooted in the ANC's National Democratic Revolution, which emphasised the concept of people's democracy.[33] When comparing the Freedom Charter and the UDF Declaration (guideline document) there are some obvious similarities. When the UDF drafted its declaration, the Freedom Charter had been in existence for 28 years. Among other things, the Freedom Charter categorically condemned `apartheid' divisive rule and an undemocratic government. The Freedom Charter stated that `The People shall govern, All shall enjoy human rights, All national groups shall have equal rights'. The UDF declaration had similar demands; it was a declaration against the divisive and undemocratic reforms initiated by the government (The Koornhof Bills, The Constitutional Act). The declaration stated that the Front stood for `a single, non-racial, unfragmented South Africa and a democratic right, based on one man one vote for all South Africans'.[34]

By early 1984 there were just under 600 organizations affiliated to the UDF.[35] The regional breakdown was as follows:

	Stud	Yth	Trad	Womn	Civc	Relg	Polit	Othrs	Total
Tvl	12	16	8	7	30	11	9	16	109
Natl	8	15	5	3	28	4	11	7	81
W.Cap	23	271	2	20	27	4	9	4	360
E.Cape	3	13	3	2	2	6	-	4	33
OFS	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	47	316	18	32	87	25	29	31	585.[36]

---

[32] Mac Maharaj, `At a UDF farewell rally', South African Outlook (July - August 1991), p. 86.

[33] Author's interview with Blade Nzimande (UNP, 4 November 1994).

[34] See Apendix 1.

[35] Tom Lodge, `The politics of refusal,' Leadership South Africa, vol, 5. no. 1 (1986), p. 19.

[36] Ibid.

The figures for regional affiliation provided a somewhat misleading picture of the relative regional strength of UDF support. Events in 1985 and later were to demonstrate that the Eastern Cape was the area in which the UDF was strongest, while Natal, although being the first region to launch a UDF branch, presented the Front with the most problems.[37] The weakness of the Natal UDF relative to other regions, and the problems which it faced, are key themes to be explored in the following chapters.

The large number of youth organizations that affiliated to the UDF at its launching showed the frustration among young black people. The youngsters became very susceptible to the politics of resistance. Young black people, who were experiencing social and economic hardships emanating from apartheid rule, joined the UDF in great numbers. They saw themselves as having nothing to lose except perpetual bondage to the apartheid regime, unfair education with no prospects of jobs, and appalling living conditions. The figures above also illustrate the heightened politicization of urban blacks in the early 1980s.

After the launching of the UDF, protests, which were increasingly marked by confrontations between police and protesters, escalated on an unprecedented scale in many townships. It is important to note that the protests of 1983-4 were not directly organized by the UDF. It had only an indirect impact, in that people carried the banners of the UDF, sang songs which were associated with the UDF or the banned liberation movements, and shouted the slogans of the UDF. At this time, during the Vaal protests of 1983-4, Popo Molefe, the UDF secretary for the Transvaal region, observed that the UDF was `trailing behind the masses.'[38] This was probably an accurate reflection of the UDF's politics in the early stages of its existence. Initially, the UDF was an organization formed to take up national political issues which immediately and primarily

---

[37] Ibid.

[38] Jeremy Seekings, `Trailing behind the masses: The UDF and Township Politics in the PWV Region 1983-4', p. 93.

affected Coloured and Indian communities only.[39] From 1984 Indian and Coloured voters were to boycott elections that were intended to include them in the tricameral parliament.

The leadership of the UDF comprised people who were associated with the banned African National Congress. This brought quick popularity for the Front. Among its top officials were veterans from the Congress campaigns of the 1960s, such as Archie Gumede, a Durban lawyer, who served as chairman of the Release Mandela Committee; Albertina Sisulu, the wife of Walter Sisulu who had been imprisoned along with Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC; Helen Joseph, a former member of the banned Congress of Democrats, who had endured years of banning orders; Oscar Mpetha, a Cape Town trade union leader; and Nelson Mandela himself.[40] Government leaders were on record in claiming that the UDF was a front for the ANC's `Mission in Exile'. The leaders of the Front consistently denied any link with the ANC, mainly because they wanted to avoid suppressive measures which the government could have imposed on them, but the policies of the UDF were clearly charterist in orientation.

This call to `regroup' organizations under the umbrella of the UDF, also led to the `regrouping' of the `leftist' organizations under the umbrella of the National Forum, comprising various autonomous bodies which were aligned to Black-Consciousness ideologies. Its first gathering was at Hammanskraal in June 1983. Eight hundred delegates attended and they voted to adopt the Manifesto of the Azanian People Organization. The Forum, as its name suggests, did not constitute itself as an organization. It was a mechanism for consultation between existing Black-Consciousness organizations like AZAPO, AZASO, CUSA (Council of Unions of South Africa) and AZACTU (Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions). AZAPO was its driving force, and the intention of the Forum was to broaden AZAPO's base as the political vanguard of the 200 organizations affiliated to it, including various student

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] Meredith, In the Name of Apartheid, p. 193.

organizations, black political organizations, trade unions and pressure groups of varying strengths.[41]

The relationship between the UDF and NF was neither cordial nor politically hostile. Their `co-operation' was based on the perceived need to combine their different localised struggles and address social and political problems faced by the majority of South Africans, and ultimately to bring apartheid to an end.[42] AZAPO, the most powerful organization in the NF, attacked the UDF for being `soft' on issues such as capitalism, the role of the working class and the role of white liberals in the political struggles.[43] The NF rejected, as a bourgeois document, the Freedom Charter which the UDF seemed to be using as its guide, and it was critical of what it called `ethnic' organizations, i.e. organizations in the UDF such as the Natal Indian Congress.[44]

Once or twice the UDF and NF shared platforms in the name of the struggle against the evils of apartheid. One of those occasions took place in Johannesburg at a protest against the killing of students at the University of Zululand in October 1983. Four students had been killed and hundreds injured when members of Inkatha attacked students who had tried to stop Buthelezi from delivering a speech.[45] This is one of the incidents that marked the beginning of physical confrontation between UDF and Inkatha supporters in the Natal region. In short, the incident set a precedent for later physical attacks by Inkatha on perceived UDF supporters.

---

[41] Howard Barrell, `The UDF and NF: Their emergence, composition and trends' South African Review, vol. 2 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1984), p. 11.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Meredith, In the Name of Apartheid, p. 194.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Johnson, South Africa: No Turning Back, p. 376.

The relationship between the UDF and Inkatha was always tense. At its inauguration the UDF rejected Inkatha's overtures to join it, on the grounds that no organization participating in the bantustans or other apartheid institutions could affiliate.[46] Since 1975, when Inkatha had been established, Chief Buthelezi the president of the organization, had been trying to secure a popular anti-apartheid base of support. However the Soweto uprising marked a turning-point for Inkatha. As Paul Forsyth argues, the 1976 uprising clearly damaged Buthelezi's national political aspirations and sent him in search of the political security which could be provided by an alliance with other homeland leaders, and by the support of a white liberal constituency.[47] In October 1976, Buthelezi announced the formation of the Black Unity Front (BUF) along with fellow bantustan leaders Ntsanwisi (Gazankulu), Phatudi (Lebowa) and a variety of black professionals.[48] In January 1978 the South African Black Alliance (SABA) was formed; it comprised the Labour Party, the Indian Reform Party and Inkatha. At this time Buthelezi was trying to portray Inkatha as a party with `national' aspirations.

But by 1983 three factors had served to undermine Inkatha's popular appeal. First was the Soweto uprising of 1976, which eroded Inkatha's attempts to portray itself as a national liberation movement, as the students mobilized themselves under the banner of the banned ANC. The second development was Inkatha's split with the ANC in October 1979, after a meeting in London between Buthelezi and ANC delegates.[49] At this meeting Inkatha was apparently denied the right to act as the representative of the liberation movements by the ANC. Third was the impact of the economic recession and the growth of mass popular organizations such as COSAS, civic associations and the

---

[46] K. Gottschalk, `UDF, 1983-1991, rise, impact and consequences', in I. Liebenberg (ed.), The Long March, p. 192.

[47] P. Forsyth, `The past as the present: Chief A. N. M. G. Buthelezi's use of history as a source of political legitimation' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1989), p. 111.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

Black Consciousness movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The growth of mass-based popular organizations posed a threat to Inkatha's domination of African politics in Natal. In the early 1980s Buthelezi gradually moved from attempting to portray Inkatha as a `national' organization to openly portraying it as an `ethnic' organization, with its main base of support among Zulu-speakers in Natal and KwaZulu.[50] This shift was accompanied by increasing belligerence on the part of Inkatha towards its opponents, and its increasing use of physical force to silence these opponents.

The formation of the UDF in 1983, therefore, was another opportunity for Buthelezi to recapture national stature for Inkatha by seeking to align it with the UDF. At the opening of the Nodwengu museum in October 1983, Buthelezi condemned the proposed new national constitution as undemocratic.[51] But his attempt to take Inkatha into the UDF failed, partly because people had already started to protest directly against Inkatha's close links with the KwaZulu bantustan. In addition, as Keith Gottschalk argues, in 1983 Inkatha supporters outnumbered UDF supporters in Natal, and if they had been allowed to join the UDF they would have dominated it in the region. The two organizations had different approaches to emancipation from apartheid, both economically and politically. The UDF was a charterist organization in its outlook, while Inkatha had parted ways with the main charterist organization, the ANC, in 1979. The UDF was committed to opposing the establishment of councils in the townships, while Inkatha persisted in allowing its members to join such structures. From the UDF's perspective, the problem with the urban councils was that, even if they received full `local authority' status, they could wield such authority only within the framework of apartheid.[52] They had no power to challenge or change laws. For these

---

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., p. 154.

[52] Judy Seidman, Facelift, Apartheid: South Africa after Soweto (London, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980), p. 17.

reasons, most Africans labelled them as a `fraud', and boycotted them.[53] Working within the apartheid ambit, the councillors were required to administer the most unpopular laws, like the influx control regulations. Subsequently they became the `visible agents of the white government in the township, and a target of discontent as a body'.[54] In addition the UDF supported sanctions and revolutionary change, while Inkatha was against them. Economically and politically the two organizations had incompatible agendas, and for them to work together was practically impossible.

In Natal, the emergence of the UDF threatened Inkatha's claims to leadership, pushing its tolerance of opposition beyond its limits, forcing it to resort to physical means as a way of restraining opposition.[55] Not only did the UDF compete for the same membership as Inkatha, but it also aimed to organize support in Natal in Inkatha's `reserved Zulu constituency', i.e. in a political space which Inkatha leaders saw as belonging to the Zulu `nation'.[56]

Indian organizations played a vital role in organizing UDF affiliates, particularly in Natal. The Indian community was in a much better position to organize themselves than were Africans. The Natal Indian Congress was still led by the people who had been responsible for reviving it in 1971, Mewa Ramgobin and George Sewpershad being two of the best known.[57] In the 1970s and 1980s, the state's repressive measures had not fallen as harshly on Indian organizations as on their African counterparts.

---

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., p. 18.

[55] Author's interview with Blade Nzimande (UNP, 5 October 1994).

[56] Nkosinathi Gwala, `Political violence and the struggle for control in Pietermaritzburg', Journal for Southern African Studies, vol. 15, no. 3 (1988-9), pp. 506-524.

[57] Tom Lodge, `The politics of refusal', Leadership South Africa, vol. 5, no. 1 (1986), p. 22.

The struggles between Inkatha and `progressive' organizations retarded the growth of political organizations in Natal. This enhanced the role played by the relatively protected Indian activists who successfully organized affiliates to the Durban Housing Action Committee.[58] It also helps to explain why the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) played such an important role in UDF politics at the regional level in Natal.[59]

In Durban, township residents were mobilised by UDF activists to form the Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC). JORAC was formed in early 1985 by residents of Lamontville, Chesterville, Shakaville and Hambanathi. Their main objectives were to spearhead resistance to rent hikes and, later, incorporation into KwaZulu by the Port Natal Administrative Board (PNAB), in defiance of Buthelezi.[60] Township administration was changed from Durban `white city' authorities to KwaZulu authorities, and some residents were unhappy about the move. The resistance in these townships to the incorporation into KwaZulu led to fighting between Inkatha and UDF supporters, and within a short space of time almost the whole Natal region was embroiled in similar conflicts. Durban townships were the first to be engaged in political struggles in the Natal region. Some of the factors contributing to this were the existence of large black townships (KwaMashu and Umlazi), where students organized protests against inferior education in the early 1980s. The repressive measures that the KwaZulu government used in the early 1980s to clampdown on the protests compelled students to come together and organize themselves for resistance. Buthelezi warned KwaMashu students who were participating in the 1980 school boycotts that they were `political riff raff' who were throwing down a gauntlet to Inkatha and would end by having their skulls cracked.[61] Although these political struggles in Durban in the early 1980s did not affect

---

[58] M. Swilling, `The UDF and township revolt', in W. Cobbett et al. (ed.), Popular Struggles in South Africa, p. 95.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Fatima Meer, Resistance in the Townships (Durban, Madiba Publications, 1989), p. 133.

[61] Johnson, South Africa: No Turning Back, p. 368.

the Pietermaritzburg region, they set a precedent for UDF-Inkatha conflicts in the Natal region as a whole. In Pietermaritzburg, these conflicts commenced in 1984.

Political conflict in the Pietermaritzburg region in the early 1980s

The upsurge of political struggles in South Africa did not take the same form in every region. Pietermaritzburg had its own particular dynamics. The impact of the Soweto uprising was only psychological (there were no demonstrations but people became aware of the grievances that had led to students' protests). Furthermore, the civic and youth protests of the early 1980s did not immediately come to the fore as compared to the other regions, for instance the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) and the Eastern Cape.

When examining the roots of political struggles in the post-Soweto era in the Pietermaritzburg region, the formation of the D.C.O. Matiwane Youth League is an obvious starting-point. This body was formed in 1980 at a meeting at the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre.[62] The Youth League was named in honour of David Cecil Oxford Matiwane, who lived at Willowfountain and was known for his dedication to the liberation struggle.[63] On anniversaries like those of the Sharpeville massacre on March 21, and the Soweto uprising on June 16, Matiwane used to walk from his home to Pietermaritzburg city centre carrying a cross and chains to signify the perpetual oppression of black people.[64]

---

[62] Jeremy Seekings, Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1993), p. 41.

[63] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 September 1994).

[64] Ibid.

The main activities of the League were to organize social activities for the youth and to provide a forum for political debate.[65] Together with Matiwane himself, it organized commemoration services on the days which had importance in the history of the struggle for liberation. The League focused more on developing leadership than on mobilizing mass support.[66] Among future leaders whom it produced were Sipho Shezi, Ben Martins Dikobe, Andile Hlenge, Sithabiso Mahlobo and the Gqubule sisters.[67] When Matiwane died in 1984, there was a big funeral service. Prominent UDF members came to Pietermaritzburg, among them Victoria Mxenge, a member of the UDF executive in Durban, and the wife of the political activist Griffths Mxenge who had been assassinated in 1981.[68]

After Matiwane's death the Youth League plunged into chaos. The police raided its offices at the Lay Centre, as well as the homes of members. Illegal firearms were found at both places, and the entire executive was either detained or prosecuted.[69] Some members of the league became state witnesses in court, and others fled the country.[70]

In 1982 Sobantu Youth Organization (SOYO) was formed by youths from Sobantu township. SOYO was born out of a crisis relating to an increase in rents and bus fares. The increases in rents by the Natal Drakensberg Board (the body in charge of the township), which was followed by the announcement of bus fare increases, compelled a number of Sobantu residents to form an organization which could channel complaints

---

[65] Seekings, Heroes or Villains?, p. 41.

[66] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1995).

[67] Author's interviews with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995) and Ahmed Bawa (UNP, 22 June 1995).

[68] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 September 1994).

[69] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 6 June 1995).

[70] Ibid.

to the relevant authorities. People from Sobantu were receptive to change and easier to organize than in other townships in Pietermaritzburg for several reasons. Sobantu Village had been founded in 1928 and had gradually increased in size until 1954, when the government froze further expansion indefinitely.[71] Sobantu had been a predominantly ANC-supporting area in the 1950s and 1960s; in the 1980s a number of people who had served long prison terms on Robben Island from the region were from Sobantu. These were people like Moses Mabhida, Azalia Ndebele, and Sipho `Matshayina' Xulu. This provided the township with a proud history of having residents who were fighting in the liberation struggle.[72] Research conducted in 1989 by Napier and Mthimkhulu found that most of the residents of Sobantu had been there since the 1950s and 1960s.[73] The township was also unique in having one high school, one lower primary school, and one Anglican Church, and this promoted a sense of solidarity. People in the township had the opportunity to know one another from childhood to adulthood. With the revival of charterist organizations in the 1980s, residents joined without hesitation because of their past association with the mother of the charterist organizations, the ANC.

Between 1982 and 1983 a number of people in the Pietermaritzburg region began to question the legitimacy of township councillors. Discontent had started simmering in the townships of Ashdown and Sobantu in 1982-3 after rent increases had been approved by councillors without prior consultation.[74] The Sobantu township councillors resigned

---

[71] Heather Peel, `Sobantu Village: An administrative history of a Pietermaritzburg township 1924-1959' (unpublished Honours thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1987), p. 120-121.

[72] Author's interviews with Lungisani Kunene (UNP, 20 April 1995), Jabulani Sithole (UNP, 20 March 1995) and Vis Naidoo (UNP, 6 June 1995).

[73] Clive Napier, `Pietermaritzburg's Sobantu village: A case study of control and violence in a Natal township' (unpublished paper, Department of Development Administration and Politics, University of South Africa, 1989).

[74] Radley Keys, `Chronology of the Pietermaritzburg violence', Work in Progress (March 1988), pp. 3-4.

because they said they were increasingly becoming nothing but rubber stamps. Their Ashdown counterparts complained that they were toothless bulldogs, and that they were merely called an Advisory Council, which could not change or challenge any bylaws and regulations.[75] The Edendale Advisory Board had a similar complaint, and its members also resigned. Edendale was unlike other townships in the Pietermaritzburg region in that it was not under the direct control of the government.[76] Tenants in Edendale reported their grievances direct to their landlords. Also, because of the absence of government-controlled local structures, protest and defiance campaigns which were experienced elsewhere in the early 1980s had minimal impact in Edendale.

In May 1983, at a conference organized by the Anti-South African Indian Council in the Newholmes Hotel in Pietermaritzburg, teachers, social workers, students, youth, religious and community leaders representing about forty-two organizations representing all racial groups came together to discuss social and political problems that they were facing.[77] At this historical meeting a Committee of Concern was formed, with R. Harku, a former teacher, being elected acting chairperson.[78] Most of the organizations that were represented were from Indian areas, as a number of civic organizations had been launched in Indian areas by Anti-South African Indian Council activists who were mobilizing the Indian communities to boycott the government-proposed tricameral parliament.

The Committee of Concern organized two workshops (at the Nizamia Muslim Society and at Ubunye House in the Pietermaritzburg city centre) at which community leaders and experts who understood the government plans (the Constitutional Bills and the

---

[75] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 October 1994).

[76] Nkosinathi Gwala, `Political violence and the struggle for control in Pietermaritzburg', pp. 506-512.

[77] PACSA, UDF folder: Committee of Concern, Newsletter (October 1983).

[78] See Appendix 3.

Black Authorities Bills) could educate the members on the government intentions. After listening to Advocate Zac Yacoob's report on the work of the UDF, the Committee of Concern decided to affiliate to the UDF.[79] Members of the Committee of Concern were amongst the 15000 people at the UDF rally in Cape Town on 20 August 1983. They took with them declarations of support for the UDF from 42 organizations in Pietermaritzburg.[80]

When township councillors in Sobantu and Edendale resigned, Imbali became the only township which continued operating with an increasingly discredited Township Council structure. The Township Council had been established in 1977, under the name `African Liaison Committee' to help the City Council to administer the township.[81] With potentially explosive problems that authorities were failing to address, like rent increases, inadequacies of drainage systems, lack of electricity, and shortages of telephones, the authoritarian township councillors became a target of complaints and protests. Furthermore these problems fuelled political activity among the youth. Although two prominent councillors of Imbali resigned in August 1983, new elections were held the following month and the Township Council continued to function.

In October 1983, only three of the six wards were contested, with a total of 248 votes being cast.[82] The councillors who came to office later played very important roles in political strife in the region. They all became Inkatha supporters, and several were allegedly involved in a number of killings in the following years. The most important figures were Patrick Pakkies from Ward One and Abdul Awetta and Ben Jele from

---

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Mark Butler, et al. Imbali (Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal Pietermaritzburg, 1993), p. 12.

[82] J. Aitchison, M. Butler and A. Harley, Imbali (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Centre for Adult Education, 1993), p. 155.

Ward Four. Jele had actually lost the election to Awetta, but he later became prominent in Imbali because of the role he played as an Inkatha leader.

On 30 October 1983, in the same month as the township election in Imbali, about 3500 people gathered at the Lay Ecumenical Centre in Edendale in one of the biggest political gatherings held in the city since the 1960s.[82] Its purpose was to mark a `people's weekend' called by the national UDF to show opposition to the proposed constitution. At this meeting the second office of the UDF in the Natal region was opened at the Lay Centre, the first having been opened in Durban. This was just before the referendum in which white voters were asked to vote `yes' or `no' for the proposed new constitution. The message which was given by the UDF at the meeting was that `we want to control our own lives and we reject the white referendum, the constitutional act and the Koornhof plans.'[83]

October 1983 marked a turning point in UDF politics in the Pietermaritzburg region. It was the first big gathering of UDF supporters held in Pietermaritzburg. No elected officials were put into office nor were UDF structures established at that occasion. Activists who worked at the Lay Centre were among other things selling UDF materials (like T-shirts), and distributing information from the Durban office and from the UDF national executive.[84] But the opening of the Lay Centre office was important in that for the first time in the region UDF activists had a place where they could meet and obtain information pertaining to the Front's activities. On the other hand, the launching of UDF offices in the region aroused further tensions between UDF and Inkatha supporters. This rift developed into fierce struggles between the supporters of these two organizations in the following years. The following chapter will explore how these struggles started, and the role of the UDF in the struggles.

---

[82] Natal Witness, 31 October 1983.

[83] PACSA, UDF folder: UDF Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 3 (October 1983).

[84] Author's interview with A. S. Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 October 1994).

CHAPTER TWO

AT THE CROSSROADS: TRANSFORMATION AND REPRESSION, 1984-1986

Introduction

Although some people saw the holding of a `people's weekend' at the Edendale Ecumenical Lay Centre in October 1983 as marking the launching of the Natal Midlands UDF branch, there were no UDF structures established on that occasion. The Committee of Concern, the organization that took the signatures from Pietermaritzburg organizations to the UDF launching in Cape Town, continued to represent the Front. This continued until March 1985, when the UDF established executive structures in the Natal Midlands region. The establishment of these UDF structures was done by transforming the Committee of Concern.

From 1983 to late 1984 the UDF was fighting at a national level to stop the implementation of the new constitution and the related Koornhof Bills. When the government went ahead in 1984 with enacting the constitution, the strategy of the UDF had to change. Organizations identifying themselves with the UDF (or charterist tradition) began to take more militant action to oppose the government. From 1983, although the ANC was still banned, it became a focus for opposition forces through progressive organizations that included the UDF. The demands for Nelson Mandela's release from prison became a central unifying call for the exiled ANC, and for both the external and internal anti-apartheid movements.[1] On the other hand the government had its defined reform policy within which it wanted the UDF to operate. From 1985 the state reacted to the Front with

---

[1] William Beinart, Twentieth-Century South Africa (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 234.

repressive measures. The political situation was at a crossroads, and the UDF was compelled by circumstances to transform its structures so that it could adapt to the changed situation.

In Pietermaritzburg the year 1985 marked the beginning of the `unofficial war', as Kentridge puts it.[2] It saw the beginning of conflicts between pro-UDF campaigners, who championed resistance to government institutions, and Inkatha supporters, who felt that bus and school boycotts, as well as stayaways and consumer boycotts, were being imposed on people. In return, Inkatha pressurized the same people to obey its organization's policies.[3] The Congress movement (consisting mainly of UDF-affiliated organizations) and its militant youth met strong political resistance from Inkatha.[4] The KwaZulu homeland structure and the central state came together to `normalise' the situation.[5] This meant expelling, and silencing the so called radicals in the region. The years 1985-6 witnessed the intensification of Inkatha supporters' campaigns to remove radical youth from the townships of Imbali and Ashdown.[6] It was also during this time that

---

[2] Matthew Kentridge, `Pietermaritzburg under the knife', South African Outlook, no. 1 (1990), p. 233.

[3] Khaba Mkhize, `Reporting the violence: an insider's problem' (unpublished seminar paper, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, April 1988), pp. 3-4.

[4] The Congress movement consisted of organizations which identified or aligned themselves with the banned African National Congress.

[5] Ari Sitas, `Political violence in Southern African: Historical, comparative and contemporary perspectives' (unpublished seminar paper, St. Antony's College, Oxford, 25-27 June 1991), p. 3.

[6] M. Butler, et al., Imbali (Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1991), p. 161.

Pietermaritzburg witnessed a shift of the focus of UDF politics from Indian areas to the black townships of Edendale, Imbali, and Sobantu and to the peri-urban areas.

Nationally, detention and restriction measures imposed by the state on UDF activists during these two years forced the organization to function virtually underground, although it was still legal.[7] It had to survive by changing its tactics and strategies. In Natal, having to deal with Inkatha on one hand and the state on the other, the UDF faced a formidable task. By seeking to mobilize and organize school pupils, the UDF situated the educational struggles within a strategy of challenging apartheid. UDF activists sought to succeed in their plan through mobilizing and politicizing young people. Imbali schools were the key points of focus. Another important event in the mobilization and organization of UDF support in the Pietermaritzburg region was the Sarmcol strike in 1985. This marked the beginning of the emergence of an organized labour movement in the region. Labour movements came to combine their workplace struggles with community struggles, and this helped to strengthen the UDF. The formation of Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in December 1985 marked the increasing involvement of workers' organizations in the politics of the UDF.

This chapter ends with the imposition of a national state of emergency on 12 June 1986. Mushrooming extra-parliamentary activities were confronted by the enormous power of the state. Some activists went underground, some were detained and some were restricted. The state imposed a blanket of silence on extra-parliamentary organizations. This totally changed the functioning of the UDF.

---

[7] Jo-Anne Collinge, `The United Democratic Front', South African Review (Johannesburg, Ravan Press), vol. 3 (1986), p. 248.

Towards establishing UDF structures in Pietermaritzburg

After the Edendale Ecumenical Lay Centre gathering of October 1983, the Committee of Concern organized a mass meeting to launch the UDF million-signature campaign in the city. The million-signature campaign aimed to mobilize people against the implementation of the South African Constitutional Act. This meeting took place on 17 March 1984 at the Lotus Hall, where local residents signed a petition that rejected the new constitutional proposals.[8] The meeting marked the take-off of the million-signature campaign in the Natal Midlands. Speakers at this gathering were Patrick `Terror' Lekota (the National UDF Publicity Secretary), Jerry Coovadia and Virgil Bonhomme from Durban, and Simon Gqubule, John Makhathini and Simon Motala from Pietermaritzburg.[9] There was a mixture of African and Indian speakers, probably to reflect the official non-racialism of the UDF, and also because the campaigns were centred around issues that directly affected these groups. This interregional exchange of speakers was what Jo-Anne Collinge has called the UDF's `road-show style'.[10] The million-signature campaign was not a success nationally, as the Front failed to attain its set figure. Partly this was because of police harassment and confiscation of sheets of signatures.[11] However, the campaigns were significant in that for the first time they provided township activists with a focus for door-to-door organization.[12] By mid-1984 approximately 230 000 signatures had been collected

---

[8] Natal Witness, 18 March 1984.

[9] PACSA, UDF folders: UDF Newsletter (March 1983), p. 4.

[10] Collinge, `The United Democratic Front', pp. 240-250.

[11] Nigel Worden, The Making of Modern South Africa (London, Blackwell, 1994), p. 129.

[12] M Swilling, `The UDF and township revolt', in W. Cobbett and R. Cohen (eds.), Popular Struggles in South Africa (London, James Currey, 1988), p. 101.

nationally.[13] The breakdown was as follows: Western Cape 90 000, Transvaal 40 000, Natal 40 000, Eastern Cape 20 000, Border 30 000 and other regions 10 000[14]. The figure for Natal was equal to that for the Transvaal. This could have been because state repression was concentrated in the Transvaal. Police harassment of political activists was more intense in the Transvaal than in Natal. The state confiscated sheets of signatures, and detained and restricted political UDF activists. Also, some civic organizations in Soweto refused to participate in the million-signature campaign.

After the million-signature campaign, the next UDF mobilization campaign in the Pietermaritzburg region was when Piet Koornhof, the Minister of Cooperation and Development, visited the region. On 21 August 1984 he came to Imbali to install the township council, to be led by Patrick Pakkies as mayor.[15] On the eve of the minister's visit, the Imbali Youth Organization (IYO), a UDF youth affiliate under the leadership of S'khumbuzo Ngwenya, organized a meeting for youths and students. The purpose of this meeting was to prepare for activities that the students had to carry out the following day.[16] The members of the IYO went to every school in Imbali, organizing students to go and protest against the installation of the township councillors.[17] The following day students went to barricade the roads leading to Imbali Hall, but the police took them by surprise and brought Dr. Koornhof to the hall in an ordinary car while the students were expecting a luxury car. When the students discovered his presence, they went inside to disrupt his

---

[13] PACSA, UDF folders: Report of the UDF National Executive Meeting held at Cape Town on 1-2 June 1984.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Butler, et. al., Imbali, p. 19.

[16] Author's interviews with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995) and Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[17] Echo, 30 August 1984.

speech, and he was forced to cut it short. The security police responded by firing tear gas, which drifted into the hall and assisted in disrupting the meeting.[18]

This incident had important practical results. It marked a success for the Imbali Youth Organization in organizing students. For the first time students in Pietermaritzburg had challenged the security police with the `toyi toyi'. From that day many students became increasingly involved in UDF politics. The Congress of South African Students (COSAS) became active at various schools in Pietermaritzburg.[19] The incident marked the beginning of a new phase in mobilizing students to take part in the Front's activities. The students provided the base that the UDF was looking for. The core of the UDF leadership in Pietermaritzburg was to become dominated by students and teachers.[20] In addition, the youth organizations that emerged in 1984-5 around Pietermaritzburg, and in whose formation the IYO played an important role, adopted a different approach from the youth organizations that had operated in the early 1980s. Where the D.C.O Matiwane Youth League had concentrated on leadership development (training activists in leadership skills), the new youth organizations embarked on mass mobilization and organization.[21]

The Koornhof incident also affected relationships between some parents and youth. Most parents who were present at the Imbali Community Centre were embarrassed and annoyed by the students' behaviour during the occasion. Students protested near where

---

[18] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[19] Ibid.

[20] Author's interview with Blade Nzimande (UNP, 5 October 1994).

[21] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

the parents were waiting for Koornhof, and they upset pots of prepared food.[22] A group of parents who felt that they should not let children control them set about reviving a vigilante group called `Oqonda'. The term `vigilante' before the mid-1980s referred to a member of a group trying to prevent crime in the community. These groups existed in Ashdown, Imbali and Edendale. From the mid-1980s its meaning gradually changed. UDF supporters began to associate the vigilantes with a group of people who were conservative politically and aligned to reactionary forces or state agencies.[23] In Natal the term became applied to Inkatha supporters. Because of the common interests that Inkatha and the vigilante groups shared in Natal, they forged a relationship to work together. Inkatha was concerned with maintaining the patriarchal and hierarchical values which it presented as traditional aspects of African culture, while the vigilante committees in the region were concerned with maintaining Zulu culture and respect for elders.[24] As Inkatha supporters and the vigilante groups found common ground, they began to forge links with the aim of disciplining the youth. In the process they became enemies of UDF-affiliated youth organizations. Because the youth constituted the largest constituency of the UDF, the hostility of the vigilantes and of Inkatha ended up being directed at all UDF supporters.

Um . . interesting explanation

---

[22] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 7 October 1994).

[23] Author's interviews with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994) and Masibu Majola (Community Care Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 9 September 1994).

[24] C. McCaul, `The wild card: Inkatha and contemporary black politics', in P. Frankel, N. Pines and M. Swilling (eds.), State Resistance and Change in South Africa (Johannesburg, Southern Books, 1988), pp. 158-9; Author's interview with Gcina Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 15 October 1994).

In the townships of Imbali and Ashdown, `Oqonda' had existed previously as a `community policing group', together with another group called `Imbokodo ebomvu'.[25] Previously `Oqonda' were known by people to be a community-oriented group that was not linked to any political organization.[26] Some people saw `Oqonda' as consisting of elders who were trying to inculcate traditional values, particularly respect for elders on the part of the youth. Most parents were becoming worried about the way in which traditional values were fading away.[27] Unlike the previous `Oqonda', the groups which emerged in the mid-1980s aimed specifically at inculcating `discipline' among the youth.[28] By discipline they meant that younger people should continue to be subordinated to elder people. `Oqonda' objected to anything done in the community by the youth without their consent or that of other elders. Culturally or traditionally, in many African societies any person who is not yet married in the community is perceived to be a child who should obey the elders. The relationships between `Oqonda' and official law enforcement agencies before the mid-1980s is not clear; it seems as if the police acknowledged the existence of these groups but did not act against them. People whom `Oqonda' disciplined did not lay charges with the police.

---

[25] Author's interview with Masibu Majola (Community Care Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 9 September 1994). `Oqonda' was a name take from the word `ukuqonda' meaning to be straight. The vigilantes claimed to discipline those who were going astray by bring them into the main stream of `proper values'. `Imbokodo Ebomvu' literally means a `red grindstone'. Usually this term is used by some Zulu speakers to refer to police cars because of the red reflecting light that they have on their roofs.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 8 June 1995).

The politics of resistance and revolution had no home for the `Yes, father' type of person which some parents wanted the youth to be. Those who saw themselves as belonging to the anti-apartheid `youth' movement had to demonstrate this through their behaviour; they had to show that they were at war with the apartheid system. In a war situation there is no compromise; to win the battle you have to incapacitate your enemy or destroy him if possible. `Bayinyove', meaning `they should break down things or destroy them', became a very popular term among the youth in the 1980s.[29]

Although the main enemy was the apartheid regime, it took time for the struggles in the region to focus in that direction. Form 1985 to 1991 the UDF in the region was preoccupied with struggles against Inkatha. This sapped its ability to become a strong organization in terms of opposition to apartheid. By the end of 1984, although the UDF had not yet established its formal structures in Pietermaritzburg, two hostile camps had emerged in the region. On one side were people who supported UDF-affiliated organizations, and who openly criticised apartheid structures in which Inkatha members participated. On the other were Inkatha members and vigilante groups who came together to try to expel UDF activists from the townships. From late 1984 the UDF supporters viewed `Oqonda' (the vigilantes) as Inkatha groups in disguise.[30] There were no UDF supporters in such groups. Usually when `harassing' people, the vigilantes identified themselves as a `community-concerned group' and not as Inkatha.[31] Inkatha spokesperson described the vigilantes as groups that were merely `expressing black anger' and wanting to suppress `udlame' (violence).[32]

---

[29] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 30 October 1994).

[30] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 7 October 1994).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Fatima Meer, Resistance in the Townships (Durban, Madiba Publications, 1989), p. 209.

The UDF in Natal was restructured in March 1985. People involved in the restructuring process were from both the national and regional levels of the Front. The national leadership proposed divisions of the country into regions, which the regional leadership was responsible for setting up organizational structures. Before this the only functioning regional office was in Durban. In the Durban region there were two bodies, the Regional Executive Committee (REC) and Regional General Council (RGC). The establishment of the REC and RGC had occurred in 1983 and 1984 respectively. The REC was elected to office on 14 May 1984, while the RGC came to office immediately after the launching of the UDF nationally.[33]

In terms of the restructuring programme, the Natal region was divided into the subregions of Northern Natal, Natal Midlands, North Coast and Durban Central.[34] In the Natal Midlands region, the Committee of Concern was dissolved. This meant two things: firstly that the members of organizations represented by the Committee of Concern automatically became UDF adherents and, secondly, that the leaders of the Committee of Concern were absorbed into a new group of leaders under the banner of the UDF. Since the opening of the regional office of the Natal UDF branch in Pietermaritzburg in 1983, the UDF supporters in the region had remained under the aegis of the Committee of Concern. This created confusion among some organizations that were affiliated to the Committee of Concern because they were not fully informed about the change-over. Also, because everything was centralised in Durban, most of UDF-affiliates in the regions were not well informed about what was happening.

When the UDF established its new structures in Pietermaritzburg in March 1985, the following people were elected to executive positions for the Natal Midlands region: A. S.

---

[33] PACSA, UDF folders: Report of National Executive Meeting (UDF), held on 1-2 June 1984 at Cape Town.

[34] Ibid.

Chetty (chairperson), S'khumbuzo Ngwenya (organizing secretary), Martin Wittenberg (minutes secretary), Muzi Thusi (rural organizer), and D. V. Chetty (treasurer).[35] There were other UDF executive members like Simon Gqubule, Simon Motala, and Colin Gardner, but the above were the most functionally effective members.[36] Below the executive there was a Local General Council that had close to twenty members.[37] It consisted of members delegated by their organizations to represent them. This council of the UDF was responsible for organizing and mobilizing people under the banner of the Front. Among the members of the LGC delegated by affiliated organizations were Yunus Carrim, representing the Natal Indian Congress (Pietermaritzburg), Hloni Zondi and S. Faizal representing COSATU, Kenneth Dladla and Kam Chetty representing the civic associations, Sipho Gabela and Sobhuza Dlamini representing students from schools in the region, S'thembiso Ngcobo and R. Mkhize representing the youth, and John Jeffery representing the Pietermaritzburg Congress of Democrats.[38] Later, because of detention and restrictions, additional people, such as Mduduzi Ndlovu, were coopted into both structures.

The following diagram illustrates the way in which members were elected to various structures of the UDF during this period.

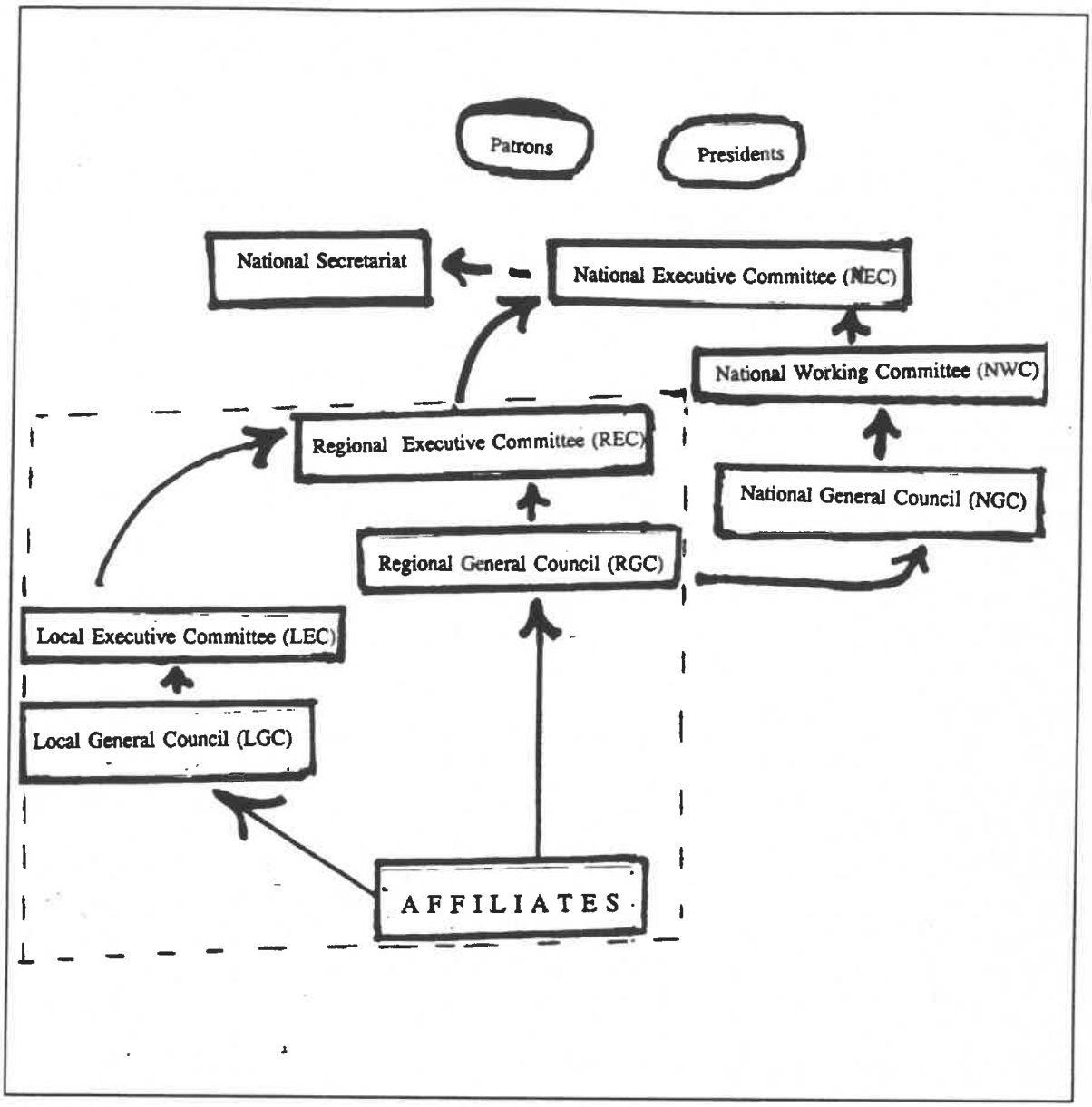
---

[35] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 6 June 1995).

[36] Ibid.

[37] Author's interview with A. S Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 June 1995).

[38] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (University of Natal, 6 June 1995). Youth and students' representatives were elected by representatives of various UDF youth and students' organizations from the region.



Source: PACSA: UDF folders, `The United Democratic Front'.

The structures indicated in the dotted box were the most influential in any region.[39] They could adopt and carry out programmes of action without necessarily waiting for directives from the NEC. Organizationally, the UDF local executive referred matters to the National General Council if they were important, or to the Local General Council if they were more local in nature.[40] The main reason for using the General Councils was that they were the only bodies to which every affiliate organization sent representatives. Through this structure it was easy to disseminate information, and decide upon strategies and programmes of action. The restructuring process led to the establishment of UDF structures and the election of local UDF activists to those structures. The UDF's Local Executive Committee, the Local General Council and the affiliates began to determine the functioning of the Front in the region.[41] The Executive Committee was to meet once a week and the Local General Council once a fortnight.[42]

From 1984 to mid-1985, UDF mobilization campaigns shifted from Indian areas to the townships. This was partly because when more and more Africans joined the UDF, they highlighted the problems that were experienced by Africans. These were worse than those affecting other communities. The unequal delivery of basic services (i.e. telephones, electricity, maintenance of roads, and recreational facilities) to different communities weakened the joint commitment (that is the working together) between Africans and Indians in the region. While it was easy for the UDF to organize in Indian areas through door-to-door campaigns, discussion groups, house meetings, and civic organizations, it was not so in African areas.[43] In the African townships, people wanted schools, houses

---

[39] Author's interview with A. S. Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 June 1995).

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Author's interview with A. Bawa (UNP, 22 June 1995).

and improvements in infrastructure, among other things. To address these problems a political structure was needed, so that the issues would be publicized in national political campaigns.[44] The UDF therefore became a conveyor belt, taking problems from regional level to national level. The problems that were experienced by Africans in various regions (including Pietermaritzburg) became national issues.

Furthermore, there was a problem in Pietermaritzburg, particularly in the African townships, in mobilizing older people into UDF structures. Most of the older African people in the UDF, like the Rev. Simon Gqubule, were from the Federal Theological Seminary (FedSem), and they had little contact with old people in the townships.[45] The relative absence of African adults in the UDF left open a space for white and Indian adults to be highly influential in the politics of the UDF. In addition, the fact that some African people perceived the UDF as Indian-dominated created difficulties in mobilizing in African areas. Opponents of the UDF argued that Indians were outsiders who were creating problems in African townships.[46] Also, because they often risked being attacked, or having their property destroyed by Inkatha or vigilantes, and because of police harassment, older people were very cautious about becoming involved in UDF politics.

The UDF's shift in focus to the African areas led to a decline in the participation of people from the Indian communities in its activities.[47] Most UDF-affiliated organizations in the Indian areas were unable to become fully involved in a situation of heightened conflict in the African townships. Because the conflicts were outside the Indian residential areas, their impact on Indian people was limited, and did not lead to active organization and mobilization. Generally, there was little joint action from UDF affiliates in the Indian areas

---

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Author's interview with Vis Naidoo (UNP, 6 June 1995).

and in the African townships. As a result, when the UDF established its structures in 1985, the affiliated organizations in the African townships assumed a more prominent role in the functioning of the Front.[48]

Most of the organizations that had sent signatures to the launching of the UDF in Cape Town were from Indian organizations which were members of the Committee of Concern. According to Jorry Mohamed, who served in the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and Pietermaritzburg Central Residents and Ratepayers Association (PCRRPA), most of the forty organizations that had registered under the Committee of Concern had virtually no active support.[49] A number of them had only a token existence. Some organizations were registered because it happened that there were individuals who belonged, or had once belonged, to the organizations which they wanted to register, though some had not had general meetings for years.[50] The Committee of Concern, like the UDF, tried to portray itself as having strong support. This was to be achieved by trying to bring as many organizations together as possible. However, there were also active, functional organizations in the Committee, especially youth and church organizations.[51] Students also played a prominent role in the UDF struggles in the region. The following section will assess the impact of their early involvement in the politics of the UDF.

---

[48] Ibid.

[49] Author's interview with Jorry Mohamed (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 17 June 1995).

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

Students' involvement in the politics of the UDF

The UDF launched its Natal Midlands branch at a time when students at schools in the region were embarking on mass protests. The students' demonstrations that had begun with Koornhof's visit in August 1984 resumed in January 1985. In the first five months of that year there were many protest marches and sit-ins at various schools around Pietermaritzburg.[52] The issues taken up in the school protests were the shortage of free books for students, the imposition of age restrictions by the Department of Education and Training (DET) on the admission and progression of African pupils, and the appointment of under-qualified teachers in African schools.[53] There were also protests against the arrest of students who were involved in organizing marches. For instance, a week-long sit-in was organized in May 1985 by four Imbali and Edendale high schools to demand the release of six students held in police detention.[54] At Siqongweni High School in Imbali there was an additional issue, the imposition of a R25 deposit for all students who enrolled.[55] Some of these issues affected not only students but also parents, who had difficulty in finding the money, and who viewed education as a right, not a privilege, for their children. On 6 August 1985 students from black schools embarked on a massive stayaway. The protest was against the continuation of the partial state of emergency imposed by the government in 18 Districts to suppress political protests (although Natal was not affected), the detention of Themba Ngubane in May 1985, a student from Siqongweni high school, and the murder of Victoria Mxenge in August 1985, a UDF treasurer in the Durban region.[56]

---

[52] Natal Witness, 23 January; 7 May; 14 May 1985.

[53] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 9 October 1994).

[54] M. Butler et al., Imbali, p. 159.

[55] Natal Witness, 23 January 1985.

[56] Natal Witness, 7 August 1985.

After the establishment of UDF structures in the Pietermaritzburg region in March 1985, UDF activists began to build up affiliated organizations. It became relatively easy for the UDF to organize students because they already had concrete problems round which to mobilize. UDF activists took advantage of this opportunity to try to situate educational struggles within the general strategy of challenging apartheid, thereby winning students' support.[57] In this context, students in Pietermaritzburg came to the forefront of UDF activities, demanding various changes in the system of education.[58] The educational crisis continued to attract students to the organizations that were challenging the Bantu education system. Sobhuza Dlamini, who was a member of the Congress of South African Students, observed that during this time COSAS became very active in attracting students to support the Front. Using phrases from the Freedom Charter like, `Education shall be free, Compulsory, Universal and Equal for all children' as slogans, COSAS managed to win over the support of most of the students in Pietermaritzburg.

Another development that facilitated the mobilization and organization of students by UDF activists was the trial in Pietermaritzburg of sixteen national UDF leaders on charges of treason. It is possible that state officials chose Pietermaritzburg as the site of the trial because they felt that UDF was weak in the region, and that it would not be able to organize mass demonstrations. From May to December 1985, Pietermaritzburg became a centre of attention for South African and overseas newspapers. The sixteen UDF members were released on bail of R170 000 on 4 May 1985.[59] Nevertheless, attention and criticism (from both internal and external anti-apartheid activists) continued, focusing on the restrictions experienced by the 16 UDF members under security laws. In the USA forty senators of both parties petitioned the Botha government, 125 British MP's registered their

---

[57] Author's interview with Blade Nzimande (UNP, 5 October 1994).

[58] Ibid.

[59] Natal Witness, 5 May 1985.

protest, and the United Nations debated the issue.[60] The UDF established a Treason Trial subcommittee to organize accommodation and food for the people on trial, their relatives, and other visitors to the trial[61]. The UDF Local General Council organized fund-raising projects to raise money to help in paying for these expenses. The funds were also used for organizing campaigns, encouraging people to attend the trial proceedings, and informing people who were not attending of the latest developments.[62] These campaigns in Pietermaritzburg that started in May continued up to 9 December 1985 when the court dropped the charges against the 16 activists.[63]

The first project for raising money that the UDF Natal Midlands subregion embarked upon was to organize a screening of the movie, `A Passage to India' at the Grand Prix cinema in May 1985.[64] It was chosen because it exposed how imperial or colonial governments manipulated and exploited indigenous people.[65] According to Irshaad Kaseeram, who was a Natal Indian Congress (NIC) activist and part of the UDF fund-raising committee, the committee aimed at winning strong support from the Indian communities. Also, Indian communities were seen by the committee as ideal targets for fund-raising because most of them were financially better off than Africans.

In Pietermaritzburg the treason trial increased the level of awareness of students and youth. Student bodies such as COSAS and AZASO (Azanian Students Organization)

---

[60] Collinge, `The United Democratic Front', p. 265.

[61] PACSA, UDF folder: Letter from Martin Wittenberg to the UDF affiliates in Natal Midlands (May 1985).

[62] Ibid.

[63] Natal Witness, 10 December 1985.

[64] PACSA, UDF folder: Letter from Martin Wittenberg to the UDF affiliates in Natal Midlands (May 1985).

[65] Author's interview with Irshaad Kaseeram (UNP, 17 September 1995).

became very popular among the students. COSAS became the more popular of the two because of its use of the Freedom Charter guidelines, as it had adopted the Charter at its launching. To COSAS, proper education for African students was not achievable, since African leaders were in prison.[66] Students from surrounding schools frequently organized attendance at the trial proceedings. They chanted the 1960s Rivonia trial slogans such as `We stand by our leaders' and `An injury to one is an injury to all', thus reviving charterist memories of the 1960s.[67] Students who were unfamiliar with the slogans were taught by UDF organizers. Furthermore, since COSAS functioned within the paradigm of the charterist organizations, its supporters relied on the using the history of the ANC, as a point of reference.

When Natal's UDF leaders appealed to UDF affiliates to show solidarity with the members on trial, the Imbali Taxi Association responded by providing free transport to people who wanted to attend the trial proceedings.[68] Most of those who took up this offer were students from various high schools in the region.[69] Some taxi-owners, like Gibson Msomi, were university students.[70] Some Imbali parents, particularly those who were not sympathetic to the UDF, were strongly against the assistance provided to the UDF by the Taxi Association. They accused the association, IYO and COSAS of disrupting schooling in the township by encouraging students not to attend school but to attend the trial proceeding.[71] This further widened the gap between many parents and their children.

---

[66] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 7 October 1994).

[67] Ibid.

[68] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[69] Ibid.

[70] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994).

[71] Ibid.

From the state's perspective, the various acts of student protest were insurrections which needed to be suppressed. Security forces, in responding to students' protest marches held regionally and nationally, used teargas and rubber bullets in certain instances to disperse crowds.[72] By the end of 1985 police harassment was becoming a major obstacle to UDF activists. The situation became worse in June 1986, when the government imposed a state of emergency. Policemen like Major D. Terreblanche, who could speak Zulu fluently, sought to influence parents by telling them that the `youth' were defying them and that, as adults, they were supposed to discipline the youth.[73] Terreblanche and other chief security-force members insisted that the authorities would seek to restore law and order in Pietermaritzburg by returning control to the parents and the traditional chiefs.[74] This approach helped to exacerbate further the divisions that were emerging between parents and youths.

Another development that led to heightened conflicts and confrontations in the second half of 1985 was the assassination in Umlazi of the Natal UDF regional treasurer, Victoria Mxenge.[75] On 3 August students and pupils belonging to COSAS (Congress of South African Students), AZASO (Azanian Students Organization) and AZASM (Azanian Students Movement), organized a week of mourning by boycotting classes.[76] Students marched through the streets of Inanda, KwaMashu and Umlazi (townships around Durban). Incidents of looting in shops and clashes between demonstrating students and those who

---

[72] Natal Witness, 24 January, 7 May and 14 May 1985.

[73] Author's interviews with Masibu Majola (Pietermaritzburg, 9 November 1984), Jabulani Sithole (Pietermaritzburg, 20 March 1995) and Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 6 June 1995).

[74] Ibid.

[75] Natal Witness, 7 August 1985.

[76] Cooper, et al. Race Relations Survey 1985 (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1986), p. 538.

were not participating were reported. On 7 August UDF supporters who were attending the funeral service of Mxenge were allegedly attacked by Inkatha supporters from Lindelani; at least 12 people were killed and 100 injured.[77] Violent clashes between Africans and Indians took place in Inanda settlement, with Indian shops looted or burnt down. Groups of vigilantes, some of them up to 1000 strong, were organized by Inkatha branches to restore `law and order'.[78] They conducted house-to-house searches for looted goods and UDF activists. Hundreds of UDF youth fled the township in fear of clashes with the vigilantes.[79] The affair marked the state's tolerance of Inkatha's attacks on UDF activists in the Natal region. From Inanda, violent clashes between the UDF and Inkatha spread to the whole of the Natal region.

In addition, in August 1985 there occurred the national banning of COSAS and the brutal murder in the Eastern Cape of the `Cradock Four' (Sparrow Mkhonto, Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata and Fidelo Mhlawuli). COSAS was banned because of the continuation of intense students' protest against the imposition of partial state of emergency and the brutal killings of anti-apartheid activists. All these incidents led to heightened animosity between Inkatha and the UDF, and to confrontations between the police and UDF supporters. In the Pietermaritzburg region, UDF activists held several rallies in the city to mark these events.[80] Inkatha and the state opposed these UDF rallies or mass actions because they regarded them as UDF recruitment drives.

---

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Natal Witness, 7 August 1985.

The conflict intensifies: UDF, Inkatha and the state

Nationally, the period 1983-5 could be referred to as the heyday of the UDF. There was swelling support for the Front from youths, workers, students, and community organizations. At its annual national conference on 5-7 April 1985, in Krugersdorp, the UDF adopted the theme `From Protest to Change, From Mobilization to Organization'. This was the product of an attempt to find ways of transforming `mass mobilization' into coherent organization. The UDF aimed to organize and mobilize community, student, worker and church organizations at local levels.

From 1985, church organizations affiliated to the UDF began to organize peace marches and commemoration services on days that were symbolically important in the liberation struggle, like Sharpeville Day on 21 March, and Soweto Day on 16 June. In Pietermaritzburg, on 16 June 1985, churches held a mass prayer service at St. Marks Anglican Church in Imbali to commemorate Soweto Day. The ceremony was attended mostly by young people.[81] The Rev. Wesley Mabuza, with the Rev. Mazwi Tisani, conducted the service.[82] In his sermon, Mabuza linked evil and unjust powers to the devil, and he said that `one does not pray that the devil be converted but that he is overcome'.[83] After the church service, the police followed a group of about 300 youth who were singing as they went off towards their homes, and fired teargas to disperse them.[84]

---

[81] PACSA Newsletter, 17 June 1985.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

At times when the UDF was not directly involved in organizing marches, it was represented by its church affiliates.[85] The churches became instrumental in organizing marches. Even after the imposition of emergency regulations in June 1986, churches carried on managing to bring people together.[86]

The UDF's growth and strength became a threat to the authority exercised over African people in Natal and KwaZulu by Inkatha and the state. The state was confronted by enormous problems in the 1980s. Socio-economic conditions in the country were undermining the government's ability to deliver what large numbers of people demanded (like subsidies for rents, houses, and bus fares, and the creation of employment). The heightened political conflicts which were emerging between the state and the UDF scared off prospective investors. In 1986 some investors pulled out of the country in accordance with the sanctions that were endorsed by the United Nations in protest against apartheid rule.

The UDF took advantage of this situation and staged activities aimed at encouraging people not to participate in government-led institutions. This led to the collapse of civil government in many townships throughout the country. The aim was that they should be replaced by alternative, unofficial organizations calling for `people's power'.[87] Government officials were evicted from many townships by UDF activists, and government buildings were burnt down. The UDF gave civic associations a responsibility to make the townships ungovernable.[88] This led to the emergence of `people's structures' (set up by UDF supporters) in a number of townships throughout the country. The civic organizations

---

[85] Author's interview with Peter Kerchhoff (PACSA, Pietermaritzburg, 29 September 1995).

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Jabulani Sithole, UDF file: National Working Committee paper (29-30 May 1987), p. 8.

struggled for access to state funds which were monopolized by whites, fought for participation in a decision making-process that could bring them from the periphery to the centre of urban government, and vigorously demanded the upgrading of facilities and infrastructures in the townships. This was a direct challenge to the state by the UDF, and marked the beginning of a new phase in South African popular resistance.[89]

The growing strength of the UDF also posed a direct challenge to Inkatha. The launching of the UDF in 1983 was a threat to Inkatha in terms of followers, particularly in Natal where Inkatha claimed to have the mass support of the `Zulus'. When the UDF established its structures in Pietermaritzburg in 1985, this threat became real to Inkatha supporters in the region. UDF supporters began to mobilize in the same constituencies that Inkatha claimed to be controlling. UDF supporters criticized the KwaZulu administrative structures controlled by Inkatha, and they openly criticized Inkatha members for participating in apartheid structures like the township councils.[90]

From 1985 onwards, Inkatha supporters began to forge alliances with vigilante groups in an attempt to expel from the region the so-called `troublesome elements' or `radicals'. Their campaigns were characterized by intimidation and harassment. As a result, numbers of people who were politically undecided were pushed into siding with the UDF. From 1985, Inkatha began treating people who wished to remain neutral and unaligned in the same way as those who were UDF members. People had either to move from their homes or fight. For instance, if a member of a family had joined a UDF-affiliated organization,

---

[89] Worden, Making of Modern South Africa, p. 130.

[90] Author's interviews with Lakela Kaunda (Pietermaritzburg, 14 October 1994); Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994); Thami Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994) and Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 July 1995).

Inkatha harassed the whole family.[91] As a result the rest of the family had to side with the UDF for `protection'.[92] According to Dumisani Phungula, a member of the Edendale Youth Organization (EDEYO), joining Inkatha was not a solution because after joining one had to participate in attacking non-Inkatha members.[93] Therefore, many people chose to oppose Inkatha rather than let it control them.[94] What can be concluded is that from the early stages of the UDF's activities in the Pietermaritzburg region in 1985, the Front consolidated itself through defence of its supporters in the townships rather than through attempts to mobilise around national or regional anti-apartheid campaigns. Political struggles in the region became clearly defined as struggles between Inkatha and the UDF.

In the townships, the UDF camp comprised mainly civic, church and youth organizations, while Inkatha supporters forged an alliance with the vigilante committees. Nigel Worden argues that in the 1980s the South African state was involved in encouraging reactionary vigilante groups to protect township councillors, police, and traders, and also to take action against anti-apartheid township activists.[95] Clearly the vigilante groups received support from the police for whom they provided a convenient ally in countering protest. This can be better understood through an analysis of the problems the that Imbali Civic Association (ICA) faced in the region.

---

[91] Author's interviews with Lakela Kaunda (Natal Witness, Pietermaritzburg, 14 October 1994) and Jabulani Sithole (Pietermaritzburg, 20 March 1995).

[92] Ibid.

[93] Author's interview with Dumisani Phungula (UNP, 30 October 1995).

[94] Ibid.

[95] Nigel Worden, The Making of Modern South Africa (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994), p. 132.

With rent boycotts becoming more frequent and more widely supported nationally in 1983-4, civic organizations became important in coordinating these boycotts. In April 1985, Imbali residents formed the Imbali Civic Association at a meeting held at a Baptist church in Imbali Stage One.[96] The founders dubbed it `the movement of the future' and `the people's body.'[97] Student organizations, the IYO and the Imbali Taxi Association played a crucial role in its formation.[98] At its launching an interim committee of eight was elected, consisting of A. Hlengwa, M. Gumede, Kenneth Dladla, Mnqe Mvuyane, D. Ngwenya, A. Khuma, D. Dladla and Robert Duma. Duma, a worker at the South Africa Breweries and a member of the Food and Allied Workers Union, was chairperson.[99] The association had two priorities: to fight evictions of families who could not afford to pay rent for their homes, and to deal with students' problems, particularly to try to bridge the gap between youth and parents (that is to bring the youth and parents to work together).[100] Members of the association told people who were not working and who were in arrears with their rents that their arrears would be scrapped.[101] The ICA also strongly criticized the township councillors, accusing them of working within the system and participating in the structures that were perpetuating apartheid.[102]

---

[96] Natal Witness, 20 April 1985; Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 September 1994).

[97] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 September 1994).

[98] M. Butler, Imbali, p. 20.

[99] Natal Witness, 20 April 1985; Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 4 November 1994).

[100] Natal Witness, 20 April 1985.

[101] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 September 1994).

[102] Ibid.

After its launching the ICA decided to affiliate to the UDF as a means of gaining wider support. The step was taken because of the influence of students within the association.[103] The move was inevitable because the agenda of the ICA clearly matched that of UDF affiliates. The UDF was to make the townships ungovernable by encouraging the residents not to pay rents, to force councillors out of townships, and to demand from the state that more amenities should be constructed in the townships.[104]

The formation of the ICA was bound to provoke strong reaction from Inkatha supporters, as had happened at the beginning of 1985 with the formation of the Joint Rents Action Committee (JORAC) in the townships of Durban.[105] The formation of JORAC was followed by physical confrontation between UDF and Inkatha supporters. The two factions burnt homes and killed opponents.[106] The position of the ICA after its launching in April 1985 became similar to that of JORAC, with UDF and Inkatha supporters fighting each other. Inkatha supporters who wanted to retain Imbali's council structures strongly resented the ICA. Inkatha supporters were prepared not only to participate in town councils but to defend them.

By August 1985 the political situation in Imbali had became tense as efforts by Inkatha members to eradicate the so-called `radical' elements continued.[107]. A group of heavily armed men began roaming the township, demanding to see UDF, AZAPO and ICA members, and threatening them with death. On 18 August, four months after the launching of the ICA, unknown people attacked R. Duma and burnt his home. He fled to the Federal

---

[103] Ibid.

[104] Jabulani Sithole, UDF File: National Working Committee paper (29-30 May 1987), p. 8.

[105] Meer, Resistance in the Townships , p. 133.

[106] Ibid.

[107] M. Butler, et al., Imbali, p. 161.

Theological Seminary for refuge.[108] Two days later a mob burnt taxis in Mlahlankosi Road, an Inkatha-supporting area in Imbali.[109] These were clearly retaliatory attacks between Inkatha and UDF supporters. Because of death threats, ICA members were not able to keep the association functioning. For the next five years the UDF did not attempt to launch any civic organizations in the African townships of Pietermaritzburg. Other ICA members had seen what happened to their chairman, and they were afraid of risking their lives and property. UDF supporters had learnt a lesson in Imbali and elsewhere in Natal about the way Inkatha dealt with those who initiated such structures. However, the need for the UDF to have the support of civic organizations was a pressing one because the civics could be a powerful force in highlighting community problems. Furthermore, civic associations in African townships had the potential to transform the image of the UDF from being an organization dominated by youth and students to one which included adults in its township structures. Although adults from COSATU unions lived in the townships, they were not organized according to townships or areas but only at their workplace. This lack of adult structures in black townships proved to be a weakness for the UDF in the Natal Midlands.[110]

On Sunday 25 August 1985 about 200 stick-carrying Imbali residents marched on the Federal Theological Seminary and informed the senior staff members, including the president of the seminary, Dr. Khoza Mgojo, that the seminary was a cause of unrest in Imbali.[111] Among the crowd were Patrick Pakkies, the mayor of Imbali, Ben Jele, chairperson of the Inkatha branch in Imbali, and V. B. Ndlovu, a member of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly.[112] The leaders of the crowd were Inkatha members. They gave the

---

[108] Natal Witness, 18 August 1985.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Author's interview with A. Bawa (UNP, 22 June 1995).

[111] Weekly Mail, 6-12 September 1985.

[112] Ibid.

members of the seminary an ultimatum to vacate the premises. The seminary took the issue to court and obtained an interdict restraining Inkatha members from harassing members of the institution. In mid-September, a few weeks after the issuing of the court interdict, some residents of Imbali alleged that members of Inkatha had intimidated them into paying a donation of R1 each towards the costs of defending the court application against P. C. Pakkies and V. B. Ndlovu.[113]

In September 1985 in Imbali, unknown people attacked S'khumbuzo Ngwenya, the UDF Natal Midlands co-secretary, and stabbed his mother.[114] A month later, Gibson Msomi, who was a co-founder of the ICA, a taxi-owner and a student at the University of Zululand, was shot dead, as was Mandla Madlala, an Inkatha member.[115] The conflict between the UDF and Inkatha was beginning to develop into one of `elimination', not merely `expulsion' or `discipline'. In November 1985, the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg heard allegations of Inkatha's bid to `cleanse' Imbali of `troublemakers' when seven Imbali residents submitted affidavits. These affidavits cited an Imbali town councillor, Abdul Awetta, as having told residents that he would take such a step.[116] Henry Mabida, a UDF member in the region, was one of the seven residents who gave the affidavits. By the end of 1985 and early 1986 these conflicts were spilling over into other areas.

---

[113] Natal Witness, 18 September 1985.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 September 1994).

[116] Natal Witness, 4 November 1985.

Sobantu, Edendale and Vulindlela in the mid-1980s

From 1985, political events in Imbali had important repercussions in Sobantu, the Edendale townships and the Vulindlela peri-urban areas. In the case of Sobantu, it is important to take the analysis back to the early 1980s. At that time the township had been relatively calm, compared to Imbali, because of political solidarity within the village. The sense of unity that had developed in Sobantu was due largely to the small size of the township, which had not expanded since the late 1950s. It had one church, one primary school, one secondary school, and no workers' hostels, so people who grew up in Sobantu knew one another and developed a sense of community.[117] In the wake of abortive government attempts to set up a community council in 1979, and then later a town committee, leadership of Sobantu passed to an unofficial Committee of Twelve'.[118] This committee, which was elected by the residents of Sobantu at a public meeting on 26 January 1984, comprised Thami Mthalane (chairman), Elias Ntshangase, Arthur Mathonsi, D. Majola, Theo Mkhize, M. Hlengwa, Jackie Ntshangase, Pius Mbuyisa, Nhlanhla Makhathini, Tolbert Ngcobo, Ben Tshona and Gugu Mdlalose.[119]

The aim of the Committee of Twelve was to lobby for the inclusion of Sobantu into the white municipality, and for obtaining funds for the development of the township. The committee dealt with two boards that administered the township, the Drakensberg Administration Board and then, from 1985, the Natalia Development Board. The committee received widespread support from the people of the village, which kept it intact and

---

[117] See chapter 1, under the section `Political conflict in the Pietermaritzburg region in the early 1980s'.

[118] Heather Peel, `Sobantu Village: An administrative history of a Pietermaritzburg township 1924-1959' (unpublished Honours thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1987), p. 147.

[119] Forsyth, Pietermaritzburg Conflict Chronology, p. 60.

respected as a body. It had clearly defined issues to deal with, and its members saw their task as fighting for blacks against `reactionary whites'.

Political solidarity in Sobantu began to break down in 1985, as political refugees from Imbali came to seek safety in the village. With the coming of these refugees, the committee had to deal with problems that were no longer related only to civic or township development but to political struggles among the residents.[120] Two major political complications developed. Firstly, those who supported AZAPO started organizing their own youth organization in opposition to the UDF-aligned Sobantu Youth Organization (SOYO). Broadly speaking, tensions developed between supporters of the `charterist' UDF, and the National Forum (NF), a federation of black-consciousness organizations. Secondly, Inkatha members from Imbali were trying to track down refugees from that township; as a result, the refugees in Sobantu were suspicious of visitors to the township, and sometimes harassed them.

The first testing incident for the Committee of Twelve came on 15 July 1985. Armed Sobantu adults raided homes in the township and ordered Pastor Kwela to leave the township.[121] This was because of the activities of his son, Gcwelumusa, a COSAS member who was organizing students at Sobantu high school.[122] The UDF youth saw Kwela as a `progressive' adult who was prepared to help the younger generation politically and socially.[123] Kwela used to allow SOYO to hold political meetings at his church, and occasionally hired educational videos for the local youth to watch. In the event Kwela left

---

[120] Author's interview with Lungisani Kunene (UNP, 20 April 1995).

[121] Natal Witness, 16 July 1985.

[122] Author's interviews with Jabulani Sithole (Pietermaritzburg, 20 March 1995) and Lungisani Kunene (UNP, 20 April 1995).

[123] Author's interview with Lungisani Kunene (UNP, 20 April 1995).

Sobantu, but the incident tarnished the political image and the reputation of the Committee of Twelve.[124] The engineers of this action were well-known residents, and included members of the Committee.[125] These latter might have participated in the actions because they felt that if the radicalization of students was tolerated, they might become uncontrollable. Because of the indecisiveness of the committee in taking sides in the on-going community struggles, most of its members came to be seen by SOYO as enemies. In the eyes of UDF-affiliated organizations in the region, the `Dozen' became a discredited body.[126] `Progressive' youth organizations like SOYO began to view the committee as part of the vigilante group that was operating at Imbali.[127]

For the first time, rival organizations to SOYO emerged in 1985. They were led by `outsiders' and their emergence helped to divide Sobantu into two sections, `proper' Sobantu and `Dark City'. `Proper' Sobantu was where SOYO had its support. Its members were commonly called `Amavarara' (the term that was later used to refer all UDF youth organizations). `Dark City' became predominantly a refugee settlement, and the youth activists who formed AZAPO and Forward Youth were collectively known as `Amazimuzimu.'[128]

---

[124] Ibid.

[125] For personal reasons, my source preferred to remain anonymous (Pietermaritzburg, 20 March 1995).

[126] Author's interview with Lungisani Kunene (UNP, 20 April 1995).

[127] Ibid.

[128] `The names Amazimuzimu and Amavarara do not have their origins at Sobantu, but they were brought into Sobantu and both group used them without attaching any specific meaning to them, besides being a name of a group identity. The names were used all over the country.' Author's interview with Zithulele Ngubane (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 24 April 1995).

The first youth organization to challenge SOYO in Sobantu was the Forward Youth Movement, launched on 17-18 December 1985.[129] Nationally, Forward Youth was seen as the youth wing of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), which had its origins in the Western Cape in the 1940s. The movement had resurfaced in Cape Town in April 1985, with R. O. Dudley as president.[130] They believed in the ideology of the Trotskyist socialist workers' tendency. But according to Lyov Hassim, its general secretary, the Pietermaritzburg FY perceived itself as an independent socialist organization. In Pietermaritzburg the Forward Youth was functional for only six months and then collapsed.[131] Like the UDF, the FY sought to mobilize a black constituency, although its leadership was predominantly Indian. As part of its mobilization tactics, the FY used slogans like: `If you are not forward you are backward, forward for ever, backward never.'[132]

The movement relied on charismatic youth leaders, Masibu Majola and Jabulani Makhathini for its mobilization campaigns. They had both been expelled from Imbali by the vigilantes, and belonged to AZAPO's youth wing. They were temporarily living at Dark City in Sobantu. When they joined Forward Youth, they carried on with dual membership of these organizations.[133] As a result they always combined the activities of Forward Youth and AZAPO.

---

[129] Author's interview with L. Hassim (UNP, 18 October 1994).

[130] Alex Callinicos, South Africa between Reform and Revolution (London, Bookmarks, 1988), pp. 110-112.

[131] Author's interview with L. Hassim (UNP, 18 October 1994).

[132] Ibid.

[133] Author's interview with Masibu Majola (Community Care Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 9 September 1994).

The collapse of Forward Youth in Pietermaritzburg was due to the problem of having the leadership belonging to two different organizations. The misunderstanding between Sobantu's Forward Youth leaders, Hassim the general secretary, Adam Habib the vice-secretary, and Masibu Majola the president, led to the collapse of the FY six months after its launching in the region.[134] The issue was whether the FY should attend the launching of the National Forum in Durban, which was being organized at the initiative of AZAPO and CAL (Cape Action League).[135] After failing to come to an agreement, Masibu and other members proceeded to attend the launching of the National Forum on their own.[136] Because the FY relied on Majola and Makhathini for mobilization in Sobantu, when the two left the organization, it collapsed.

At the end of 1985 there were tensions between UDF youth and AZAPO youth in Sobantu, although not on a large scale.[137] The existence of two hostile camps, which were gearing themselves to organize the same members but using different political ideologies (Charterist and Black Consciousness), resulted in conflict. The confrontations between these two camps first emerged in Imbali in mid-1985. This served as a prelude to the fighting that broke out between these two youth organizations again in Sobantu in 1987.[138]

---

[134] Author's interviews with L. Hassim (UNP, 18 October 1994) and Masibu Majola (Community Care Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 9 September 1994).

[135] Author's interview with L. Hassim (UNP, 30 October 1995).

[136] Ibid.

[137] Author's interview with Masibu Majola (Community Care Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 9 October 1994).

[138] Butler et al., Imbali, p. 161.

On 8 March 1986, Inkatha supporters held a meeting in Sobantu.[139] Inkatha supporters allegedly came from Imbali. Three days after the meeting there were clashes between UDF and Inkatha supporters in Sobantu. This followed an incident in which Inkatha supporters had attacked students at Sobantu High School, who allegedly had assaulted two schoolgirls who were Inkatha members.[140] Sobantu High School closed for several days because of these clashes.

By 1986 the repercussions of the flight of refugees from Imbali was being felt in many parts of the region. Sobantu was the first township to experience the political impact of their arrival. Vulindlela and Edendale residents felt it from mid-1986, but more particularly from early 1987 onwards. In Edendale and Vulindlela the struggles were more prolonged than in Sobantu. There are several hypotheses which one can postulate to try to explain this. Firstly, Sobantu had been built to a clear design, and was also smaller than these other two residential areas. Residents of Sobantu could easily notice strangers or visitors in the township. However, Vulindlela and some parts of Edendale were not planned settlements. Households were more scattered, and it was not always easy to know of events happening immediately.[141]

Moreover, unlike Imbali, which had a substantial number of both UDF and Inkatha supporters, other areas were dominated by a single party. Sobantu and some parts of Edendale were predominantly UDF townships, while Inkatha dominated Vulindlela. In this region the conflict between the UDF and Inkatha reached its peak in 1987, a theme which I will discuss in the following chapter.

---

[139] Natal Witness, 10 March 1986.

[140] Natal Witness, 13 March 1986.

[141] Author's interview with Dumisani Phungula (UNP, 30 October 1995).

Inkatha had an advantage over the UDF in Vulindlela because the area fell directly under the KwaZulu government. And because of detentions, restrictions and bannings imposed on UDF activists, the Front was organizationally handicapped. It was through workers' and church organizations that UDF activities in the Pietermaritzburg region were sustained.

Workers' organizations in Pietermaritzburg in the mid-1980s

By mobilizing workers, the UDF secured strong support in challenging the state economically and politically. The labour movement, which in the early 1980s was more organizationally mature than black political organizations, strongly influenced the awakening of resistance politics in Pietermaritzburg.[142] In the Hulett's Aluminium strike (1981), organized by the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU), the Simba Chips strike in 1985 organized by the South African Workers' Union, which later was called the Food and Allied Workers' Union (SAWU-FAWU), and the BTR Sarmcol strike in Howick in 1985, organized by MAWU, workers managed to link their workplace struggles with problems that were being experienced by people politically and socially in the townships. They managed to gain substantial support from people in Pietermaritzburg.[143]

The 1985 Sarmcol strike marked a turning-point in the history of popular resistance and mobilization in Pietermaritzburg. The dispute between BTR Sarmcol and its workers was over management's prolonged delays in recognizing the Metal and Allied Workers Union, and in granting wage increments demanded by workers. A preliminary agreement on these issues between workers and management at BTR Sarmcol had been made in

---

[142] Nkosinathi Gwala, `Political violence and the struggle for control in Pietermaritzburg', Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 15, no. 3 (1988-9), p. 514.

[143] Ibid.

August 1983.[144] Sarmcol's management had, however, continually delayed implementation of the recognition agreement.[145] The strike started on 30 April 1985 after management had failed to sign an agreement recognizing MAWU as the union representative of the workers.[146] On 1 May workers in unions affiliated to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) flocked to a workers' rally at Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre. Striking Sarmcol workers also participated in this rally, which was called by FOSATU, the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa, the General Workers Union and the Food and Canning Workers' Union.[147] By 3 May the company had dismissed all 950 workers.[148]

When Sarmcol began to employ `scab' workers, backed by Inkatha because of its opposition to UDF stayaways and boycotts, the dispute took on a political dimension that fuelled confrontation and conflict in the Pietermaritzburg region. The UDF and its affiliates condemned the policy of using `scab' workers. The dismissal of the striking Sarmcol workers came as a test for the two-month-old UDF structures in the region.

On 8 July 1985 the dispute between Sarmcol workers and management turned into an open confrontation between UDF and Inkatha supporters. Most of Sarmcol's striking workers came from Mpophomeni township near Howick, while `scab' workers came from Inkatha-supporting areas like Imbali. This is one of the reasons why most of the public

---

[144] Forsyth, Pietermaritzburg Conflict Chronology, p. 74.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Debbie Bonnin and Ari Sitas, `Lessons from the Sarmcol strike', in William Cobbett and Roben Cohen (eds.), Popular Struggles in South Africa (Trenton, Africa World, 1988), p. 51.

[147] Natal Witness, 2 May 1985.

[148] Ari Sitas and Debbie Bonnin, `Lessons from the Sarmcol strike', p. 51.

rallies related to the dispute took place in Pietermaritzburg. Furthermore, MAWU wanted to put pressure on the Chamber of Industries, whose offices were situated in Pietermaritzburg.

In July 1985, the Metal Workers' Union, representing the striking workers, organized protest marches and support rallies for the workers in Edendale, Imbali and in other parts of the Pietermaritzburg region. They explained to the residents the dispute between the workers and Sarmcol management.[149]

Tension rose as hundreds of workers and school children in Pietermaritzburg heeded a call to stay at home on 18 July in support of Sarmcol's striking workers.[150] The call followed a last-minute failure of negotiations between the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Industry and MAWU to solve the dispute. In organizing the stayaway, MAWU workers played a leading role, and UDF youth organizations helped it.[151] The stayaway was the largest in the city's history. It brought the city to a virtual standstill.[152] Demonstrators set two beerhalls on fire in Imbali, and others in Machibisa, Edendale, and Ashdown. In Imbali the home of Abdul Awetta was petrol-bombed as well as a clinic under the KwaZulu administration. In Machibisa the homestead of Chief Mini was attacked.[153] In all, the protests were not successful in terms of helping the striking workers to win their battle to be reinstated, nor to stop the company employing `scab' labour but they certainly succeeded in mobilizing UDF supporters in the region. The dispute became a UDF rallying point for its mass mobilization in the region, and ultimately led to protracted struggles that

---

[149] Ibid. and Natal Witness, 19 July 1985.

[150] Natal Witness, 19 July 1985.

[151] Author's interview with A. S. Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 October 1994).

[152] Natal Witness, 19 July 1985.

[153] Ibid.

affected everyone in the region. Furthermore, the Sarmcol dispute marked the beginning of the development of strong a relationship between trade unions and community organizations in the region.

On 15 August 1985 UDF affiliates began the second phase of a concerted effort to put pressure on Sarmcol.[154] This time the campaign took the form not of a stayaway but of a mass consumer boycott of white shops and businesses in the Pietermaritzburg and Howick area.[155] These boycotts and stayaways were successful in the sense that the Front and its affiliates managed to mobilize large numbers of people to show solidarity with the striking workers. But the stayaways and the boycotts were not successful in pressuring the Sarmcol management to heed the workers' demands. But nevertheless the stayaway symbolized a new phase of the workers' struggles in the region: the city of Pietermaritzburg came to a halt, and organizationally, the stayaway marked a great achievement on the part of trade unions and community organizations. To quote the Daily News:

> `If there were any remaining doubt about the degree of organization among black workers, they have now been dispelled. Those few employers who had still believed that the old order continued - that workers making unreasonable demands could simply be dismissed and replaced by others off the streets will now be revising their ideas'.[156]

In December 1985, FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) was replaced by a politically oriented trade union federation, COSATU, which was launched at a meeting of 10 000 workers in Durban. With 33 unions representing 449 679 paid-up members, COSATU was the largest-ever trade union federation in South Africa's history.[157] Its

---

[154] Natal Witness, 16 August 1985.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Daily News, 16 August 1985.

[157] Yunus Carrim, `Working class politics to the fore', Work in Progress, no. 42 (1986), p. 40.

formation coincided with a general movement of the emerging unions into an alliance with other anti-apartheid organizations.[158]

In Pietermaritzburg COSATU took over the struggles of its affiliate MAWU (Metal and Allied Workers Union) at BTR Sarmcol. As a result the Sarmcol dispute turned into a political confrontation between UDF and Inkatha supporters. In December 1985 three leading Sarmcol workers and a youth were murdered, allegedly by Inkatha supporters.[159] There were attacks on UDF and COSATU members, allegedly by Inkatha supporters after this.

On 1 May 1986 COSATU organized its first national campaigns. In Pietermaritzburg COSATU and the UDF jointly organized a workers' gathering at Wadley stadium on 1 May 1986. About 10 000 people attended.[160] Speakers drew attention to the plight of the striking Sarmcol workers, and asked other workers to unite in the fight against apartheid.[161] From this time on, number of workers began to observe 1 May as a people's holiday.

The formation of COSATU, with its politically militant strategy, impelled Inkatha to form its own ethnically based trade union.[162] On 1 May 1986 Inkatha launched its own union, the United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA), again at a meeting held in Durban. There was strong, politically motivated competition for control of workers in Natal between

---

[158] Philip Van Niekerk, `Inkatha and Cosatu: drawing the battle lines', Work In Progress, no. 42 (1986), p. 5.

[159] Natal Witness, 4 December 1985.

[160] Natal Witness, 2 May 1986.

[161] Ibid.

[162] J. W. Van Wyk, `An explanation of the conflict between the UDF and Inkatha in the greater Pietermaritzburg area; 1987-1988' (unpublished Honours thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989).

Inkatha and the UDF. The UDF perceived Inkatha as a threat in Natal because of its ethnic mobilization. On the other hand, Inkatha was trying to keep Natal as its stronghold. UWUSA's formation, in particular, should not be interpreted as addressing a separate or a spontaneous need among workers, but rather as a concerted attempt by the Inkatha leadership to combat the new onslaught.[163] UWUSA became a rival union whose prime aim was to undermine COSATU in the region. Furthermore, being an ethnically based trade union, UWUSA aimed to enhance Inkatha's ideology of `Zuluness'.[164]

The formation of these two trade union organizations in Natal exacerbated existing tensions between the UDF and Inkatha. Although to Inkatha the formation of COSATU was a threat, to the UDF it proved to be a source of strength. In Natal, COSATU worked hard to keep the politics of the UDF alive through organizing protest campaigns and boycotts, particularly in Pietermaritzburg. COSATU brought several unions into the Front. Because COSATU was well organized in the Pietermaritzburg region, with a functioning council that held meetings twice a week, it greatly assisted in strengthening the UDF presence in the region.[165] This enabled certain UDF affiliates to discuss and propose programmes of action even when the Front itself was not functioning. When the state and Inkatha harassed UDF activists, COSATU assumed an important role in UDF politics in the region. Struggles waged by the UDF in the region against the state and Inkatha would have had much less impact without the support of COSATU. During the state of emergency, the strength of COSATU was important in enabling the Front to survive.

---

[163] Ibid.

[164] Paul Van Niekerk, `Inkatha and COSATU: Drawing the battle lines', Work in Progress, no. 42 (1986).

[165] Author's interviews with Sobhuza Dlamini and Mduduzi Ndlovu (Pietermaritzburg, 6 and 8 June 1995).

Extra-parliamentary activities thwarted

The surge in support for the UDF and other extra-parliamentary organizations in the mid-1980s became a threat to the state. Most protest activities in the early 1980s were centred in the PWV region. The protests in the Transvaal were against payment of rents, fare hikes, and the passing of the South African Constitutional Bill that led to the creation of the tricameral parliament in September 1984, accommodating whites, Indians and Coloureds. By June 1985 the political situation in the country had reached such a state that the government declared a partial state of emergency, extended the power of arbitrary detention without trial, and indemnified the security forces against charges of misconduct.[166] The partial state of emergency was declared on 25 June 1985, to last for three months in eighteen magisterial districts. The UDF and 28 other organizations were restricted from holding outdoor meetings and from campaigning without police permission. In August the partial state of emergency was renewed for six months. This second partial state of emergency was not renewed, and for two months (April and May 1986) the country was not under any emergency regulations. The state probably intended to test the reaction of anti-apartheid activists, and to display an image of reform to people who were critical of its repressive measures.

It is important to note is that none of the districts affected by the partial state of emergency in 1985 were in Natal.[167] The reason that the emergency was not extended to Natal may have been that here, unlike in other regions (i.e Transvaal), the UDF-led mass protest campaigns were still at an early stage of development. Because some areas in Natal were directly under the KwaZulu government, protests in those areas were not directed at the South African state but at the KwaZulu government. As a result the South African government could have felt that the UDF was being effectively checked by Inkatha.

---

[166] Worden, Making of Modern South Africa, p. 130.

[167] Natal Witness, 30 June 1985.

To sum up, the state responded in two ways to curb the growing strength of the UDF and other extra-parliamentary activities from the mid-1980s. Internally it embarked on a policy designated to curtail the strength of the UDF, and externally the South African government embarked on programmes of disrupting the economies of the neighbouring states, where South African political exiles lived.

By August 1985 the state had detained about 45 out of 80 UDF national leaders; others were on trial or had been murdered. The number of detained UDF activists rose dramatically in 1986.[168] The government used detention to silence political opposition. The state usually used `Section 29' of the Internal Stability Act to detain UDF activist for long periods, so as to prevent them from participating in anti-apartheid activities. Refusing bail for UDF activists was a camouflaged form of detention without trial. The detention of 16 UDF members on treason charges was a means of harassing the UDF and of cracking down on extra-parliamentary opposition in South Africa.

On 2 November 1985 the state president, P. W. Botha, signed an indemnity regulation that protected the security forces and the government from prosecution for actions taken while carrying out their duties.[169] The Natal Witness published the following report:

> `In terms of the regulations: No civic or criminal proceedings would be brought in any court of law anywhere in South Africa against the State. If any action is taken in which the good faith of the State, a member of the government or a member of the forces is in question, it would be presumed, until the contrary is proven, that such act was advised, commanded, ordered, directed or done in good faith. Regulation 2 prevent the courts from granting interdicts to stay or set aside orders and rules issued in terms of the emergency regulations'.[170]

---

[168] Keith Gottschalk, `UDF, 1983-1991: rise, impact and consequences', in Ian Liebenberg (ed.), The Long March (Cape Town, HAUM, 1994), p. 191.

[169] Natal Witness, 2 November 1985.

[170] Ibid.

On the same day the government banned newspaper, radio and television reporters from entering areas where security forces were deployed. By these actions the government effectively set the police and security forces above the law. The restrictions placed a wall of silence around the townships, and gave pro-apartheid forces free rein with minimum public exposure of their activities.[171]

On Christmas Eve, 1985, the UDF, COSATU, National Education Coordinating Committee and the South African Council of Churches called on their followers to express their protest against the partial state of emergency by turning off the lights in their homes.[172] The campaign was highly important for the Front, because it was the first national campaign organized by these organizations in concert. In Pietermaritzburg most township-dwellers turned off their lights as a symbolic protest. However, there was generally poor participation in non-African areas.[173]

Through the first half of 1986, political mobilization was building up in Pietermaritzburg, with church, youth and students' organizations becoming more active in the political struggles in the region. By mid-1986 protests were spilling over to other regions. On 12 June 1986, four days before the commemoration of Soweto day, the government declared a national state of emergency. The broad purpose of the emergency was to break the spiralling cycle of violence in the country, to protect the regime's black supporters, and to reassure whites that Pretoria was determined to restore order.[174] The state of emergency

---

[171] Jabulani Sithole, Personal UDF file: UDF National Working Committee conference paper (29-30 May 1987), p. 11.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Jesmond Blumenfeld, South Africa in Crisis (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1987), p. 107.

disorganized most extra-parliamentary activities nationally. Activists were restricted, banned or detained.

With the imposition of the national state of emergency, a large number of anti-apartheid activists were arrested. Within a month, some 3867 people had been arrested nationwide.[175] In Pietermaritzburg, 57 or so UDF activists were detained during the first two weeks of the state of emergency.[176] The repressive security measures taken against the UDF forced it to function virtually underground, although it was still legal.[177] However, statistics of the organizations that compiled records are not completely accurate. The detainees' support committees which were established during the state of emergency did not record the first batches of detention in detail. It was difficult for them to compile information because of security legislation and because of the remoteness of Pietermaritzburg's peri-urban areas. Also, it was dangerous for violence monitoring organizations to enter some areas because of the turbulent political situation.

In conclusion, UDF structures in the Pietermaritzburg region were set up mainly as a defence against Inkatha rather than as a challenge to the apartheid state. Problems that UDF supporters faced in the region included the conflict between youth and parents, and conflicts between UDF and Inkatha supporters. Opponents of the UDF criticised the Front's youth constituency, and argued that it was an organization dominated by unruly, riotous and radical youth. This widened the rift between parents and youth in the region. The UDF had to struggle to change this image.

The last part of the chapter surveyed the state's change of policy towards the UDF. After the formation of the UDF, the state had at first allowed it to function freely, probably with

---

[175] Ibid.

[176] Christopher Merrett, UNP, Personal Report and Research file: The Detainees Aid Committee.

[177] Collinge, `The United Democratic Front', p. 248.

the hope that UDF activists were going to work within its reform parameters. But when the UDF and other extra-parliamentary organizations began to grow in strength and militancy, the state changed its policy. This began in June 1985 when the government declared a partial state of emergency.

With the imposition of the national state of emergency in June 1986, the government tightened repressive measures against the UDF. In Pietermaritzburg, as in many other parts of the country, the UDF became disorganized. Some activists went into hiding, while others started to dissociate themselves from political activities because they were afraid of detention. Because the UDF's political meetings could not be held in public places, its political activity was drastically curtailed.[178] This opened the way for a more violent assault on UDF supporters by Inkatha. This issue will be examined in the next chapter.

[178] Christopher Merrett, UNP, Personal Report and Research file: The Detainees Aid Committee.

CHAPTER THREE

BENEATH THE LID OF OPPRESSION TENSION BOILS, 1986-1989

Introduction

This chapter seeks to analyze the functioning of the UDF in the Natal Midlands during the state of emergency years. It begins by assessing the impact of the state of emergency declared in June 1986. It ends towards the end of 1989, at a time when the MDM's defiance campaigns were taking place over the whole country. The year 1986 saw the intensification of efforts by the state and Inkatha to silence the UDF and other extra-parliamentary organizations, while 1989 marked the resurgence of the organizations that the state and Inkatha had aimed to destroy. This chapter attempts to assess how the Front survived during these years.

The 1985-6 State of Emergency severely curtailed the activities of extra-parliamentary political organizations in the country. The UDF and its affiliates became a special target of the emergency regulations. The legal space in which the Front could operate became very narrow.[1] In Pietermaritzburg, as in other parts of the country, the emergency regulations weakened the UDF structurally and organizationally. The state incapacitated most of the key UDF political activists through detention and restrictions. The functioning of the Front became very difficult. The state of emergency led to the development of `invisible' leaders of certain UDF affiliate organizations, leaders who were not known by some members of the organization and who could not let themselves become known for

---

[1] Jabulani Sithole, Pietermaritzburg, UDF file: Report of the United Democratic Front National Working Committee conference held on 29-30 May 1987, p. 23.

security reasons.[2] Later the strategy became a source of weakness, as lines of communication were cut between leaders and supporters, and it took some time to regroup.[3]

However, the state of emergency failed to suppress tensions between the UDF and Inkatha supporters in the region. If anything, it allowed Inkatha to use more and more violent means to try to crush the UDF in Natal. The conflict between them intensified, with the areas around Pietermaritzburg being the most affected. By late 1987 the conflict that had began in Imbali in 1985 had turned into a regional issue, with fighting engulfing all the Pietermaritzburg townships and its peri-urban areas.

Resistance to government polices also increased in the townships. Although the UDF as a structure was disorganized by restrictions and bannings, its supporters continued using UDF slogans and symbols. UDF supporters in Edendale began to develop their own alternative `democratic' structures in 1987. In the UDF-controlled areas a network of street committees emerged, based on `mass participation'. For the first time `democracy' was practised at a street and township level, for people were electing structures that were accountable to them. The areas dominated by the UDF accepted street committees as their true representatives. However, the street committees in other areas in the country ended up running `peoples' courts', a system of justice criticised by many people. The street committees in Pietermaritzburg were later turned into defence committees, and these structures played a significant role in defending UDF supporters during the conflict with Inkatha.

In the search for peace and stability in the region, UDF, Inkatha, church organization, the Pietermaritzburg City Council, and business organizations tried to establish peace

---

[2] Author's interview with Dumisani Phungula (UNP, 30 October 1995).

[3] Ibid.

forums. Among these were the Greater Pietermaritzburg conferences, Pietermaritzburg 2000, the Standing for the Truth Campaign, and several peace talks facilitated by the Chamber of Commerce. However, the conflict proved to be complicated, and it was particularly difficult for organizations to get agreements through consensus. UDF and Inkatha representatives pushed forward their respective organizational interests, and tried to avoid being seen as losers by their supporters.

After the launching of COSATU in 1985, the UDF found an affiliate that brought with it an organized work force to the Front. This alliance played an important role when the state imposed emergency regulations in 1986, and when the UDF was restricted and banned in 1988. During this period, a loose alliance of organizations came to the forefront in resistance politics.[4] This alliance of organizations was called the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). According to Cassius Lubisi, who served in a number of UDF-affiliated organizations, the MDM came into being between 1985 and 1986 as a result of the imposition of the emergency regulations.[5] The UDF and COSATU became the core of the Mass Democratic Movement.

However, the UDF and COSATU had difficulties in counteracting the actions of the state and Inkatha. It took a long time for either the UDF or COSATU to reach decisions, as all affiliates had to be consulted, while the state and Inkatha could easily agree to a plan or strategy and execute it immediately. On the other hand it became an advantage for the UDF and COSATU to operate as loose federal structures because it became difficult for the government to suppress all the affiliates at the same time. Furthermore, it promoted development of leadership from different organizations.

---

[4] Business Day, 30 August 1989.

[5] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 23 October 1995).

In 1987 as a strategy to strengthen itself, the UDF gave high priority nationally to the slogan `isolate the regime and broaden the alliance'.[6] The UDF permitted two bantustan parties to affiliate to it, i.e. the Seoposongwe Party from Bophutatswana and the governing Inyandza National Movement of KwaNgwane, but not Inkatha.[7]

At the national level, in March 1987 UDF-affiliated youth organizations launched a national youth body called the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). This marked a come-back for UDF youth activists after their organizations had been suppressed by the state of emergency in 1985-6. A month later another organization, the Release Mandela Campaign (RMC), was launched by UDF activists, to demand, first, the release of Nelson Mandela, the leader of the African National Congress leader who had been sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964, and, second, the unbanning of the ANC. Nationally, the two organizations came to the assistance of COSATU in trying to help in building strong UDF-affiliated organizations.[8] In the Pietermaritzburg region, the functioning of these two organizations, the RMC and SAYCO, reflected the weaknesses of the UDF affiliates. Although the national launching of the RMC took place in 1987, the Natal Midlands branch was only established three years later (1990). The first interim committee for SAYCO in the region was elected to office on 10 April 1988.[9]

---

[6] Keith Gottschalk, `UDF, 1983-1991: rise, impact and consequences', in Ian Liebenberg (ed.), The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa (Cape Town, Philip, 1994), pp. 192-193.

[7] Ibid.
See Chapter 1, under the section `The formation of the United Democratic Front' for possible reasons why the UDF isolated Inkatha.

[8] Ibid.

[9] See Footnote 144.

In 1989, as the political situation in the country changed, the government allowed extra-parliamentary organizations to embark on political activities without restrictions. Between August and September, extra-parliamentary organizations embarked on mass defiance campaigns to protest against the state of emergency and the policies of the apartheid government. The chapter ends at the time when these mass defiance campaigns were taking off.

On the run: Activists and the state of emergency

The imposition of the national state of emergency on 12 June 1986 led to the detention and restriction of many extra-parliamentary political leaders in Pietermaritzburg and in the country as a whole. For the UDF, this removal of experienced leaders created a vacuum in organizational skills and abilities.[10] The state's suppression of UDF politics through emergency regulations also affected many UDF affiliates. Most of the affiliates that had been politically active in the mid-1980s became very weak after 1986. Setting up links between the UDF and its affiliates, and between the affiliates, became more difficult. In Pietermaritzburg and elsewhere, repression led to the virtual collapse of many functioning organizations.[11]

In Pietermaritzburg the detention during the state of emergency of key regional officials like the general secretaries, S'khumbuzo Ngwenya and Martin Wittenberg, and the scarcity or absence of General Council meetings due to the emergency regulations led to the collapse of the UDF. Without organizers, mobilization work came to a halt; without General Council meetings, UDF affiliates lacked a forum or an organ that could coordinate the activities of the various affiliates. The closure of the regional offices after June in 1986 due to repressive measures led to the disorganization of the UDF because there was no

---

[10] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

[11] Author's interview with Vis Naidoo (UNP, 6 June 1995).

central place in which the Front could perform its daily duties. Meetings that were held took place in secret places, with only few people being informed of them.[12] The rationale for this was that it was not safe to be a known UDF activist, particularly in the townships. UDF activists were harassed and intimidated by Inkatha, vigilantes and by the police.[13] Furthermore, some of these external problems that the UDF in the region had to deal with ended up brewing internal conflicts within the Front. For instance, having meetings in secret places, with only a `selected' few in attendance, was seen by other UDF activists as leading to the emergence of a `cabal' of leaders and the development of clique politics.[14] It was particularly the collapse of youth organizations in the townships which weakened the Front, for in the Pietermaritzburg region the youth constituted the largest constituency of UDF supporters.

When local activists were put out of action the national UDF leadership was unable to provide assistance. This was due to the fact that most of the UDF structures in the region were not functioning; as a result, it was difficult to establish strong regional and national ties. Moreover, it was regional structures that had to play a crucial role in facilitating and coordinating democratic interaction between local affiliates and the Front at a national level.[15]

---

[12] Author's interviews with A. S. Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 October 1994), Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 6 September 1994), Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994) and Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[13] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[14] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 6 September 1994).

[15] Report of the UDF National Working Committee conference held on 29-30 May 1987 in Johannesburg, p. 13.

With the disintegration of the UDF structures and its affiliate organizations at local level, people continued responding to calls for stayaways and boycotts because issues like rents, bus-fare hikes, and police harassments affected them daily. Although people were not mobilized into formal organizations they heeded UDF calls to display their opposition to apartheid.[16] From mid-1986, the recruitment of new members into existing UDF organizations subsided because of state repression as well as intimidation from Inkatha supporters.[17] Nonetheless township social life provided some channels for the dissemination of information to unorganized groups of people. Activists knew whom to tell and where to go (places like bus terminuses, soccer grounds, shops), and eventually messages could get to most UDF supporters.

In the short-term, the effects of the state of emergency on the UDF and its affiliates largely crippled it as an effective organization. However, in the long-term the state of emergency had some positive effects on the Front. UDF youth activists, particularly those who left Imbali because of harassment, were always on the run from the security forces who wanted to detain them, and from Inkatha vigilantes who claimed that they should be `disciplined'.[18] They moved from one place to another, from Mpophomeni to Empolweni, from Sobantu to Songonzima. Wherever they remained for a day or so, they aimed to leave a contact person to start mobilizing people into joining UDF-affiliated organizations.[19] For the first time places that had previously been politically quiet became zones that bred anti-apartheid activists.[20]

---

[16] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[17] Ibid.

[18] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[19] Author's interviews with Mduduzi Ndlovu and Sobhuza Dlamini (6 June 1995; UNP, 8 June 1995).

[20] Author's interview with Vis Naidoo (UNP, 6 June 1995).

In the long run, the detention of UDF activists and the expulsion of UDF and AZAPO youths from Imbali, a process that had began in 1985, had precisely the opposite effects from those hoped for by the state and the vigilantes. Detention brought together many people behind bars, which gave activists an opportunity to discuss political issues. Some people who had little political understanding left the prisons politically matured.[21] Detention and harassment of UDF activists led to the emergence of a new and young leadership. For example, Imbali witnessed the coming to the forefront of Sipho Gabela, Bheki Zulu and Sobhuza Dlamini, and at Mpophomeni there was Boy Ndlela.[22]

One should be careful not to romanticize detention, which often had adverse psychological effects on detainees. Conditions of detention differed; some people were in solitary confinement, while others were interrogated day and night.[23] The Kenyan author and activists Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that `detention is torture and the cruelty of it is ignorance of when one would be released, and this torture is not only for those inside but even those outside'[24].

After realising that restrictions and detentions were not effectively destroying extra-parliamentary organizations, in February 1988 the state banned the UDF and sixteen other organizations. It prohibited all the banned organizations from engaging in any political activity.[25] The state also severely restricted the activities of COSATU. The UDF was

---

[21] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

[22] Author's interviews with Sobhuza Dlamini, Vis Naidoo and Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 6 June 1995).

[23] Author's interview with Ahmed Bawa (UNP, 19 May 1995).

[24] Ngugi wa Thiong'o A Writers Prison Diary (Nairobi, Heinemann, 1981), p. 146.

[25] Natal Witness, 25 February 1988. See Appendix 3 for a list of the organizations that were affected.

permitted to retain its assets and keep its books up to date.[26] But because of detentions, banning and restrictions, it was difficult to run the offices. Nationally, the UDF continued its activities under the mantle of the MDM.[27] Eighteen leading UDF political figures were served with restriction orders.[28] In Pietermaritzburg, some of the UDF leaders who appeared in the Natal Witness newspaper under the column of those who were restricted were A. S. Chetty, Simon Gqubule and Jabu Ngwenya.[29] In place of restricted activists, certain individuals took over the functioning of the Front. This led to in-fighting within the UDF, with some activists being accused by others of forming a `cabal'.

The emergence of clique politics

By 1986 it had become risky to be a known UDF activist in the Pietermaritzburg region. When political protests took place in the region, police often arrested and detained UDF activists whom they knew. In addition to police harassment in Natal, UDF supporters were always at loggerheads with Inkatha supporters.[30] The hostile political environment for UDF supporters in black areas led to the concentration of the Front's leadership in the hands of few individuals. Most of those who took over leadership were Indian activists in functioning organizations like the Natal Indian Congress (NIC). Such dynamics led to the emergence of a controlling core group within the UDF, later called a `cabal' by other UDF activists who were not part of this group. However, cabal politics could be more easily understood as group politics rather than race politics. Indian `comrades' who were

---

[26] Hennie Kotze and Anneke Greyling, Political Organizations in South Africa, (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1994), p. 209.

[27] Ibid.

[28] See Apendix 5.

[29] Natal Witness, 22 February 1988.

[30] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

perceived as forming the core of the group were not alone, for individuals of other race groups were involved.[31]

Among UDF activists, there were different opinions about what constituted `cabal' politics. According to a report drafted by some UDF supporters from the Natal Midlands region, the `cabal' was undemocratically oriented practices that had emerged within the UDF structures from 1986 onwards. Such practices were carried out by a clique of activists who were caucusing, and taking decisions for the Front and bypassing democratic mechanisms laid down for the Front.[32] These individuals controlled the `democratic' practices of the UDF and access to resources, among other things.[33] They abused their positions through undemocratic practices. Their practices did not allow for evaluation, debates, and discussions of the Front affairs. That led to an end of the UDF as a democratic structure. From 1986 onwards, some activists claimed that the Front in Natal was dominated by a coterie which gave instructions to the activists and expected them to obey.[34]

Different UDF activists held different views on the impact of the cabal in the Pietermaritzburg region. Some perceived the cabal's activities as highly destructive, while others argued that there was no alternative, as conditions were not conducive for the UDF to operate democratically. Some former UDF activists argued that all effective political

---

[31] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 23 October 1995).

[32] Jabulani Sithole, Pietermaritzburg, UDF file: Report on identifying undemocratic practices (no page numbers indicated).

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

organizations are run by small groups of individuals, and that the so-called `cabal' needed to be viewed in this light.[35]

Although there were a number of reasons for the emergence of the cabal, the state of emergency was the main reason. The argument from UDF activists who failed to see reasons for the `cabal' accusation is that the state of emergency led to detention and restrictions, and limited the opportunities for political activity, as a result only a few individuals could meet and keep the organization going. Of those who were labelled by other supporters as forming the `cabal', some were activists who were trying to keep the Front functioning.

Between 1987 and 1989 the UDF executive and the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses held several meetings and workshops in an attempt to defuse accusations of `cabalism'. (Although the UDF was officially banned in 1988, activists continued calling themselves UDF supporters collectively or individually). In March 1988, November 1988, December 1988, and February 1989, the UDF Regional Executive Council held meetings (on one occasion at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg) to discuss the issue.[36] The outcomes of these meetings were all much the same. They all condemned the practices of individuals who were seen as trying to control the Front, and acknowledged that they perpetuated and reinforced schisms within the Front's structures and among its affiliates. At the March 1988 meeting, six main problems were identified.[37] To quote a UDF document:

> `There is a lack of political leadership in the organization (UDF);

---

[35] Author's interviews with A. S. Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 October 1994) and Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

[36] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 6 September 1994).

[37] Jabulani Sithole, Pietermaritzburg, UDF file: Report on identifying undemocratic practices.

There is a break down in communication;
The problems emerged over the amount and distribution of resources;
The UDF have severe difficulties in remaining accountable and democratic during the state of emergency;
The structures on the ground are weak or not coordinated;
There is generally a low level of political education'.[38]

Having identified the problems, the executive's next undertaking was to try to address them. UDF activists envisaged the restructuring of the Front in the region as the best means of solving the problem. The process of restructuring was delayed until 1989, and in the event it was never completed, for in that year extra-parliamentary organizations again embarked on defiance campaigns, political activists began to organize openly, and secret meetings faded away.

Politics and territorial control: The UDF and Inkatha

The struggles between the UDF and Inkatha, besides being characterized by ideological differences, were in essence about domination of one group over the other. Each organization aimed at gaining control of particular territories. Inkatha and the vigilante committees had managed to evict the `radical' youth from Imbali in 1985-6. After the declaration of a state of emergency in June 1986, seeing an opportunity to further cripple an opponent reeling from the impact of the emergency measures, Inkatha began to escalate violent attacks on UDF supporters.[39]

As the only political party in KwaZulu, Inkatha controlled the KwaZulu government, and it had the means to control schools, hospitals, transport and police.[40] The KwaZulu administration controlled Edendale Hospital, and clinics and schools in Imbali and

---

[38] Ibid.

[39] Stephen Davis, Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War (London, Yale University Press, 1987), p. 95.

[40] Fatima Meer, Resistance in the Townships, p. 202.

Vulindlela. It also had the right to allocate housing and land in areas that fell under the KwaZulu government, jurisdiction. Inkatha used all these powers to entrench its party position.[41] In the mid-1980s Chief Buthelezi, the leader of Inkatha and Chief Minister of the KwaZulu government, constantly warned civil servants working for the KwaZulu Government that he would dismiss them if they supported the UDF.[42]

By early 1987 Inkatha was intensifying its efforts to expel UDF supporters completely from the townships in the Edendale valley. In January 1987, there was a full-scale clash between members of the Inkatha Youth Brigade and the supporters and players of the Young Buccaneers soccer team in Ashdown. Inkatha and vigilantes attacked the star player of the Young Buccaneers side, who had been associated with the UDF in the past.[43] When other players and supporters came to his defence, they all became targets of attack by Inkatha.[44] These attempts by Inkatha to `discipline' its opponents in Ashdown stimulated political organization and mobilization of anti-Inkatha groups in Edendale townships. People who were opposed to Inkatha galvanized the youth to defend their communities against further Inkatha attacks.[45]

To some people in Edendale, memories of being told by Chief Buthelezi that they were the offspring of people who assisted the British to destroy the Zulu kingdom in 1879 served to enhance their fears and concerns against Inkatha.[46] Non-Inkatha members in Edendale

---

[41] Ibid.

[42] Natal Witness, 20 December 1987.

[43] Fatima Meer, Resistance in the Townships, p. 200.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Author's interviews with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994) and Dumisani Phungula (UNP, 30 October 1995).

[46] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, 30 August 1994).

feared that Inkatha might use this opportunity to settle this old grudge.[47] Furthermore, the Edendale community, with its independent landlords, was prepared to resist incorporation into the KwaZulu bantustan. It was in Edendale in 1987 that the UDF formed its first street committees in the region. This led to the formation of coordinated Self-Defence Units (SDUs). These became the first cells of defence structures that the UDF-affiliated organizations established in the Pietermaritzburg region.[48] Later, UDF-affiliated organizations formed SDUs in most of the Pietermaritzburg area. The members of the SDUs commonly called themselves comrades or amaqabane, while they called the Inkatha faction otheleweni or oklova.[49]

Because of the powers that Inkatha wielded in rural areas through chiefs and Izinduna and in Imbali through the township council, its supporters were able to use force to recruit people to the organization. The indiscriminate forced recruitment by Inkatha supporters antagonized large numbers of people, even some police officers who were usually seen as Inkatha's natural and traditional allies.[50] Beside Inkatha's forced recruitment, there were other factors that sparked conflicts between UDF and Inkatha supporters. For instance, on 2 June 1987 ten youths coming from a funeral of UDF member Mbongeni Majola were

---

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] The name otheleweni has its origins in the warnings which were supposedly given to UDF supporters by Chief Buthelezi. It is said that Buthelezi constantly warned UDF supporters that Inkatha would drive (thela) them over the cliffs (eweni). I did not find out the origins of the word Oklova. Amaqabane is Xhosa word meaning a close friend or a colleague.
Author's interviews with Boni Khuzwayo; Zola Mthembu; Sibongiseni Mkhize; Mzwandile Magaqa (UNP, August-September, 1995).

[50] Fatima Meer, Resistance in the Townships, p. 201.

killed in Imbali. An Inkatha spokesperson claimed responsibility for the attack. He said that members of Inkatha had heard that the youths had stoned the home of Z. B. Mncwabe after the funeral, and they had been singing and chanting that they were going to kill and burn Inkatha members.[51] The extension of conflict could also be understood as a product of retaliation between UDF and Inkatha supporters.

In September 1987 violent clashes between Inkatha and the UDF suddenly spread like wildfire in the Edendale valley townships. Fighting was reported in Ashdown, Edendale proper, Machibisa, Caluza and right up to ngaphezulu areas of Gezubuso.[52] Most of these clashes, UDF supporters alleged, were due to reaction against forced recruitment drives orchestrated by Inkatha. Inkatha supporters on the other hand claimed that clashes were due to UDF recruitment drives. Recriminations and retaliation followed. In its `recruitment drives' Inkatha had various advantages over the UDF.[53] Inkatha had the backing of the KwaZulu bantustan and of the South African state. Logistically and financially, Inkatha was far better organized than the UDF.

Heavy floods at the end of September 1987 gave the UDF an opportunity to establish civic organizations and working committees in the most affected areas.[54] Inkatha also tried to use the opportunity for its campaigns. Some flood victims alleged that Inkatha officials forced them to join the organization before they were given relief aid.[55] A worker for a state relief distribution agency confirmed that `eight out of ten flood victims said they were

---

[51] Natal Witness, 3 June 1987.

[52] Natal Witness, 28 September 1987. Ngaphezulu literally means `upper'. It refers to the areas in the upper Msunduzi valley.

[53] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

[54] Author's interview with Vis Naidoo (UNP, 6 June 1995).

[55] Fatima Meer, Resistance in the Townships, p. 201.

forced to join Inkatha before they could get help from the organization.[56] Both organizations' mobilizations campaigns were not successful, in that the humanitarian aid offered by several other organizations had nothing to do with political orientation.[57] People understood the problem as a natural disaster, and they ignored the political solutions (joining political organizations so as to attain support) which the UDF and Inkatha hoped to offer.

In September 1987, some prison warders, security police and other ordinary members of the force told international journalists that they were fighting alongside UDF activists not because of political affiliation, but because of the indiscriminate attacks of Inkatha.[58] In September 1987, three police officers were suspended for allegedly taking part in the killing of 13 Inkatha Youth Brigade members, in what the local residents described as a preemptive strike.[59] This incident took place at Taylor's Halt, where Inkatha Youth Brigade members had held a meeting. When an Inkatha official V. Mvelase, made a public accusation that the police supported the UDF, Brigadier J. Kotze replied by saying that `they' in the police force have made investigations into these police officers whom Mvelase claimed were UDF members, but they have found that those who were being accused were police who refused to join Inkatha'.[60] In spite of the common view that the police colluded with Inkatha in attacking UDF supporters, there were some policemen who were opposed to Inkatha.

In October 1987 the police arrested number of UDF supporters in the Pietermaritzburg region. This followed the call made by the Deputy Minister of Law and Order, Roelf Meyer,

---

[56] Ibid.

[57] Author's interview with Vis Naidoo (UNP, 6 June 1995).

[58] Fatima Meer, Resistance in the Townships, p. 201.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Echo, 1 October 1987.

to step up operations in the townships as a means of curbing unrest.[61] The state protection that Inkatha enjoyed became obvious during these police operations, as most of those who were arrested were UDF supporters. For instance in December 1987, about 115 UDF youth activists, nearly all from Songonzima or eMbumbane areas, were arrested.[62] When they were released, they were summoned by Chief Ngcobo, from whose territory most of them came, to appear before him with their parents and apologise for joining the UDF.[63]

At the beginning of 1988 the conflict between the UDF and Inkatha intensified. On 1 February 1988, the valley was in turmoil again, when about 1 500 Inkatha vigilantes held a meeting in the upper reaches of Edendale at KwaMkhulu and then attacked the residents of Ashdown, a stronghold of the UDF.[64] The group returned to the township the following day, but the UDF local defence committees repulsed them.[65] Inkatha's attack followed widespread allegations that the organization was planning to execute a mission called `Operation Doom', which sought to destroy all the `alternative structures' created by the UDF and to restore the authority of parents and the traditional chiefs.[66]

After UDF supporters had successfully defended the Edendale townships against Inkatha attacks, Inkatha shifted its focus to the peri-urban areas of Vulindlela, carrying out severe repressive measures against UDF supporters. Most of its `warlords' who came to prominence were from these areas, and chiefs in Vulindlela exercised their authority to

---

[61] Natal Witness, 20 October 1987.

[62] Tim Smith, They have Killed my Children: One Community in Conflict 1983-90 (Pietermaritzburg, PACSA, 1990), p. 7.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Natal Witness, 2 February 1988.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Karl Von Holdt, `Vigilantes versus defence committees', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13. 2 (1988), pp. 16-25.

suppress UDF activists. Individuals and households were forced to buy Inkatha cards and to become members and attend meetings.[67] These actions fuelled further opposition and confrontation. The UDF youth activists from these regions became the most militant and aggressive, overshadowing the `radical' youth from Imbali.[68] They became caught up in the politics of war, as was reflected in the songs and slogans which they composed. For instance they sang a song like: *`Izinyo ngezinyo; Babetshilo eMgungundlovu bethi Inkatha sizoyitshisa'* (tooth for a tooth; they have said at Pietermaritzburg that we will burn Inkatha). They also called themselves *`izikhafulagazi'* (those who spill blood).[69]

At the beginning of 1988, political conflict spread to KwaZulu schools in the townships and around the city. The Natal Witness cited widespread reports that pupils were being told to produce Inkatha cards before being admitted into some KwaZulu schools, particularly in the Sweetwaters areas and at Siqongweni high school in Imbali.[70] In most schools in the peri-urban areas of Pietermaritzburg, the conflicts between Inkatha and UDF-supporting students were intense. Students who supported Inkatha identified those who sympathized with the UDF, pointing them out to school committee members. In these areas most school committee members were Inkatha supporters, and they told students who supported the UDF to leave the schools, or harassed them there.[71] Some schools went as far as closing. Inkatha supporters called the students who supported the UDF amaphekula (those who cause disorder).[72] Some students who were in UDF-affiliated organizations had

---

[67] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Natal Witness, 30 January 1988.

[71] Author's interview with Nkosinathi Gabela and Weekend Ngubane (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 3 July 1995).

[72] Ibid.

to carry not only books and pens when going to school but ogwatsha (home-made guns) as well.[73]

These fierce struggles between UDF and Inkatha supporters ultimately resulted in many parts of Edendale, Imbali and the peri-urban areas of Pietermaritzburg being declared `no-go' areas by the inhabitants. At night UDF and Inkatha supporters alike physically guarded the areas which they dominated. Unauthorized entry usually resulted in death or at least a severe beating.[74] In these areas, places were renamed by dominant political groups with names of countries or cities associated with a history of war or, in the case of UDF supporters, of places which they knew were training ANC exiles. In the Edendale and Vulindlela area there were places called Ulundi, Angola, Maputo and Moscow, and Imbali had its own Vietnam and Beirut.

Most people who had their homes on the fringes or in the border zones of the townships were forced to leave because of constant attacks. Also drastically affected were the people who supported a side that was not dominant in a particular township. Some UDF families who left their homes for safer areas, fearing attacks from Inkatha supporters or feeling insecure and unsafe, left their homes with young males from the family, or from related families, to guard their houses and property.[75] Some of these homes were later used by young `comrades' as camping sites, commonly known as ingoja (hidden place).[76] Usually it was at these homes that war rituals took place.

---

[73] Ibid.

[74] Natal Witness, 19 September 1987.

[75] Author's interview with Isaac Selepe (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 17 March 1995).

[76] Ibid.

UDF and Inkatha fighters alike took popular Zulu traditional beliefs and superstitions very seriously during the `war' period. Before people could go into battle, an inyanga (medicine man) was called to treat the participants with intelezi medicine so that they would be bold when facing the enemy.[77] Some people became famous through using stronger medicine, which was believed to offer protection from bullets. This was ukuqhiha. In the use of intelezi and ukuqhiha, people believed that Inkatha was stronger and more organized than the UDF.[78] This was probably because Inkatha was dominated by elders who believed in, and had some knowledge of, African `traditional' medicines, unlike the UDF which was a predominantly youthful side with little attachment to, or knowledge of, `African tradition'.

Weapons that were used by UDF activists during this conflict were spears, knives, oqwatsha and stones. The UDF defence committees developed the slogan, Isikhali seqabane yitshe (the weapon of a comrade is a stone).[79] As the war intensified, the UDF self-defence units, through their street committees, began to order residents in the areas which they dominated to donate money towards the purchasing of `community defence weapons' (izikhali zokuvikela umphakathi).[80] These guns were never numerous enough to be give to everyone. Those who were allocated guns were most commonly those who had had military training (eg. ex-soldiers or ex-policemen) or those who showed aggression when speaking about Inkatha and the state.[81]

---

[77] Ibid.

[78] Author's interview with J. Ndlovu (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 14 March 1995).

[79] Author's interview with Isaac Selepe (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 17 March 1995).

[80] Author's interview with Zithulele Ngubane (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 3 May 1995).

[81] Ibid.

During these political struggles Inkatha appeared more organized because of the privileges that it enjoyed from the KwaZulu government and from the South African state. Its youth structures were fully functional, and in the tribal areas the chiefs and izinduna kept their subjects in check to see that they maintained loyalty to the KwaZulu government.[82] Inkatha supporters did not experience constraints in funding, in transportation, and in supply of weapons to the same extent as UDF supporters. The reality of this imbalance was that the conflicts posed a threat for many young black people, from both Inkatha and UDF organizations, who saw war as the only solution for their future.

Participants in these fights between the UDF and Inkatha were not only local supporters of these two organizations. Both Inkatha and UDF-affiliated organizations organized outsiders to come and help. `Comrades' from the Durban region helped the UDF, while Inkatha drew in supporters from the rural areas, especially from the Amanyavu people at Table Mountain.[83] These people had a history of supporting Inkatha, for their chief, Bangubukhosi Mdluli, had successfully driven out followers of the UDF, forcing them to seek refuge with Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo. Bangubukhosi and his Amanyavu were at the time engaged in bitter struggles with Chief Maphumulo and his people. Bangubukhosi accused Mhlabunzima of accommodating his dissident subjects.[84]

The analysis above focuses on the conflicts between the UDF, Inkatha and the KwaZulu government. The following assessment focuses on the role of the South African state in the UDF and Inkatha conflicts. UDF activists always viewed the state's interventions with suspicion. They perceived the government's strategies, usually implemented by police, as

---

[82] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

[83] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994) and Sibongiseni Mkhize (UNP, 28 July 1995).

[84] Ibid.

aimed at ensuring the repression of the UDF and the victory of Inkatha. The common strategy of the state was to detain UDF activists. Detentions became more frequent after the imposition of the state of emergency in 1986. The state effectively banned all gatherings, including weddings and parties. It became shameful for a UDF youth to die of disease, for `It was death with a bullet that UDF supporters hailed, the death with a funeral that would attract the masses'.[85] The more coffins there were, the greater the occasion was, and attending funerals was like going to witness the spirit of freedom.[86] The crowds sang songs praising uMkhonto weSizwe and acted out the firing of AK47 rifles; banners acclaiming the ANC, Nelson Mandela, and the Communist Party dotted the crowds, while the same parties' colours covered the coffins.[87] During such gatherings some people would start spreading reports that the police who were present were harassing members of the crowd, so that people would react immediately and challenge them.[88] For Inkatha, a funeral for a victim of a clash with UDF supporters was confirmation of the evils of the UDF, which aimed at exterminating Inkatha supporters (seen as collaborators) in conjunction with the ANC mission-in-exile. Inkatha supporters saw UDF supporters as being incited by `radicals' and the propaganda of `Radio Freedom' (on the ANC radio station in Lusaka), to kill them. The solution was to expel these `radicals' from the region.[89]

---

[85] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994).

[86] Author's interviews with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994), Makhosi Khoza (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 4 April 1995) and J. Ndlovu (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 22 June 1995). Debbie Bonnin and Ari Sitas, `Lesson from the Sarmcol strike', in William Cobbett and Robin Cohen (eds.), Popular Struggles in South Africa, (London, 1988), p. 169.

[87] Davis, Apartheid's Rebels, p. 90.

[88] Author's interview with M. Makhanya (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 17 September 1994).

[89] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 1994).

During the period 1986-9 the state intensified its strategy of trying to silence the UDF in Pietermaritzburg region. After imposing emergency regulations, detaining, and restricting UDF activists, the state finally banned the UDF and other sixteen extra-parliamentary organizations in February 1988. Sixteen hours after the announcement of the bannings, the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly called for all African people in Natal to be placed under its jurisdiction and to come under the authority of the KwaZulu police force.[90] The KwaZulu government was clearly trying to take the opportunity of enforcing its rule over Natal as a whole, and not just the territories in KwaZulu.

When the Minister of Law and Order, A. Vlok, visited Pietermaritzburg on 26 February 1988, he categorically warned the residents that the South African Police (SAP) would face the future in alliance with `moderates' (those who accepted the state's reforms), and would fight against `radical groups' (those who did not accepting state reforms).[91] The minister was seeking to justify the recent bannings.[92] Under new legislation the banned organizations were not supposed to be involved in any activities unless they had permission from the Minister of Law and Order. The minister's visit to the region was ostensibly to present a trophy to the Town Hill police station, after it had been judged the neatest police station in South Africa for the year 1987. Of the nine police stations in the Greater Pietermaritzburg region, only two were situated in the black areas. (A second one at Imbali was opened in the 1990s.)[93]

---

[90] Natal Witness, 27 February 1988.

[91] Ibid., 27 February 1988.

[92] Ibid., 25 February 1988.
See Appendix, for a list of organizations that were affected.

[93] Police stations in the Greater Pietermaritzburg were Imbali, Loop Street, Alexandra Road, Hilton, Prestbury, Town Hill, Bishopstowe, Mountain Rise and Plessislaer.

For its part, the state became more and more openly partisan towards Inkatha and the vigilantes in the Pietermaritzburg region. Its aim was to destroy the ability of the UDF and other progressive organization to operate effectively.[94] Inkatha activists were protected by the state, even when there was reason to institute criminal proceedings against them.[95] In the national state of emergency, nearly all the people detained in the Pietermaritzburg region were UDF supporters.[96] The collusion of the state with Inkatha was also noted in police actions, particularly in their failure to respond to urgent calls from UDF supporters for the police to ward off Inkatha attackers. On the other hand, the police intervened quickly and vigorously to disarm UDF youth going to defend the borders of areas under attack from Inkatha.[97] In addition to these perceived acts of commission were acts of omission. It seemed as if police were instructed that if they saw UDF supporters being attacked they should look aside, but if they saw an Inkatha supporter being attacked they should intervene.[98]

On 2 March 1988 the state deployed 300 `kitskonstabels' (`instant constables') in the Greater Edendale area. The state's intentions were to increase the presence of armed personnel in the region.[99] This force consisted mainly of Inkatha supporters from the region. The rationale for recruiting them locally was probably that they knew the situation far better than outsiders and they knew who the enemy was, that is, the young `radicals'. It soon became clear that this new force operated in effect as an armed wing for Inkatha.

---

[94] Christopher Merrett, UNP, Personal Research and Report file: Detainees Aid Committee (no page numbers).

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Matthew Kentridge, `Pietermaritzburg under the knife', South African Outlook (January, 1990). p. 234.

[98] Author's interview with Khaba Mkhize (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 30 October 1994).

[99] Natal witness, 2 March 1988.

Some members of the force were from the Inkatha youth brigade, and had charges involving violence pending against them in court.[100] For instance, Weseni Awetta, an Inkatha Youth Brigade member and the son of the Imbali councillor and senior Inkatha member, Abdul Awetta, was among the members of the force.[101] After being subjected to public criticism for recruiting people who were subjects of a Supreme Court interdict, the police department discharged them on 10 March 1988. Nonetheless, the controversy surrounding the force did not disappear.

During the years 1987-8, UDF activists used court interdicts to seek protection from courts against assaults from Inkatha supporters, and also to publicize the activities of the Front. Although the number of interdicts obtained increased during these years, their impact was minimal as fighting continued between UDF and Inkatha supporters. Some of the court cases between the UDF and Inkatha supporters were the following, with all the respondent being Inkatha members:

> Mkhize and others versus D. Ntombela and others, case No 2887/87, 2 November 1987. Hebron Mkhize and others versus Sichizo Zuma, case No 2894/87, 2 November 1987. Zulu and others versus Awetta and others, case No 3029/87, 16 November 1987. Sililo and others versus Jerome Mncwabe, case No 3199/87, 2 November 1987. J. Mthembu and others versus Sichizo Zuma, case No 202/88, 8 January 1988.[102]

An overview of struggles between UDF and Inkatha supporters in the late 1980s indicates that the political rivalry between the two movements was a crucial factor in causing the violence that engulfed the Pietermaritzburg region. Socioeconomic problems among African people formed part of the background to the struggles. However, to view socioeconomic hardships as the sole cause of the conflict is to overlook reality. Natal was

---

[100] Ibid., 10 March 1988.

[101] Ibid.

[102] John Jeffery, `Witness to the crisis: The Inkatha interdicts' (Paper given to seminar on violence in Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, August 1988).

not the only region in South Africa drastically affected by the apartheid laws. Socioeconomic conditions sustained the conflicts, but the immediate source was political antagonism. Through its apartheid apparatuses, and through the police force, the state manipulated that disunity.

From the mid-1980s, the UDF in the Pietermaritzburg region was compelled to struggle on two fronts. In the townships, its supporters became increasingly involved in physical confrontations with Inkatha supporters and the police. In the city, UDF leaders were involved in diplomatic manoeuvres to re-establish peace between the warring factions. This involvement in multiple struggles posed great difficulties for the UDF in the region, for there was no clear functioning mechanism to relate different strategies. Decisions taken by the executive in meetings were not efficiently and properly explained to supporters on the ground. This does not mean that messages were failing to get to the people, but that the content often got distorted. The next section assess the techniques that UDF used when it was confronted by these problems.

Beyond political issues: The UDF's search for alliances

After its launching in December 1985, COSATU became a strong UDF ally nationally. The UDF-COSATU mobilization campaigns tended to focus on problems facing the urban population. The UDF's broad, populist appeal directly opposed the narrow ethnic appeal of Inkatha.[103] UDF-COSATU campaigns were directed at problems which the workers faced in the work place and at widespread community grievances.

Struggles involving bus drivers in Pietermaritzburg illustrate this. Due to geographic location of factories far from the black residential areas in Pietermaritzburg, as in many other cities in South Africa, transport issues are important in deciding the outcome of

[103] Kentridge, `Pietermaritzburg under the knife', p. 235.

industrial action. Pietermaritzburg remained the only major city in South Africa that did not utilize a rail link from its townships to its places of work.[104] Without bus transport, even those who wished to defy strikes or stayaway actions were not able to do so.

In the Pietermaritzburg region during the 1980s there were two major black bus services, Sizanani MaZulu Transport, which serviced the area beyond Edendale (Taylor's Halt, Mafakathini, Elandskop, Tafeleni, Gezubuso and Swartkop), and the transport department of the Pietermaritzburg Municipality, which serviced most other townships.[105] The total workforce of the two companies combined was about 800.[106] The Trade and General Workers Union (TGWU) a COSATU affiliate, had a very high percentage of members in both companies, while the United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA), the Inkatha-linked trade union, had a small presence.[107]

The year 1987 witnessed an escalation of attacks on bus drivers in the region. The TGWU gave the following account about what precipitated attacks on drivers by Inkatha and the vigilante groups:

> *`The drivers' members of the TGWU believe that there are several reasons for their attacks. First Inkatha blamed them for the success of the stayaway on 5-6 May 1987, when residents heeded the COSATU-UDF calls for a stayaway to protest an only whites' Parliamentary election. Since without buses even those opposed to the stayaway could not get to work. Secondly the bus drivers were a powerful force in the COSATU local, they have been organized since the early 1980s and have*

---

[104] Anne Truluck, Pietermaritzburg 1990: The Fractured City (Pietermaritzburg, Natal Midlands Black Sash, 1990), p. 37.

[105] Trade and General Workers Union views, `Bus drivers under attack by vigilantes', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 2 (1988), pp. 45-52.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

helped to organize many other workplace since then. Therefore, an attack on the bus drivers was an attack on COSATU in Pietermaritzburg[108]'.

The two-day stayaway called by the Mass Democratic Movement (an alliance of anti-apartheid organizations, that had COSATU and UDF as the main organizations) in protest against the whites-only election on 5-6 May 1987 achieved an almost total stayaway in the commercial sector of the city.[109] Less than a week after the stayaway, the police raided the COSATU offices in the city and seized about 5000 documents.[110]

The decisions about stayaways and other actions taken by COSATU and its affiliates also affected people who supported Inkatha. Even drivers who belonged to UWUSA, the Inkatha-backed union, heeded the calls for stayaways. The reasons why they were unable to defy the calls can be understood by analysing the disadvantages they faced in relation to the routes which they used. It was difficult for Inkatha supporters to travel to work in the city because the main route from most Inkatha-supporting areas in Vulindlela passed through Edendale, an area that was predominantly UDF. Therefore, it was risky to travel to town on stayaway days for Inkatha supporters. It was equally risky for any driver to take chances and work on days that COSATU-UDF declared as stayaways.

Inkatha supporters were bitter with COSATU because of this reality, and this led to a fight among the bus drivers themselves. The Gezubuso depot for Sizanani MaZulu buses witnessed the first public shootings between UWUSA and COSATU-TGWU union members in the first week of October 1987.[111] From the October shooting incidents between the two union members, killings of bus drivers in union-related fighting increased.

---

[108] Ibid.

[109] Truluck, The Fractured City, p. 4

[110] Natal Witness, 15 May 1987.

[111] Echo, 8 October 1987.

The government and the company officials failed to control the situation within the company, even when it spilled over to the community at large.

In another domain of struggle, the UDF tried to broaden its approaches by pressuring organizations that had access to, and influence with, the government. The UDF asked these organizations to use their influence in pressing for an end to conflict. This led to the development of peace forums. These initiatives came mostly from church organizations and from the Pietermaritzburg City Council. One of the instances where the UDF tried to put pressure on a certain group was on 11 February 1987, when its representatives pulled out from participating in the Greater Pietermaritzburg Conference (organized by the Pietermaritzburg City Council to discuss possible means and ways that could bring to an end the conflicts in the region), setting out the following conditions for their return:

> `The conference must be fully democratic and fully representative of the people of Pietermaritzburg.
> The city of Pietermaritzburg binds itself to fully implement all decisions of the conference.
> All UDF affiliates and members must be able to participate fully in the process.
> All detainees must be released.
> All restrictions on the UDF's ability to operate openly must be lifted and all attacks by other forces on its members must cease'.[112]

The Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce played an important role as a mediator between Inkatha-UWUSA on the one hand and UDF-COSATU on the other. The Chamber was brought into the scene because the struggles led to the disruption of business and industry in the region. At times workers were unable to come to work due to stayaways and boycotts, or because they had to defend their homes from imminent attacks. To discuss problems generated by this conflict and to try to get solutions, the Chamber of Commerce was invited by both organizations to act as a mediator. From 24 November 1987 to 16 March 1988, the delegation sent by the Chamber of Commerce to be mediators in between COSATU-UDF and Inkatha-UWUSA peace talks was led by Paul Van Uytrecht (general

---

[112] Natal Witness, 12 February 1987.

manager of Chamber of Commerce). He was forced to resign following pressure from Buthelezi and the Association of Commerce (ASSOCOM), after a report which quoted him as accusing Inkatha of responsibility for the conflicts in the region was published in the New York Times.[113] After Paul Van Uytrecht, Kay Makan became the chairperson of the Chamber of Commerce (up to 1991), and led the team of mediators.

Official peace talks under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce began on 24 November 1987.[114] The organizations represented were the UDF, Inkatha, COSATU, UWUSA, and the churches. The UDF and Inkatha delegations wanted to win the support of the Chamber for their respective sides.[115] Inkatha saw the Chamber as an employer organization and therefore as having clout with the unions. The UDF-COSATU alliance viewed the Chamber as a group that had economic ideas that matched those of Inkatha, and therefore the Chamber had to use its influence to pressure Inkatha into stopping its aggression.[116] The Chamber found itself trapped in between: they wanted their business to operate, while on the other hand it was difficult to find solutions to the conflicts.

The first phase of the peace talks ended in a dramatic deadlock in a meeting held in December 1987 in Durban. Inkatha and UWUSA introduced a document purportedly written by the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC called `Inqaba Yabasebenzi', dated October 1987.[117] The document criticized UWUSA and Inkatha, and called for the destruction of both organizations. Furthermore, the document outlined ways in which the

---

[113] Ibid., 16 March 1988.

[114] Ibid., 25 November 1987.

[115] Author's interview with Kay Makan (Pietermaritzburg, 23 September 1994).

[116] Simon Burton interview with Paul Van Uytrecht, `Directly or indirectly you are involved', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 2 (1988), pp. 38-45.

[117] Natal Witness, 10 December 1987.

UDF and COSATU should use peace talks to their advantage against Inkatha and UWUSA. Inkatha and UWUSA demanded that the UDF and COSATU repudiate the document before any talks could resume. They did so on 15 December 1987.[118]
On 22 January 1988, further peace talks were held by UDF, Inkatha, UWUSA, COSATU, and a number of clergy.[119] On the same day, the Natal Midlands UDF and COSATU issued a joint statement indicating what they viewed as causes of the conflict in the region:

> `The suppression of information by the National Party
> The curtailment of the freedom of expression by the National Party government
> A largely unaccountable and politically motivated police force
> The desperate protection of Inkatha by powerful political interests
> The role played by the SABC in constructing a picture of `black on black' violence, to shift focus attention away from the state's responsibility'.[120]

However, most of these peace talks made very little progress in curbing the escalating violence. To a certain extent the state was involved in scuttling peace talks. For instance in November 1987, the police arrested ten UDF activists at a peace meeting in the city.[121] The banning of the UDF in February 1988 meant that most of the UDF executive members in the Pietermaritzburg region could not directly participate in peace talks. For instance people like the UDF chairperson of the region, A. S. Chetty, and the Rev. S. Gqubule were placed under restriction orders during this time. Others like S. Ngwenya, M. Wittenberg, and K. Chetty were on conditional release at one stage or another, and were forbidden to attend any public meetings. At the beginning of 1988, the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Social Awareness (PACSA) reported that between June 1987 and February 1988, 800 people from the city were in police detention. This figure included some UDF executive members.[122] The discontinuity in UDF representation at the peace talks had serious

---

[118] Ibid., 16 December 1987.

[119] Ibid., 22 January 1988.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Natal Witness, 14 November 1987.

[122] Ibid., 6 April 1988.

repercussions in that the whole process had to start afresh with new members. It became difficult to achieve any progress under such circumstances.

In June 1988 the trade union federations, COSATU and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), in protest against the government actions of trying to silence extra-parliamentary opposition, organized a three-day national protest. It was directed primarily against the Labour Relations Amendment Bill and the banning of the 17 organizations in February.[123] The Labour Relations Amendment Bill prohibited political strikes, outlawed solidarity strikes, disallowed workers from striking for the same reason within 15 months, and empowered employers to sue unions for the loss of income incurred during work stoppages.[124] The protests therefore aimed, firstly, to demonstrate their condemnation of the Bill by organizing large numbers of workers to participate in demonstrations, secondly, to demonstrate that the Bill would not guarantee weaker unions and industrial peace, but on the contrary, militant action and a collapse of collective bargaining.[125] Nationally, the June campaigns therefore succeeded in showing the South African government that the Bill was unworkable.

In September 1988, Inkatha and COSATU signed a peace agreement in terms of which each organization agreed to take action against any of its members found to be violating the agreement. This was followed by the establishment of a Complaints Adjudication Board by the two organizations.[126] The UDF was not present at the signing of the document because of restrictions which had been imposed on it at the beginning of the year. Chief

---

[123] Ibid., 3 June 1988.

[124] Ibid., 8 June 1988.

[125] Karl Von Holdt, `Mass action against the Bill', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 3 (1988), pp. 1-14.

[126] Jabulani Sithole, Pietermaritzburg, UDF file: Report on the position of the UDF and COSATU in regard to the peace talks in Natal.

Minister Buthelezi constantly referred to the UDF's non-participation although he knew fully well why it was not able to sign the agreement and that the UDF fully endorsed the agreement.[127] Accused Inkatha members effectively sabotaged the Board because of their non-appearance before it on the grounds that this would prejudice their cases in criminal actions.[128] Where the Board did make a finding against Inkatha members, the Inkatha disciplinary committee decided to take no action of any significance. The board failed to serve its purpose, and it collapsed.

To sum up: the history of the struggles in the Natal Midlands was littered with failed peace agreements.[129] Some events turned out to be `circuses', with organizations emphasizing and arguing on trivial matters. Issues causing the breakdown of peace talks varied from police restrictions imposed on the UDF members to stalemate on venues. For instance on 2 May 1988, Buthelezi refused to accept Pietermaritzburg as a venue for peace talks, while COSATU-UDF rejected Ulundi. On 26 September 1989 neither organization could agree on the number of representatives from each side. When the executive officials of the UDF, Inkatha, and COSATU convened, they hailed each initiative as a `major' `breakthrough' but none proved to be either `major' or a `breakthrough'.[130] Seemingly, peace in the region was going to leave either Inkatha or the state on the losing side. If peace was achieved, it would give room to extra-parliamentary organizations to start mobilizing and organizing people at a large, to protest against apartheid rule. Peace was also a threat to Inkatha, as it would have given the UDF a chance to mobilize freely in the region, particularly in Inkatha supporting areas. Also to the UDF peace at its cost (with terms that would not satisfy its supporters, and its national goals) was unacceptable. The UDF and

---

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Kentridge, `Pietermaritzburg under the knife', p. 236.

[130] Ibid.

Inkatha both attempted to use peace calls for public relations purposes. With all these complications, it is clear that peace talks were not genuinely aimed at securing peace; no organization was prepared to compromise its stance. Failure of political organizations to achieve amicable solutions in Pietermaritzburg entrenched divisions in the surrounding communities, for instance in Sobantu.

Changing times: Sobantu Village's solidarity collapses

The political stability that Sobantu enjoyed in the early 1980s began to crumble in 1985 and eventually collapsed in 1987.[131] From 1985 the Sobantu community gradually became divided, as a the rift between the Sobantu Youth Organization (SOYO) and the Committee of Twelve widened. The impact of the refugees, discussed in chapter two, left a festering wound in the social order of the township. The first incident that showed that times had changed took place on 11 April 1987, with the burning of the homes of David Thusi in Mbokotho Drive and of Elliot Madonda in Ekukhanya Road.[132] Although the motives for the burning of these homes cannot be verified, people commonly saw the incident as an attack on Inkatha members by UDF supporters.[133]

In July 1987, SOYO requested the `Dozen', as they were called, to resign. SOYO got backing from some residents, who complained about the committee's actions, after the Stoneyard Unemployed Relief Project (an employment project), on which most villagers depended for their income, was ended. SOYO made the following allegations about the committee to the Echo newspaper:

---

[131] See Chapter 2, under the section: Sobantu, Edendale and Vulindlela in the mid-1980s.

[132] Natal Witness, 11 April 1987.

[133] Author's interview with Gloria Zuma (Linley House, Pietermaritzburg, 19 July 1995).

> `The dozen do not consult the community on issues involving them. They received assistance from the Maritzburg City Council without informing the community and made a report back afterwards. They also spoke to the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) without a mandate.
> The committee was linked to the vigilantes who sjambokked school children into classes during a boycott at Sobantu High School (1985).
> Stoneyard workers are not organized and do not have a spokesperson. SOYO suggests the formation of a committee made up of one representative per street who will safeguard the interests of the workers'.[134]

Amid these political complications, anonymous death threats were levelled against members of the Committee of Twelve. As political tensions grew, the role of the committee became insignificant and eventually it collapsed. The main problem of the Committee of Twelve was that it was neither a civic association nor a township council. When the committee opposed SOYO or showed no interest in UDF-affiliated organizations, the youth immediately identified it as another vigilante group. Moreover, UDF supporters were very unhappy with people who participated in township councils. When people who had been elected to a `people's body' failed to fulfil what the Front supporters anticipated from them, UDF supporters immediately identified them as `collaborators'.

Fighting between AZAPO youth and UDF youth in Sobantu further damaged the township's social fabric. A fierce battle between the UDF's Amavarara and the AZAPO's Amazimuzimu took place on 11 June 1987.[135] One person died, and two UDF supporters, Velaphi and Thuli Mkhize, were allegedly shot by police on the same night. They were admitted to Northdale Hospital.[136] The fight allegedly began when the Amavarara marched to Dark City, which was the base of the Amazimuzimu, to order refugees out of the

---

[134] Echo, 16 July 1987.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Natal Witness, 12 June 1987.

township. The refugees allegedly attacked Imbali residents visiting Sobantu. Many Sobantu residents were also assaulted when the feud over refugees started.[137]

Besides ideological differences, the problem between Amazimuzimu and Amavarara was allegedly that the former had embarked on a campaign of deciding who was allowed to visit Sobantu and who was not. Sobantu, as stated in the previous chapter, had not expanded since the late 1950s. As a result, usually the elder children of households moved, and parents and younger children stayed behind. When the Amazimuzimu attacked visitors to the township, SOYO reacted, as the attacks were directed against their brothers, sisters and relatives. SOYO accused the Amazimuzimu of being gangsters rather than a political grouping. The battles ultimately led to most of the AZAPO youth members leaving the township for Durban. The urgent need for security prompted this exodus, according to the former AZAPO youth president, Nkosinathi Majola. AZAPO's regional headquarters were at Durban, and resources such as lawyers could be more easily obtained there.[138]

When the Committee of Twelve collapsed in 1987, a new group of ex-political prisoners, which included people like Azalea Ndebele, came to the forefront in the community of Sobantu. Residents called this group Omathanduxolo (peace-lovers).[139] This name came from their approach of seeking compromise. The group existed in the township up to 1990, when the Sobantu residents formed the Sobantu Residents Association (SRA). The launching of the SRA in 1990 coincided with the restructuring of a youth umbrella body South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) in the Natal Midlands region. This gave the SRA

---

[137] Ibid., 12 June 1987.

[138] Author's interview with Nkosinathi Majola (Community Care Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 9 October 1994).

[139] Author's interview with Jabulani Sithole (Pietermaritzburg, 20 March 1995).

the opportunity to be the only representative body of Sobantu residents, as SOYO and other youth organizations were absorbed into SAYCO.

Struggles within: The UDF and its affiliates in the Natal Midlands

In March 1987 youth activists from Congress movements launched the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) in Cape Town. In April the Release Mandela Committee (RMC) was launched in Hammanskraal by anti-apartheid activists who were campaigning for the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC. Nationally, the two organizations sought to fill gaps that had emerged when the state suppressed extra-parliamentary activities and organizations under the state of emergency regulations. The two organizations joined COSATU in organizing and mobilizing people to protest against apartheid rule.

After its launching the RMC in conjunction with other two organizations as key players, orchestrated some organizational challenges to the government. Its first initiative was to challenge the emergency regulations in the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court and to embark on an extensive campaign in the media for the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Mandela. The government later banned its advertisements. Nationally, the RMC campaigns were a success to some extent in that T-shirts, calendars and pamphlets with Mandela's photo were continuously distributed to the public, and that publicized the anti-apartheid political struggles in the country.[140]

Although the national launching of the RMC took place on 11-13 April 1987, it was nearly three years before a Natal Midlands branch was formed.[141] According to Cassius Lubisi who was national assistant publicity secretary for the RMC from 1987 to 1990, the reason

---

[140] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 6 September 1994).

[141] Ibid.

for this was that UDF leaders in Maritzburg and in Natal accused each other of being involved in the cabal.[142] The RMC campaigns in the region between 1987 and 1990 were organized jointly with the SAYCO campaigns, or under the banner of SAYCO. Some of the campaigns that these two organizations jointly organized in the region included the holding of public meetings of the relatives and families of detainees to campaign for their release. Some of the individuals from the region whom they had on their list were Harry Gwala, Matthews Meyiwa, Zakhele Mdlalose, John Nene, Anthony Xaba and Truman Magubane.[143]

Although the SAYCO branch in the region managed to organize a number of campaigns, it was continuously in crisis and chaos. In 1988 the SAYCO structures in the region twice disbanded. Its first Interim Committee elected by youth from the region came to office on 10 April 1988, but collapsed within two weeks.[144] In May of that year SAYCO was resuscitated, but again soon collapsed. The collapses were mainly caused by `struggles within', i.e. friction between supporters because of unequal distribution of resources, and denial of independence to members who felt that SAYCO should pursue its own campaigns independently of other progressive organizations.[145] According to Thembokwakhe Ngubane, some members blocked funds that were supposed to help COSATU to organize a campaign. Before it collapsed, a committee of five people was elected to convene a meeting on 25 February 1989 in Edendale. The Edendale five failed to do this, and explained that they were too few in number. Then the SAYCO restructuring

---

[142] See Chapter 3, under the section titled: The emergence of clique politics.

[143] Ibid., 28 June 1995.

[144] Speech delivered to the Annual General Congress of the South African Youth Congress on 12 May 1990 at Pietermaritzburg, by Thembokwakhe Stich Ngubane (in possession of author).

[145] Ibid.

committee, which had been elected in May, increased their number to eight. This served to strengthen the Edendale five against the elected restructuring committee, and they now attacked the restructuring committee, questioning its legitimacy. The restructuring committee then disbanded on 30 July 1989.[146] A new organizing committee representing various areas in the region was elected by some youth members who claimed to belong to SAYCO (although the regional structure was non-existent), but it collapsed within a month.[147]

Without functioning affiliates in the townships, how did the Front organize meetings, stayaways and boycotts? According to Thembokwakhe Ngubane, people responded to calls as individuals, not through organizations. This assertion reaffirms the account given by Mduduzi Ndlovu that UDF-affiliated organizations, and indeed the Front itself, during the state of emergency years became `omnibus' organizations, mobilizing but not organizing people.[148] For instance, there were no fully organized and functioning UDF-affiliated organizations in African townships in the region but when the UDF called for boycotts, protest marches or stayaways a large number of people showed their support. Apathy, conflicts and confrontations were common characteristics of UDF-affiliated organizations in the region.

Other factors that weakened the UDF structures in the region were that after the imposition of the 1986 state of emergency its activists were either in hiding, detained or restricted, and from February 1988 it was a banned organization. It had been incapacitated structurally and organizationally by the state. The main strength of the Front was that it managed, even though disorganized, to resist Inkatha's recruitment, and to bring together

---

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

people from various diverse background. People from different walks of life (students, workers, professionals, clergy) and from different races (Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites) came to work together under the banner of the UDF, even if they were few in numbers.

Although the state of emergency from 1986 managed to disorganize the Front and its affiliates in the region, by the second half of 1989 extra-parliamentary organizations were resurfacing, nationally. This resurfacing of extra-parliamentary organizations, was marked by protests marches and defiance campaigns carried under the name of Mass Democratic Movement. This gave a new turn to political struggles in the region. UDF activists began to take initiatives to revive the Front. The following chapter will assesses the mass defiance campaign and the political developments thereafter.

CHAPTER FOUR

AT THE FINISHING LINE: THE NATAL MIDLANDS UDF, 1989-1991

Introduction

In the Natal Midlands, the 1989 defiance campaigns were on 21 September, few days later than in other regions. The campaigns in the region stimulated UDF leaders into working to restructure the organization. Some UDF activists began to advocate the urgent transformation of the Front, arguing that the Front should become more democratic, transparent, and accountable to its supporters in the region.[1] The goal was to strengthen the Front through effective functioning of affiliated organizations. Furthermore, they felt that there was an urgent need to address the criticisms that had emerged in the late 1980s of malpractice, within the Front. These were the criticisms that focused on `cabalistic' tendencies in the leadership (a few individuals and taking decisions on behalf of the Front), and on the lack of coordination of the activities of the Front's affiliates.[2]

After UDF supporters had declared the Front `unbanned' through the programme of defiance campaigns, there were different views on what path the local UDF should follow and on how the Front should relate to its affiliates. The restructuring process led to tensions within the UDF leadership towards the end of 1989. Two camps emerged, with those elected to lead the body in 1985 seeing the new restructuring committee (a body that was formed by some UDF activists to revive the Front in 1989) as trying to discredit them.[3]

---

[1] Jabulani Sithole, Pietermaritzburg, UDF file: Proposals to the UDF restructuring committee (January 1990).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 22 October 1995).

While debates around the restructuring process were under way, the government unbanned all restricted political organizations on 2 February 1990. These organizations included the UDF, African National Congress, South African Communist party, Pan Africanist Congress, and others. The unbanning changed the course of politics in the region and in the whole country. The UDF became enmeshed in a struggle to redefine its role and establish itself in the new political order. From its inception in 1983 the UDF had shown that it was ideologically close to the ANC. The fact that most of the organizations that did not agree with the ANC's political approaches did not join the UDF supports this. Furthermore, the Front had adopted the Freedom Charter in 1987. The ANC had not controlled the UDF and there were no formal structural links between the two organizations, but they were strong allies.[4]

When the ANC began to operate legally in February 1990, the position of the UDF became uncertain. The question which its leaders faced was whether to merge with the ANC or to remain as a separate organization. This uncertainty affected the leaders of the Front more than their supporters.[5] They were concerned to position themselves on platforms where they could have a voice in shaping the future of South Africa. Some aimed to do so through attempts to maintain the UDF as a separate organization. Others rushed to position themselves in ANC structures. Those who were ANC members simply crossed over to it as it was unbanned. Moreover, in the townships most people who supported the UDF saw themselves as ANC supporters, so when the ANC became legal they joined it.[6]

Protagonists of the disbandment of the UDF justified their stance by arguing that most of the people whom the UDF accommodated were from charterist organizations, and with the

---

[4] Author's interview with Yunus Carrim (UNP, 14 October 1994).

[5] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 8 June 1995).

[6] Ibid.

unbanning of the ANC such people had gone back to the ANC. This left the UDF without a clear role. After the unbannings, most of the people who had previously mobilized and organized people for the UDF began to organize for the ANC. Also, to some ANC supporters the history of the UDF made it unacceptable, as the Front was seen to be dominated by unruly and uncontrollable youth. As a result a number of people swung their support to the ANC in the hope that discipline and control would be re-established by leaders like Nelson Mandela.[7]

After the unbannings in 1990, the UDF and Mass Democratic Movement gradually phased themselves out, to be replaced by the Tripartite Alliance of the ANC, SACP and COSATU. COSATU's movement into the new alliance had a great impact in reducing the Front's political weight. Nationally and locally, the strongest support for the emerging Tripartite Alliance came from those areas that were known to be UDF strongholds. This was a clear indication that most UDF supporters, particularly from the townships, were ANC sympathizers.

In the Pietermaritzburg region, the history of the UDF from 1989 can be divided into two clear phases. The first phase, from September 1989 to February 1990 was marked by debates and proposals on how to restructure the UDF in the region. The debates took a serious turn after the mass defiance campaign in September 1989. The second phase, from February 1990 was marked by attempts to establish a new relationship with the ANC and to redefine the Front's political role. The last phase was marked by few political developments on the part of the UDF, in the region. This could have been attributed to the fact that the UDF in the region had always experienced problems, and when other political organizations were unbanned its activists went back to their original organizations. In August 1991, the UDF's eight years in the politics of resistance ended. Although in 1989

---

[7] Author's interview with Vis Naidoo (UNP, 6 June 1995).

there was a strong desire to restructure the Front in Pietermaritzburg region, its disbandment in 1991 passed without notice.

The boil bursts

The defiance campaigns of September 1989 led by the Mass Democratic Movement marked the beginning of another phase in the politics of anti-apartheid resistance organizations in South Africa. During the campaigns, supporters of banned organizations declared their organizations `unbanned'. These were supporters of organizations like the UDF, ANC, SANSCO (South African National Students Congress), and COSAS (Congress of South African Students). They were called `people's organizations' by their supporters.

Why the state allowed the defiance campaign marches in 1989 to continue without imposing repressive measures is a difficult question to answer. Initially the state reacted harshly against the campaign, particularly in the Western Cape, resulting in an outcry locally and internationally.[8] Then later the state allowed the campaigns to go ahead. Explanation of the success of the campaigns and of the unbanning of political organizations vary. Some academics seek the explanation of change in 1989, from the change of leadership of the National Party, from P. W. Botha to F. W. De Klerk. This is what Robert Schrire refers to as `careful experiments in the liberation of the country by F.W. De Klerk'. Some academics see the unstable economic and political situation within the country as having been a catalyst in the acceptance of change by the National Party.[9]

---

[8] Yunus Carrim, `The defiance campaigns: Protest politics on the march', Indicator South Africa, vol. 4, no. 4 (1989), pp. 49-52.

[9] Robert Schrire, Adapt or Die: The End of White Politics in South Africa (Cape Town, Ford Foundation, 1991), pp. 125-135.

Nationally the campaigns began in August 1989 and gained momentum in September 1989. On 5-6 September the MDM led a stayaway, in which about 2 to 3 million people were involved.[10] The stayaway was called to protest against the election by white voters of a segregated parliament. In Pietermaritzburg, students and workers marched went through the streets of the city waving banners of banned political organizations, chanting and singing freedom songs.[11] Two weeks later, on 21 September, some 7 000 people marched through the city declaring their banned organizations `unbanned'. The march demonstrated the growing support of the Mass Democratic Movement in the region.[12] The protesters handed a memorandum to the police at Loop Street station with the following demands:

> The end to the institutional violence of apartheid.
> The end to the presence of the SADF and the Riot Squad in the townships.
> The end to the reluctance of the police to control violence in the townships.
> The end of the unwillingness of the government to appoint a Commission of inquiry into the role of the police in the Natal violence.
> The end of detention without trial and the suspension of the rule of law.
> The end of the silencing of activists by restrictions and banning orders.
> The end of the continuation of the state of emergency.[13]

What is important about the wave of mass demonstrations in late 1989 is that for the first time it took popular protest out of the black townships and into the white city centres.[14] The major objectives of the defiance campaigns were to force open a legal space for the extra-parliamentary organizations, and to create a popular mood for a revitalisation of opposition

---

[10] Natal Witness, 7 September 1989.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Natal Witness, 22 September 1989.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Julie Frederikse, The Unbreakable Thread (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1991), p. 262.

structures made dormant by the state of emergency.[15] In retrospect the defiance campaigns were successful, in that within four months the government had addressed most of the demands put forward. Also, in strategic terms the defiance campaign succeeded in broadening and consolidating democratic forces. Above all, the campaigns finally broke the intransigence of the National Party. However, it was not only the extra-parliamentary organizations that gained through the defiance campaigns, for by allowing the protest marches to go ahead the new government of F.W. De Klerk won favourable publicity at home and abroad.[16]

The mass action programmes and accompanying hunger strikes by detainees led to the release of hundreds of detainees.[17] In October 1989 a mass political rally was held in Johannesburg to welcome the release of ANC political leaders like Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Oscar Mpetha, Raymond Mhlaba, Harry Gwala, Ahmed Kathrada, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni and Wilton Mkwayi. That rally had the effect of virtually unbanning the ANC.[18] On 16 December 1989, the government released the five Delmas treason trialists and UDF national leaders, Patrick Lekota, Popo Molefe, Moss Chikane, Tom Manthata and Gcinumuzi Malindi.[19] The Delmas treason trial that took place in 1988 marked a second event in which UDF activists were charged by the state for treason. The first trial was in Pietermaritzburg in 1985.

---

[15] Yunus Carrim, `The defiance campaign: Protest politics on the march', p. 50.

[16] Ibid., p. 52.

[17] SANSCO News letter, University of Durban Westville (September 1989).

[18] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 22 October 1995).

[19] Natal Witness, 17 December 1989.

After the march in Pietermaritzburg on 21 September, UDF activists embarked on a programme of restructuring as a means of organizing and sustaining mass protest in the region.[20] According to Cassius Lubisi and Jabulani Sithole, who were members of the restructuring committee, there were various reasons for proposing that the UDF should be restructured.[21] Firstly, the UDF and most of its affiliates in the region were not functioning, particularly in the townships. The aim therefore, was to rebuild the Front and resuscitate its affiliates, with activists who could serve in Front structures being drawn from functional organizations.[22] Furthermore, the process of restructuring aimed at achieving accountability, efficiency, non-racialism and transparency.[23] The stress on accountability, efficiency and transparency sought mainly to address the legacy of the cabal in the region. Non-racialism was a strategy to try to integrate the different racial groups, particularly members of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and the white Pietermaritzburg Democratic Association (PDA).[24] Since its launching the UDF had been criticised by bodies like the National Forum for propagating non-racialism and at the same time allowing certain affiliates to organize along racial lines. The integration of different political organizations was to be a precautionary measure to avoid the repetition of `cabal' or `coterie' control that had developed in the 1980s.

The restructuring process was to be guided by members of a restructuring committee. They were Cassius Lubisi, Sipho Gcabashe, Nana Mnandi, Happy Blose, Jabulani Sithole,

---

[20] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 22 October 1995).

[21] See footnotes; 25 and 26.

[22] Author's interviews with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 22 October 1995) and Jabulani Sithole (Pietermaritzburg, 22 March 1995).

[23] Jabulani Sithole (Pietermaritzburg), UDF file: Proposals to the UDF restructuring committee (January 1990).

[24] Ibid.

Makhosi Khoza and the two UDF secretaries, S'khumbuzo Ngwenya and Martin Wittenberg. The Restructuring Committee was not an elected body.[25] It consisted of organizational representatives who, early in 1989 had attended a COSATU-UDF summit on violence in Natal.[26] Their first meeting was in an open field at the lower end of Church Street in Pietermaritzburg.[27] Organizations represented on the Restructuring Committee were the Natal Midlands Women's Organization (an offspring of the Natal Organization of Women), the South African Youth Congress, the Natal Students' Congress, and COSATU affiliates.[28] The restructuring committee was to serve on an interim basis. Its mandate was to coordinate the formation of elected UDF structures in the Natal Midlands.[29]

The size of the executive committee of the UDF was to be trimmed to reduce bureaucratic delays and inefficiency. The position of the Natal Midlands UDF President, which was held by the Rev. S. Gqubule, was to be abolished. The reason was that it was only a ceremonial position and there was no guarantee of accountability and responsibility. The new committee was to consist of a chairman, a vice-chairman, two secretaries (General Secretary and Publicity Secretary) and a treasurer.[30]

---

[25] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 17 October 1995).

[26] Although the UDF was banned at the beginning of 1988, and while there were no functioning UDF structures, individuals who were attending meetings called themselves UDF members. Author's interviews with Jabulani Sithole and with Cassius Lubisi(UNP, 23 October 1995).

[27] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 17 October 1995).

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

The main objective of the activists was to revive the UDF as a functioning body. The Front had to organize its affiliates so that the executive committee could be elected in a properly convened annual general meeting in the subregion. Each member organization was to send three delegates from its executive committees to meetings of the general council.[31] The PDA and NIC delegations were however to be limited to one person each. The committee proposed that at the following annual general meeting no racially or ethnically organized organizations should be allowed to affiliate. The new approach was that since the Front was engaged in a struggle to establish non-racialism, the racial integration of organizations should proceed immediately. The UDF aimed to organize Indians and Whites into sectoral organizations of youth, women, students, civics and teachers.[32] Daily decisions were to be made by the chairperson and the two secretaries (general and publicity). These three figures would form the secretariat of the UDF. The executive committee was to meet once a fortnight, the secretariat once a week, and the General Council once a month. Special General Council meetings were to be convened when major political issues needed to be discussed and decided upon.[33]

Of the affiliated organizations of the UDF, SAYCO embarked on its own restructuring process. Its objectives were to address the difficulties experienced in 1989 when the structure had disbanded and reformed several times. The desire among young supporters of MDM to revive youth organizations was still strong. The youth leagues that had been strong in 1985 had disintegrated with the imposition of the state of emergency, and with the restrictions imposed on UDF leaders by the state. The formation of SAYCO in 1987 had brought together the scattered UDF youth organizations under one umbrella body, but it was not until 1990 that the organization began to consolidate itself. However, from 1990

---

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

most of political activists who were members of UDF-affiliated organizations crossed over to the ANC and began to participate in building it.

The UDF and the ANC after February 1990

The relationship between the UDF and the ANC before 1990 was that of allies, but they had no formal structures for working together. The main reason for this absence was that the ANC was banned. When the state unbanned both organizations, the UDF had to make a decision on its future. Previously it had been an umbrella for organizations that were predominantly charterist in sympathy. Now that the ANC was unbanned, some activists felt that there was no need for the UDF to continue to exist, while others felt that it should continue to exist as a watchdog over the ANC.[34]

At a meeting held in Cape Town on 9 April 1990 to decide the future of the UDF, the decision was reached that the UDF would not disband but would be transformed.[35] The following were the proposed recommendations:

> The UDF will continue to exist, because it has a role to play in terms of coordinating its affiliate organizations.
> It should transform itself, by splitting into national sectoral federations that will consist of super-federations such as youth and women groups.
> The base of the liberation movements be broadened to include those who had not previously participated in the UDF structures.[36]

Two weeks after this meeting, with debates surging on about the future of the UDF, its National Executive passed a resolution to scale down its political activities and allow the ANC to work towards becoming the leading liberation movement.[37] Nationally and

---

[34] Author's interviews with Blade Nzimande (UNP, 5 October 1994) and Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 16 October 1995).

[35] Natal Witness, 10 April 1990.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 24 April 1990.

regionally the resolution had a great impact on the UDF, whose organizational structure had been hard hit by years of oppression and which was now trying to make an organized comeback. Many affiliates chose to leave the Front and join the ANC, and at regional levels the structures of the organization began to break down.[38]

The breakdown in the Pietermaritzburg region was rapid. Because of its internal problems and its conflicts with Inkatha, the UDF in the region was not fully functional. The movement to revive the UDF quickly turned into a movement to establish new ANC branches. But instead of building on existing UDF structures, ANC supporters began to establish their own branches.[39] Where the UDF had been concerned with strengthening sectoral organizations, i.e. youth and workers, the ANC's emphasis was on building branches rather than sectors.[40] However, COSATU-affiliated trade unions (although being sectoral) played a vital role in building ANC branches in the region.[41] The importance of workers' organizations in the region was enhanced by the influence of the socialist Harry Gwala, who saw workers as a revolutionary force in the liberation struggle.

The establishment of the ANC in the Natal Midlands region brought in a new leadership. People who were ANC members but had not been in prominent positions during the UDF era came to the forefront.[42] At times there were tensions between some UDF and ANC leaders in the region. Few leaders from the UDF managed to stay afloat politically and

---

[38] Mac Maharaj, `At the UDF farewell rally' South African Outlook (July to August, 1991), pp. 86-89.

[39] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 22 October 1995).

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Author's interview with A. S. Chetty (Pietermaritzburg, 4 October 1994).

attain top leadership positions in the ANC.[43] Those from the UDF who managed to establish themselves in the ANC's leadership in the midlands were S'khumbuzo Ngwenya, A. S. Chetty, Yunus Carrim, John Jeffery and Thamsanqa Mseleku.[44]

The ANC in the region was led by Harry Gwala, a student of Marxist-Leninist ideologies. He had been released from prison in November 1988, after serving 13 years of a life sentence. In the early 1980s he had contracted a rare motor neuron disease that subsequently paralysed his arms.[45] After his release, he had re-established contact with the underground structures of the ANC and SACP, and played a key leading role in the activities of these organizations in the Midlands.[46] In June 1989 he travelled to London to seek treatment for his disease. During his two-month stay in London he held discussions with the exiled leadership of the ANC and SACP.[47]

Due to his uncompromising war talk, people called him the `lion of the Natal Midlands'. He was nationally known as one of four `radicals' in the ANC leadership, together with Peter Mokaba, Winnie Mandela and Tony Yengeni. He served on the internal leadership core of the ANC after its unbanning. In December 1990 he was elected as Natal Midlands ANC leader in the first ANC conference in the region in 30 years.[48] In July 1991, at the ANC's 48th National conference in Durban, he was elected to the national executive committee.

---

[43] Ibid.

[44] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 26 October 1995).

[45] Obituary letter, read at funeral service of Thembeyakhe Harry Gwala (June 1995).

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Natal Witness, 30 December 1990.

In December of the same year he was elected to the central committee of the SACP at its eighth Congress in Johannesburg.[49]

Gwala turned out to be a highly charismatic political leader in the Natal Midlands. Some critics argued that his style of leadership was problematic in that he concentrated organizational power around himself. He was very critical of the UDF cabal in the region. This might explain why the UDF was disbanded sooner in the region than in other parts of the country. The unbanning of the ANC in the region brought an opportunity to try to change the image of UDF supporters. This was done by abandoning it and crossing over to the ANC. After the unbannings, Gwala alienated not only those who were seen as part of the cabal group but even some people who were in the restructuring committee.[50] Most of the activists who became close to Gwala were not former UDF activists. Some activists began to criticise him, and accused him of forming another cabal.[51]

In his speeches Gwala did not hesitate to show his radicalism or militancy, as the following quotation indicates:

> We are not begging for our liberation, we will take it by force. To the warlords, we are not going to meet them with bibles and prayers, but we will meet them with AK-47s.
> This country is experiencing labour pains and where a normal birth is not possible a cesarean section must be performed. The death of apartheid cannot be pronounced by the National Party, but by the people who experienced its oppression.[52]

---

[49] Obituary letter, read at the funeral service of Thembeyakhe Harry Gwala (June 1995).

[50] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 22 October 1995).

[51] Ibid.

[52] Natal Witness, 17 October 1990.

Gwala would be remembered for his presence amongst UDF-ANC-SACP supporters during what became known as the `Seven Days War' from 25 March to 2 April 1990, and of lifting the morale of the UDF-ANC-SACP supporters in the face of ongoing attacks by urging them to stand up and defend themselves.[53]

The Seven Day's War and its aftermath

The unbanning of political organizations in 1990 led to further escalation of conflicts between the UDF and Inkatha supporters. On 25 March 1990, youths in Edendale who allegedly supported the UDF-ANC attacked buses which were returning from an Inkatha rally in Durban, and caused damage of approximately R25 000.[54] This is in keeping with the view that sees UDF-ANC activists as taking the offensive in the war. A second view, given by John Aitchison from the Centre of Adult Education at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, cast Inkatha as the aggressor. According to Aitchison, on the morning of Sunday 25 March a number of buses carrying Inkatha supporters travelled down the main road through Vulindlela and Edendale to an Inkatha rally at King's Park Stadium in Durban.[55] On their way, Inkatha supporters shouted and insulted people at Gezubuso and said they would come back. At KwaShange they fired shots at people as they passed, at Vulisaka more shots were fired, and at KwaMnyandu they chased people and threw stones at them.[56] In the afternoon, when Inkatha supporters returned from the rally, clashes took place in number of areas in Vulindlela and Edendale. There were battles at Dambuza, cars were attacked, and Marawa House, where local KwaZulu Government offices were

---

[53] Obituary letter, read at the funeral service of Thembeyakhe Harry Gwala (June 1995), p. 2.

[54] Natal Witness, 27 March 1990.

[55] John Aitchison, The Seven Days War: The Victims' Narrative (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, Centre for Adult Education, 1991), p. 1.

[56] Ibid.

situated, was attacked and badly damaged.[57] KwaZulu Transport had a bus set alight at KwaShange, and on 28 March it suspended all its bus services to the townships. This move came when Inkatha crowds hijacked buses to launch a revenge attack on Caluza, Mpumuza and Ashdown.

On 27-28 March, full-scale fighting took place between UDF and Inkatha supporters in Vulindlela, Edendale, Ashdown and Imbali.[58] Thousands of non-Inkatha refugees poured into Edendale.[59] Inkatha supporters who were attacked, mostly from Vulindlela areas, escaped to their chiefs' homesteads. By the end of the month, coordinated and organized fighting in the Edendale valley had subsided, with at least 50 people dead, about 150 wounded and more than 6 000 homeless.[60] The war came to be known as the Seven Days War (25 March to 31 March), although fighting continued for more than a month, particularly in Imbali township and in the Table Mountain areas to the east of Pietermaritzburg.[61]

After the fighting had subsided, there were still some state agencies, particularly the police force, which continued trying to destabilize communities in the region. According to Aitchison, the South African Police and KwaZulu Police were seen carrying Inkatha attackers on their vehicles or not taking action when they saw that the attackers were Inkatha supporters.[62] Some prominent Inkatha members were allegedly seen wearing

---

[57] Ibid.

[58] Mark Butler, et. al, Imbali, (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Centre for Adult Education, 1993), p. 139.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Natal Witness, 31 March 1990.

[61] John Aitchison, The Seven Days War: 25-31 March 1990, p. 2.

[62] Ibid., p. 38.

police uniform, and in some instances police allegedly shot UDF comrades. Chief Shayabantu Zondi and David Ntombela allegedly played a prominent role in organizing Inkatha supporters during this war. Chief Shayabantu allegedly said that he did not want any maqabane in his area (Gezubuso, Shange, Mnyandu, Vulisaka), and that they should all leave or he would attack them.[63]

Another instance where police involvement in the township violence became known was when the commander of the Riot Unit in Pietermaritzburg and his branch were implicated in harassing people in the townships.[64] However, the story of police involvement was cut short in that the constable who made the allegations died without testifying in court.[65] The involvement of the police in destabilization was brought to light by Constable Roy Mandla Ngcobo who was accused of murdering Major Deon Terblanche, commander of the city's riot unit.[66] Ngcobo was believed to be a strong UDF sympathiser; his brother had formerly been convicted of `terrorism'.[67] Two days after his arrest, he was shot dead by the detectives who were investigating his case. They alleged that Ngcobo tried to get hold of a gun that one of them was carrying. The day before Ngcobo was shot dead, he had confessed that he had murdered Terblanche. He had also claimed that police officers attached to the `C' Relief section of the unit had murdered civilians, raided people's homes and broken into bottle stores.[68] This claim emerged during the inquest into Ngcobo's death.

Though it involved heavy loss of life and widespread destruction, the Seven Days War helped to provide the ANC with a platform and the means of mobilizing its supporters in

---

[63] Ibid., p. 37.

[64] Natal Witness, 15 March 1990.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Echo, 12 April 1990.

the region. Visits by ANC national leaders like Mandela to the region helped to build the organization in the region. Appeals from regional leaders to UDF-ANC-SACP supporters who were involved in the conflict helped to consolidate support for the ANC.

Some people viewed the war as Inkatha's means of reasserting itself after finding that the state was no longer fully on its side. If this was Inkatha's aim, one can say that it did reassert its authority in the peri-urban areas but failed to win new ground or penetrate the townships where UDF support was strong. In terms of territories dominated, the war did not lead to any changes as UDF and Inkatha areas remained as they were prior to the war.

The opening of Imbali police station in October 1990, with Chief M. G. Buthelezi as guest of honour, led to protests from non-Inkatha supporters.[69] Its siting in the Inkatha stronghold of Stage 2 meant that the station was immediately identified as an Inkatha police station.[70] To non-Inkatha supporters, the presence of Buthelezi as a leader of Inkatha was an indication that the station would be biased in dealing with cases that involved Inkatha and non-Inkatha supporters. As a result, many residents ignored the station, and continued to use Plessislaer police station.[71]

Imbali township had been the focal point of political struggles in the mid-1980s, and it became an epicentre of conflict again after the unbanning of political organizations in 1990. With the unbannings and the gradual phasing-out of the UDF, most of the problems that emerged in Imbali stemmed from the legacy of the Front's history. These patterns had to do particularly with the emergence of youth gangs in the townships. As one source put it:

---

[69] Natal Witness, 12 October 1990.

[70] Mark Butler, et. al, Imbali, p. 165.

[71] Ibid.

> The gangs consist of disaffected UDF youth, who found themselves sidelined when the ANC was unbanned and ANC exiles began returning, more especially MK cadres. (uMkhonto weSizwe).
> The gangs consist of criminals who were once part of defence units created to protect UDF leaders under restriction orders. When the influence of this leadership declined the criminals sided with some ANC faction against old UDF factions.
> The gangs consist of youth who were infiltrated and coopted by the police with the aim of destabilising the township.
> The gangs consist of criminals, who have always been criminals. They were drawn into political violence, because their fighting skills were necessary at the time, and as this necessity waned, so their importance decreased. Youths who had been heroes suddenly became mere criminals again, and in order to reassert their influence they began terrorising residents in gangs.[72]

The findings of these researchers are convincing in two aspects, firstly in that most of the people who were involved in the formation of these gangs were by-products of political violence in the area. It is indisputable that most of them had been UDF-ANC supporters. Secondly, the gangs grew rapidly after the unbanning of political organizations in 1990.

Although some exiles (ANC leaders and supporters who were outside the country) and Robben Islanders (ANC leaders who were imprisoned in Robben Island) had difficulties in realizing their expectations after their return, in terms of gaining leadership positions and finding monetary support, there are no indications to show that there was any gang that was directly backed by either the ANC or by UDF supporters in Imbali.[73] Nor was any conflict ever reported between the supporters of the two organizations. But that UDF supporters contributed to the problem is undisputable. It was through involvement in political conflicts that these gangs had acquired guns, shooting skills, popularity and recognition in the community.[74] This recognition was based on their fighting abilities, but

---

[72] Ibid., p. 147.

[73] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 8 June 1994).

[74] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 8 June 1995).

when the conflicts subsided their abilities were no longer important for the UDF supporters whom they had previously protected. However, there is a danger of perceiving the emergence of these gangs solely as a by-product of the conflict between the UDF and Inkatha. Gangs were, and are, found in numbers of townships in the country and were not only confined to areas of Natal where there were UDF-Inkatha conflicts. On the other hand it is important to note that not all gangsters were people who fought during the violence. Some groups consisted of people who did not participate in the fighting between UDF and Inkatha. The groups came into existence because of harassment by established gangs.[75]

That most of the so-called gangsters had supported the UDF against Inkatha is indisputable, but their political aims are questionable. Politically most of the gang members were immature and, according to one source bankrupt in leadership qualities.[76] They were not leaders in terms of planning or formulating strategy during the conflicts, but rank and file members. When the fighting was over they could not define who the enemy was, and they continued fighting even when it was unnecessary.

Two other important factors that led to the rapid growth of gangsterism in Imbali were the absence of community discipline in this politically divided township, and the continuation of the sharp political division between the UDF-ANC and Inkatha. This could explain why they did not emerge in any numbers in other townships, for instance in Sobantu and Edendale. Most of those who turned to be gangsters were people who were unemployable, or could not go back to school.[77] Initially, it seem, some gangs got the impression that they were supported by office-bearers of the ANC, who believed that fighting with Inkatha

---

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Author's interview with Mduduzi Ndlovu (UNP, 6 June 1995).

should continue.[78] Rhetorical statements about war made by ANC officials against Inkatha usually gave the gangs the impression that they were still fighting for a good cause in the name of the struggle. The support from the ANC office was short-lived, in that in 1990 the ANC at national level began to call for reconciliation and unity between the fighting parties in Natal. The same ANC officials turned against those who were involved in the fighting and called them Amaqola (thugs).[79] The heroic skills of these gangs were no longer in need and their fighting days were over.

Goodbye! The dissolution of the UDF

A National General Council meeting of the UDF, attended by some 364 delegates from eight regions, was held at Ntabazinde in the Eastern Transvaal on the 29 May 1991 to decide the future of the UDF.[80] The decision was reached that the Front should be disbanded by 20 August that year, eight years after its formation at Mitchell's Plain near Cape Town. At the meeting a proposal was tabled that the Front affiliates should continue mobilizing around bread-and-butter issues under the auspices of the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO).[81]

The final conference of the Front was held at Cape Town from 18 to 23 August 1991. This marked the closing of the last chapter of the UDF's history. My interviewees could not think of any person from the Pietermaritzburg region who attended that meeting. According to Cassius Lubisi, a former member of the UDF restructuring committee, by 1991 people in

---

[78] Author's interview with Sobhuza Dlamini (UNP, 4 November 1994).

[79] Ibid.

[80] Natal Witness, 30 May 1991.

[81] Ibid.

the region had almost totally forgotten about the Front.[82] In the Natal Midlands region the UDF, `died' earlier than in other regions.[83] The causes for the earlier disbandment of the UDF in the region varied from its weakness and inefficiency to the nationwide phenomena of the rush by UDF leaders to secure leadership positions in the rising ANC. The fact that the UDF in the region had always been embroiled in in-fighting, and in conflicts with Inkatha, and state repression also hastened its collapse.

At its national disbandment conference Mac Maharaj gave the following perspective on the dissolution of the UDF:

> We have come to celebrate the dissolution of the UDF, because of its success. But if success is the only thing we are celebrating, then we can be filled with sadness, with loneliness, because we are leaving something we gave birth to, lived through, and we will miss it. I believe that the significance of the UDF is among those individual achievements, it resides in a spirit that is marshalled together, a spirit that Allan Boesak called `the spirit of refusal'. It was more than refusal, it was staking out the future, the future of unity for our entire people, our country, our nation.[84]

Maharaj referred to the UDF as `we' to show that the UDF accommodated ANC supporters.

After the disbandment of the Front, SANCO branches were launched in some regions, as had been proposed on 29 May 1991 at the UDF meeting held in Cape Town. In Natal, there were difficulties in changing the image of the UDF to that of a civic organization. SANCO was supposed to draw people from across the political spectrum.[85] However, it was a difficult task to change perceptions of people who had previously viewed the UDF

---

[82] Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi (UNP, 22 October 1995).

[83] Ibid.

[84] Mac Maharaj, `At the UDF farewell rally' South African Outlook (July-August 1991), p. 86.

[85] Author's interview with Thamsanqa Mseleku (UNP, 27 October 1994).

as their enemy. The fact that it is not easy to draw a line between political and civil issues in the South African social context complicated the functions and the acceptance of the association. The bitter debates about the formation of SANCO in Pietermaritzburg delayed its launching until 8 September 1994, more than three years after the first call for it.[86] The elected chairman of the organization, Dumisani Mthalane, claimed that the delay was due to violence that engulfed the townships and the political climate that led to funerals and political rallies every weekend, leaving people with very limited opportunity to attend civic functions.[87]

The political affiliation of SANCO was clear, as most of the people in its highest echelons were inclined to the `Tripartite Alliance' politics. Although the organization's constitution stated that only those who were `apolitical' could be elected to office, the outlook of the organization gives a contrary picture. However, whether SANCO will manage to address itself to bread-and-butter issues is a wait-and-see question.

To conclude, in the period 1989-1991 the UDF in the Pietermaritzburg region was plagued by in-fighting and factionalism. The process of restructuring the UDF from 1989 onwards was short-lived because of the unbanning of political organizations in 1990. Because the UDF was working within the same part of the political spectrum as the ANC, when the latter organization was unbanned UDF activists in the region switched their support to it, and left the UDF to die its own natural death. Because the UDF had never been fully functional in the region, its effective disbandment took place earlier than in other regions.

---

[86] Natal Witness, 8 September 1994.

[87] Ibid.

CONCLUSION

> `I must say that in the life of a political organization eight years is nothing, and yet the achievement of the UDF over that period is such that when the history of our struggle for freedom is written, those eight years will need a book'.[1]

Up to the mid-1980s Pietermaritzburg was relatively quiet politically. The Soweto uprising of 1976, and the Vaal Triangle protests of 1983-4 failed to stimulate political mobilization or organization in the region. Politically, therefore the region lagged behind other centres. This was particularly so in African communities where there were neither strong civic, students' or church organizations that could mobilize people to lead protests against the South African apartheid policies of the South African government.

Among the black communities in Pietermaritzburg, Indian communities were better off in terms of political organization in the early 1980s. Indian activists from Natal Indian Congress were actively involved in creating civic and community organizations that later played a significant role in extra-parliamentary political activities in the region, although when political organizations began to mushroom in African areas the influence of Indian organizations subsided.

Political activities in Pietermaritzburg began to take off after the launching of the UDF in 1983. But it was a gradual process. After the formation of the UDF, civic organizations mushroomed in Durban townships, and strongly challenged the policies of the South African and KwaZulu government. When the South African state and the KwaZulu government, together with Inkatha, moved in to clamp down on this opposition from civic organizations, fighting ensued between their supporters and UDF supporters.

From the time of its national launching at Rocklands Civic Centre, Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town in 1983, the UDF aimed to bring people from various races and walks of

---

[1] Mac Maharaj, `At the UDF farewell Rally', South African Outlook (July-August, 1991), p. 86.

life (workers, students, religious and community organization) to work together for the creation of a free, democratic and non-racial society.[2] The UDF's initial campaigns were to oppose the passing of the South African constitutional reforms of 1983, and the related Koornhof Bills. The Front aimed at mobilizing mass opposition inside the country for the first time in 23 years.

At the launching rally, present from Pietermaritzburg were members of the Committee of Concern who took with them declarations of support for the UDF from 42 organizations from the region. The Committee of Concern was an organization formed in May 1983, at a conference organized by the Anti-South African Indian Council, to discuss social and political problems affecting the different communities of Pietermaritzburg.

In Pietermaritzburg, the first UDF mass meeting after the national launching of the organization in Cape Town was held at the Lay Ecumenical Centre in Edendale on 30 October 1983. The purpose of the meeting was to mark a `people's weekend' called by the national UDF to show opposition to the proposed South African Constitution. At this meeting the second office of the UDF in Natal was opened at the Lay Centre, the first having been opened in Durban. Some activists saw this meeting as marking the launching of the UDF in the region, but no UDF officials were elected at the meeting, nor were UDF structures set up. The Front continued to operate under the auspices of the Committee of Concern.

In 1984 Pietermaritzburg witnessed the formation of youth organizations like the Imbali Youth Organization, Edendale Youth Organization, and many others that identified themselves with UDF politics. The youths, students and teachers became very influential in the politics of the UDF in the region.[3] Most of the UDF campaigns were led by the youths, and usually the campaigns centred around issues affecting the youths.

---

[2] See Appendix 1: The Declaration of the UDF (20 August 1983).

[3] See Appendices 5 and 6.

IYO became the most influential UDF youth affiliate in the region. Its first success was in August 1984, when it organized students into protesting against the visit of Piet Koornhof, the Minister of Cooperation and Development, to Pietermaritzburg. Koornhof was visiting the region to come and install township councillors in Imbali. IYO's successful campaign led to an increase in support for the UDF from students in the region.

The Koornhof incident affected relationship between numbers of parents and youth in Imbali. The behaviour of students in disrupting the meeting prompted some parents to think of reviving vigilante groups. In their eyes, UDF activists were responsible for causing problems in the townships because of their `unruly and undisciplined' behaviour. The vigilantes were joined by Inkatha supporters who were also beginning to see the UDF youth as a threat in the region. The two groups had common purposes. Inkatha emphasised the importance of maintaining the patriarchal and hierarchical values which it presented as traditional in African culture, and so did the vigilante committees. Relations between the UDF and Inkatha and the region were complicated by the fact that the Front was dominated by young people whom some parents viewed as children who aimed at undermining their authority.

From August 1983 to March 1985, the UDF in the region functioned under the aegis of the Committee of Concern. UDF structures in the region were established in March 1985. The Natal region was divided into the subregions of Northern Natal, Natal Midlands, North Coast and Durban Central. Each subregion had its own independent Local Executive Committee (LEC) and a Local General Council (LGC), and there were two structures that represented the whole Natal region, the Regional Executive Committee (REC) and the Regional General Council (RGC). The process of setting up these structures was important in that it gave elected UDF officials experience in running the Front, and enabled supporters to identify their leaders.

During 1984-5, the emphases and nature of UDF campaigns in Pietermaritzburg changed in character, from campaigns based in Indian communities to campaigns

based in African townships. Imbali became the focal point of the political struggles in the region from this period. Organized campaigns centred around the release of 16 UDF activists on treason charges (1985), consumer boycotts, and students' boycotts. The political struggles in the region developed in a pattern, starting in Imbali and gradually spreading to other areas like Sobantu, Edendale and Vulindlela.

At the same time animosity between UDF and Inkatha supporters in the region began increasing, as UDF supporters openly criticised the Imbali township council and the KwaZulu government, both of which were supported by Inkatha. UDF activists also began to mobilize in rural constituencies which formed Inkatha's power-base. Inkatha supporters reacted to these UDF campaigns by embarking on their own recruitment drives, which intensified after 1986. When the state imposed emergency regulations to curtail the activities of extra-parliamentary organizations, Inkatha had the backing of the KwaZulu bantustan and of the South African state. UDF struggles were therefore to establish and expand an organizational presence in rural communities and in the townships in the face of opposition from Inkatha, the KwaZulu administration and the South African state. These struggles became more and more violent, and narrowed down to struggles for control of specific territories by 1987.

In the long run, some of the barriers or obstacles which the UDF faced in the region, favoured its mobilizing strategies. When Inkatha and the vigilantes began to harass people suspected of supporting the UDF in Imbali and later, in other parts of the region, many people who were politically undecided felt they had no option but to join the UDF. The Front in the region consolidated its support in response to attacks by Inkatha supporters on members of previously apolitical communities. This was unlike the situation in other regions, where political mobilization by extra-parliamentary organizations centred around civic issues and apartheid inequalities. In Pietermaritzburg only one civic organization was launched in an African township, the Imbali Civic Organization in April 1985. It was short-lived because of intimidation from opponents of the UDF.

On 12 June 1986, because of the growing strength of extra-parliamentary organizations, the National Party government imposed a national state of emergency. Extra-parliamentary organizations, including the UDF, found it increasingly difficult to operate in the face of state repression. The Front was confronted by the enormous power of the state, in the form of restrictions, bannings and detentions of its activists.

The handicaps under which the Front operated in the Pietermaritzburg region during the state of emergency years (1986-90) were formidable. In retrospect one can see that 1985 marked the heyday of the Front in the region. In June 1986, UDF offices closed down because of state repression. This meant that there was no central place for organizing the day-to-day business of the Front. Key UDF activists were detained or restricted. This affected the organizational abilities of the Front because people who were expected to organize meetings were no longer available. The banning of UDF meetings led to a breakdown of communication between the Front and its affiliates.

The effects of the state of emergency caused tensions among UDF supporters in the region. The Front in the region was plagued by severe internal divisions. These problems were evident also in some of its affiliated organizations. Some activists in the region were accused by other activists of forming a cabal that bypassed democratic mechanisms laid down for decision-making. This in-fighting, combined with repressive measures from the state and physical attacks on the part of Inkatha on UDF supporters, weakened the UDF in the region.

Some of the failures of the UDF stemmed from its nature as a confederation of organizations. Each affiliate functioned with its own constitution and it was not bound by any code to the Front. In short, the UDF was a loose body that individuals could join only through membership of affiliated organizations. Ultimately the strength of the UDF lay within the affiliates.

The state of emergency had some indirect benefits for the UDF. For instance, from 1986, UDF activists in the region were always on the run, moving from place to place.

This gave them the opportunity to mobilize in areas that had not been mobilized before. Furthermore, the presence of armed troops in schools and in the townships intensified black hostility to the South African government. The troops were visible symbols of oppression that UDF activists could point to when mobilizing residents.

From 1987 the conflict between the UDF and Inkatha in the region assumed the proportions of a civil war. Violent clashes between the two groups were reported in various parts of the region, particularly in Edendale and Vulindlela areas. In Edendale the UDF established defence units in the form of street committees. UDF activists later transformed these into more coordinated Self-Defence Units (SDUs). UDF activists later formed SDUs in other parts of Pietermaritzburg.

In February 1988 the state finally banned the UDF. But clashes continued unabated, spreading even to schools in the peri-urban areas of Vulindlela, with students who supported the UDF being harassed by Inkatha supporters and vice-versa. This resulted in some areas in the region being declared `no-go' areas by the inhabitants, who were either predominantly UDF or Inkatha.

By 1989 extra-parliamentary opposition in South Africa was resurfacing, led by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). At the core of the MDM were the UDF and COSATU. Nationally, extra-parliamentary organizations embarked on mass defiance campaigns from August 1989, in what they proclaimed their banned organizations `unbanned'. The marches in Pietermaritzburg took place on 21 September 1989.

The success of the defiance campaigns in Pietermaritzburg stimulated UDF activists into trying to restructure the Front in the region. But the process of restructuring was short-lived. With the unbanning of political organizations in February 1990, most UDF activists moved to the ANC, and began to participate in the building of ANC branches. New support for the Front was not forthcoming, probably because of its known `radical' history in the 1980s. These were some of the issues that hastened the disbandment of the UDF in the region.

After the unbanning of political organizations in 1990, UDF activists were engaged in debates to try and redefine the Front's future role in the country. While debates were going on nationally about the future of the UDF, in Pietermaritzburg region the Front had in effect ceased to exist. In the eight years of its existence in the region, the Front had achieved a number of things. Firstly, it brought together people from different races and walks of life into working to achieve a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa. Secondly, the Front managed to prevent Inkatha from establishing domination over African townships in the region. However, with traditional authorities playing a vital role, Inkatha managed to maintained its supremacy in the peri-urban area. One of the legacies of the UDF's struggles therefore is a politically community sharply divided between town and country. Finally, although the official disbandment of the UDF in 1991 passed without notice on the part of former activists in the region, its legacy passed on to the ANC. Both the UDF's support base, and problems that faced it, were inherited by the ANC.

APPENDIX 1

The Declaration adopted by the United Democratic Front at its inauguration in Cape Town at Rocklands, Mitchell's Plain, on 20 August 1983 read as follows:

We, the freedom loving people of South Africa say with one voice to the world that we cherish the vision of a united, democratic South Africa based on the will of the people, we strive for the unity of all our people through united action against the evils of apartheid, economic and all other forms of exploitation.

AND, IN OUR MARCH TO A FREE AND JUST SOUTH AFRICA, WE ARE GUIDED BY THESE NOBLE IDEAS.

The stand for the creation of a true democracy in which all South Africans will participate in the government of our country; We stand for a single non-racial, unfragmented South Africa free of bantustans and Group Areas;

We say, all forms of oppression and exploitation must end.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE NOBLE IDEAS, AND, ON THIS 20TH DAY OF AUGUST 1983, AT ROCKLANDS CIVIC CENTRE, MITCHELL'S PLAIN, WE JOIN HANDS AS COMMUNITY, WOMEN'S, STUDENTS', RELIGIOUS, SPORTING AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND TRADE UNIONS TO SAY NO TO APARTHEID.

We say NO to the Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill - a bill which will create yet another undemocratic constitution in the country of our birth; We say No to the Koornhof Bills which will deprive more and more African people of their birthright.

We say Yes to the birth of UDF on this historic day;

WE KNOW THAT

this government is determined to break the unity of our people;

WE KNOW THAT APARTHEID WILL CONTINUE

that white domination and exploitation will continue; that forced removals, the group Areas act and the Bantustans will remain.

WE KNOW that there will not be an end to the unequal distribution of the land, wealth and resources of the country. That the migratory labour system will live

on to destroy family life.

WE KNOW that the government will always use false leaders to become its junior partners and to control us. Our lives will still be filled with fears of harassment, bannings, detentions and death.

Mindful of the fact that the new Constitutional Proposals and Koornhof measures will further entrench apartheid and white domination,

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO UNITING ALL OUR PEOPLE WHEREVER THEY MAY BE IN THE CITIES AND COUNTRYSIDE, THE FACTORIES AND MINES, SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, HOUSING AND SPORTS FIELDS, CHURCHES, MOSQUES AND TEMPLES, TO FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM.

we therefore resolve to stand shoulder to shoulder in our common struggle and commit ourselves to

WORK TOGETHER TO

organize and mobilise all community, worker, student, women, religious, sporting and other organizations under the banner of the United Democratic Front;

consult our people regularly and honestly, and bravely strive to represent their views and aspirations; educate all about the coming dangers and the need for unity; build and strengthen all organizations of the people; unite in action against these Bills and other day to day problems affecting our people.

WE PLEDGE TO COME TOGETHER IN THIS UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT AND FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS AND THE KOORNHOF BILLS.

Source: Ukusa, 9 September 1983.

APPENDIX 2

The national leaders of the UDF at its formation in 1983 were:

PATRONS : Nelson Mandela, Monty Naicker, Helen Joseph, Florence Mkhize, Allan Boesak, Sheik Naseem, Francis Baard, Dorothy Nyembe, Beyers Naude, Hassan Howa, Martha Mahlangu, Johnny Issel and Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa. PRESIDENTS : Archie Gumede (Natal); Albertina Sisulu (Transvaal); Oscar Mpetha (Cape Town). VICE-PRESIDENTS: Christmas Tinto and Joe Marks (Western Cape); George Sewpersad and Virgil Bonhomme (Natal); George du Plessis and Frank Chikane (Transvaal). SECRETARIES : Yunus Mohamed and Joe Phaahle (Natal); Trevor Manuel and Cheryl Carolus (Western Cape); Mohamed Vali and Popo Molefe (Transvaal). EXECUTIVE MEMBERS : Jerry Coovadia and Mcibisi Xundu (Natal); Ram Saloojee and Aubrey Makoena (Transvaal); Andrew Boraine and Mildred Lesia (Western Cape).

Source: PACSA, UDF folders; `The United Democratic Front'.

APPENDIX 3

The organizations which belonged to the Committee of Concern (a body representing various anti-apartheid organizations) formed in 1983 in Pietermaritzburg included the following:

Azanian Student Organization, Sobantu Youth Organization, Matiwane Youth League, Teachers Association of South Africa, Pietermaritzburg Child and Welfare, Pietermaritzburg Ratepayers Association, Mountain Rise Ratepayers, Bombay Heights Ratepayers, Combined Ratepayers, Bombay Heights Youth Movement, National Union of South Africa Students, Pietermaritzburg Association for Christian and Social Awareness, Young Christian Students, Anti-South African Indian Council, Black Sash, The University of Natal Joint Academic Staff Association, Council of Unions of South Africa, Metal and Allied Workers Union, Transport Workers Union, Paper and Allied Workers Union, Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union, Trade and General Workers Union, Maritzburg Football Association, Northern Suburb Football Association, Natal Midlands Table Tennis Association, Aurora Cricket Club, BARWY, Young Men's Muslim Association, Nizamia Muslim Society, Vivekananda Divine Life Mission, Hindu Young Mens' Association, Doctors' Guild, Northdale Residents Association, Mpumalanga Arts Ensemble, University of Natal Pietermaritzburg Black Workers Union, Deepavali Cheer Society.

Source: PACSA, UDF folder: Committee of Concern, Newsletter (October 1983).

APPENDIX 4

Some of Natal **Midlands UDF members detained during the 5th state of emergency, 1988-1989**

Name	Age (approx)
Buthelezi, Sipho Abdool	17
Chetty, Kamlasen	28
Chonco, Thembezakhe Mishack	21
Dladla, Dumisani Kenneth	35
Dladla, Linda Linos	21
Dlamini, Mxolisi Theobold	17
Dlamini, Sobhuza Ernest	-
Dlamini, Sytlverius	22
Dube, Cosmos Dennis	27
Gasa, Muhle Lennie	27
Hadebe, Reggie	32
Hadebe, Vusumuzi Johannes	23
Hlongwane, Stembiso Benedict	27
Khanyile, F. Sibusiso	-
Khanyile, Siphiwe Moses	20
Khumalo, Sydney Skhumbuzo	19
Lukhele, Aubrey Mbusi	28
Mabaso, E. Nkosinathi	22
Madiba, C. Bonginkosi	23
Majola, Bonginkosi Vayi	21
Makhathini, E. Sibusiso	22
Makhathini, M. Sthembiso	19
Masango, Ernest Themba	39
Mbambo, John	18
Mbongwe, B. Mzwandile	20

Mchunu, M. Bonginkosi	28
Mdladla, Lucky Joseph	22
Mdladla, Mdelwa Jerome	19
Mkhize, Mandla Gidla	20
Mkhize, Sibusiso Alfred	18
Mnikathi, Nsizwa Herbert	23
Mokubung, N. Gregory	18
Mpulo, Fanelo Andries	-
Mseleku, Thami	26
Mthalane, B. Jeffrey	-
Mthembu, Sifako Isaac	28
Myeza, Daniel Mbongeni	22
Ndlele, Mazwi Eugene	19
Ndlovu, Mduduzi	24
Ngcobo, Qinisela Nicholas	18
Ngubane, Dominic Babo	-
Ngwane, Brian Mxolisi	17
Ngwenya, Dick Absolom	34
Ngwenya, Skhumbuzo	30
Nkwanyana, Muzi	24
Nxumalo, Moses Bhekinkosi	20
Nyimbile, S. Bhekinkosi	32
Nzimande, Bheki Cyprian	17
Sikhakhane, Dumisani	20
Sithole, England Petros	25
Sithole, Sibusiso Joackum	19
Sosibi, Israel Thulani	32
Vilakazi, J. Mandlenkosi	32
Witternberg, Martin Werner	26
Xulu, Bernard Vika	33
Xulu, Thamsanqa Wiseman	30
Zondi, Jericho	24

Zuma, Ephraim Bongani	19
Zuma, S. Nthabeni	30
Zuma, Sipho Bethwell	18

Source: Christopher Merrett (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg): Detainees Aid Committee; Research and Report file.

APPENDIX 5

17 organizations that were restricted in February 1988

United Democratic Front, Azanian Youth Organization, Azanian Peoples Organization, Detainees' Parents Support Committee, Detainees' Support Committee, Release Mandela Committee, National Education Crisis Committee, National Education Union of South Africa, South African National Students' Congress, Cape Youth Congress, South African Youth Congress, Soweto Civic Association, Cradock Residents' Association, Port Elizabeth Black Civic Association, Vaal Civic Association, Western Cape Civic Association, Congress of South African Trade Unions.

Source: Natal Witness, 25 February 1988.

APPENDIX 6

Statistical summary of detentions in Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands: An overview.

(a) Detentions under the third state of emergency, 12 June 1986 to 11 June 1987.

Category	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
Students, scholars, teachers	97	7	104	38.8%
Unionists, workers	6	1	7	2.6%
Community group members	39	3	42	15.7%
Clergy, church workers	30	_	30	11.2%
Others	5	_	5	1.9%
Unknown	78	2	80	29.8%
TOTALS	255	13	268	100.0%

Notes: In the above column A = Original detention
B = Redetentions
C = Total detention
D = Percentage of total.

(b) Detentions under the fourth state of emergency, 11 June 1987 to 10 June 1988.

Category	A	B	C	D
Students, scholars, teachers	30	4	34	2.7%
Unionists, workers	41	_	41	3.1%
Community group members	63	11	74	5.7%
Clergy, church workers	2	_	2	0.2%
Others	3	_	3	0.2%
Unknown	1124	14	1137	88.1%
TOTALS	**1263**	**29**	**1292**	**100.0%**

Notes: In the table above A = Original detention under the fourth state of emergency

B = Redetentions

C = Total detention

D = Percentage of total.

(c) Detentions under the fifth state of emergency 11 June 1988 to 9 June 1989.

Category	Number of detainees
Students, scholars, teachers	9
Unionists, workers	1
Community group members	10
Clergy, church members	_
Others	_
Unknown	74
TOTAL	104

Source: Christopher Merrett (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg): UDF Detainees Aid Committee; Research and Report file.

LIST OF SOURCES

This list has been divided into six sections:

1. Private collections of documents
2. Books and chapters in books
3. Journal articles
4. Newspapers
5. Unpublished theses and seminar papers
6. Interviews

1. PRIVATE COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS

Christopher Merrett (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg): Detainees Aid Committee, Research and Report file.

Jabulani Sithole (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg): UDF documents collection, Natal Midlands United Democratic Front, minutes of meetings.

Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness: UDF folders, `The United Democratic Front'.

Democratic Party (Pietermaritzburg office): Political violence and outreach folders, Monitoring violence in the Pietermaritzburg area.

BOOKS AND CHAPTERS IN BOOKS

Adam, H. and K. Moodley, The Negotiated Revolution: Society and Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1993).

Aitchison, J. The Seven Days War: 25-31 March 1990. The Victims' Narrative (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Centre for Adult Education, 1991).

Aitchison, J. et al., Imbali (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Centre for Adult Education, 1993).

Barrell, H. `The UDF and NF: Their emergence, composition and trends' South African Review, vol. 2 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1984), pp. 6-21.

Barrell, H. `The outlawed African liberation movements', in Shaun Johnson (ed.), South Africa: No Turning Back (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 1-52.

Beck, K. `Democratizing the UDF: The muddy slope', in R. Hunt Davis (ed.), Apartheid Unravels (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1991), pp. 100-118.

Beinart, W. Twentieth-Century South Africa (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1994).

Blumenfeld, J. South Africa in Crisis (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1987).

Bonnin, D. and Sitas, A. `Lessons from the Sarmcol strike', in William Cobbett and Robin Cohen (eds.), Popular Struggles in South Africa (London, Zed Books, 1988).

Brewer, J. After Soweto: An Unfinished Journey (Oxford, Clarendon, 1987).

Callinicos, A. South Africa between Reform and Revolution (London, Bookmarks, 1988).

Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds.), Popular Struggles in South Africa (London, Zed Books, 1988).

Cole, J. Crossroads: The Politics of Reform and Repression, 1976-1986 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1987).

Collinge Jo-Anne, `The United Democratic Front', in South African Review, vol. 3 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1986), pp. 265-283.

Davis, S. Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South African's Hidden War (London, Yale University Press, 1987).

Forsyth, P. Pietermaritzburg Conflict Chronology: Political Developments in Pietermaritzburg 1980-86 (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, Historical Studies Department, 1991).

Frederikse, J. The Unbreakable Thread: Non-Racialism in South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1990).

Giliomee, H. The Parting of the Ways: South African Politics 1976-82 (Cape Town, David Philip, 1982).

Giliomee, H. and Schlemmer, L. eds. Negotiating South Africa's Future (Johannesburg, Southern Book Publishers, 1989).

Giliomee, H. and Schlemmer, L. From Apartheid to Nation-Building (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1989).

Gottschalk, K. `UDF, 1983-1991, rise, impact and consequences', in Ian Liebenberg (ed.), The Long March (Pretoria, HAUM, 1994), pp. 187-198.

Harris, A. and Iris, T. Beyond the Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa in the 1980s (Cape Town, Kliptown Books, 1989).

Harries, A. The Child is Not Dead: Youth Resistance in South Africa 1976-86 (London, British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1986).

Hunt Davis, R. Apartheid Unravels (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1991).

Johnson, S. South Africa: No Turning Back (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989).

Johnson, S. `The soldiers of Luthuli': Youth in the politics of resistance in South Africa, in S. Johnson (ed.), South Africa No Turning Back (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 52-94.

Kane-Berman, J. Soweto: Black Revolt White Reaction (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1978).

Kentridge, M. An Unofficial War: Inside the Conflict in Pietermaritzburg (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990).

Kitchen, H. (ed.), South Africa: In Transition to What? (New York, Praeger, 1988).

Kotze, H. Political Organization in South Africa (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1991).

Liebenberg, I. `The story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa', in Ian Liebenberg et al. (eds.), The Long March (Pretoria, HAUM, 1994).

Lodge, T. et al., All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s (New York, Ford Foundation, 1991).

Lodge, T. Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983).

Luckhardt, K. and Wall, B. Working for Freedom: Black Trade Union Development in South Africa throughout the 1970s (Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1981).

Macfarlane, L. Violence and the State (London, Nelson, 1974).

Magubane, B. South Africa from Soweto to Uitenhage (New Jersey, Africa World Press, 1989).

Martin, P. and David, W. Black Trade Unions in South Africa (Nottingham, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1982).

McCaul, C. `The wild card: Inkatha and contemporary black politics', in P. Frankel et al. (eds.), State, Resistance and Change in South Africa (Johannesburg, Southern Books, 1988).

Mcdonald, S. `A guide to black politics in South Africa', in Helen Kitchen (ed.), South Africa: In Transition to What? (New York, Praeger, 1988).

Meer, F. Resistance in the Townships (Durban, Madiba Publications, 1989).

Meredith, M. In the Name of Apartheid: South Africa in the Post- War Era (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1988).

Mufson, S. Fighting Years: Black Resistance and the Struggle for a New South Africa (Boston, Beacon, 1990).

Ottaway, M. South Africa: The Struggle for a New Order (Washington, Brookings Institution, 1993).

Owen, K. `A fundamental shift in South African politics?', in Helen Kitchen (ed.), South Africa: In Transition to What? (New York, Praeger, 1988), pp. 139-154.

Price, R. The Apartheid State in Crisis (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990).

Schrire, R. Adapt or Die: The End of White Politics in South Africa (Ford Foundation, 1991).

Seekings, J. Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1993).

Seidman, J. Facelift, Apartheid: South Africa after Soweto (London, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980).

Shohat, E. and Stam, R. Unthinking Eurocentrism (London, Routledge, 1994).

Spink, K. Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa (London, St. Edmundsburg Press, 1991).

Swilling, M. `The politics of stalemate', in Frankel, T. et al. (eds.), State, Resistance and Change in South Africa (London, Macmillan, 1988).

Swilling, M. `The United Democratic Front and township revolt', in William Cobbett and Robin Cohen (eds.), Popular Struggles in South Africa (London, James Curry, 1988).

Thulo, T. `Violence in Pietermaritzburg', in Fatima Meer (ed.) Resistance in the Townships (Durban, Madiba. 1989).

Truluck, A. No Blood on Our Hands (Pietermaritzburg, Black Sash, 1993).

Wa Thiongo, N. Prison Notes: A Writer's Prison Diary (Nairobi, Heinemann, 1981).

Worden, N. The Making of Modern South Africa (London, Blackwell, 1994).

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Anonymous, `The community was forced to defend itself: Interview with UDF activists', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 2 (1988), pp. 34-37.

Anonymous, `A new COSATU strategy? Winning away Inkatha's base', Work in Progress, no. 45 (November-December 1987), pp. 29-31.

Anonymous, `Sarmcol strikers cooperation: Workers-controlled production', Work in Progress, no. 46 (February 1987), pp. 12-15.

Anonymous, `Bus drivers under attack by vigilantes' South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 2 (1988), pp. 45-52.

Bundy, C. `Street sociology and pavement politics: Aspects of youth and student resistance' Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 13, no. 3 (1987).

Burton, S. `Interview with Paul Van Uytrecht: "Directly or indirectly you are involved" ', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 2 (1988), pp. 38-43.

Carrim, Y. `Class politics to the fore', Work in Progress, no. 40 (1986), pp. 13-14.

Carrim, Y. `The defiance campaigns: Protest politics on the march, 1989', Indicator South Africa, vol. 6, no. 4 (1989), pp. 49-52.

De Villiers, R. `Front or political party?', South African Outlook, no. 41 (1986), pp. 38-39.

Gwala, N. `Political violence and the struggle for control in Pietermaritzburg' Journal for Southern African Studies, vol. 15, no. 3 (1988-9), pp. 506-524.

Innes, D. `Workers' politics and the popular movements: Unity and the Freedom Charter', Work in Progress no. 41 (April 1986), pp. 11-16.

Kentridge, M. `Pietermaritzburg under the knife', South African Outlook (January 1990), pp. 233-240.

Lodge, T. `The politics of refusal', Leadership South Africa, vol. 5, no. 1 (1986), pp. 19-25.

Maharaj, M. `Eight years of popular politics', South African Outlook (July-August 1991), pp. 86-89.

Mare, G. `Regional rule for Inkatha?', Work in Progress, no. 40 (January-February, 1987), pp. 7-12.

Naidoo, K. `The politics of youth resistance in the 1980s: The dilemmas of a differentiated Durban', Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 18, no. 1 (1992), pp. 143-165.

Schreiner, G. `COSATU strategy in Natal', Work in Progress, no. 46 (February 1987), pp. 21-24.

Schlemmer, L. `South Africa revisited by Theo Hanf', Indicator South Africa, no. 2 (1984-5), pp. 3-7.

Seekings, J. `Vigilantes and the state: Probing the links', Work in Progress, no. 40 (1986), pp. 26-29.

Seekings, J. `Trailing Behind the Masses: The UDF and Township politics in the PWV region 1983-4', Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 18, no. 1 (1992), pp. 93-114.

Stavrou, S. `Violence on the periphery: The greater Edendale complex', Indicator South Africa, vol. 7, no. 1 (1989), pp. 53-57.

Van Niekerk, P. `Inkatha and COSATU: Drawing the battle lines', Work in Progress, no. 42 (1986), pp. 4-7.

Von Holdt, K. `Vigilantes versus defense committees', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 2 (1988), pp. 16-25.

Von Holdt, K. `Mass action against the Bill', South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 3 (1988), pp. 1-14.

NEWSPAPERS

Business Day	30 August 1989
Daily News	16 May 1990
Echo	1984-1991
Ilanga	1984-1991
Natal Witness	1983-1991
Phambili	October 1988
Ukusa	October 1983
Weekly Mail	1983-1991

UNPUBLISHED THESES AND SEMINAR PAPERS

Aitchison, J. `The Pietermaritzburg conflict: Experience and analysis'(unpublished seminar paper, Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, August 1989).

Aitchison, J. `Numbering the dead: Patterns in the Midlands conflict' (unpublished paper, Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, April 1988).

Aitchison, J. `Numbering the dead: The course and patterns of political violence in the Natal Midlands, 1987-1989' (unpublished Masters thesis, University of Natal Pietermaritzburg, 1993).

Black Sash, `Natal Midlands branch annual report for national conference' (Pietermaritzburg, March 1985).

Clive , N. `Pietermaritzburg's Sobantu village: A case study of control and violence in a Natal township' (unpublished paper, Department of Development Administration and Politics, University of South Africa, 1989).

COSATU, `The role of the police in the vigilante violence in the Pietermaritzburg area' (Johannesburg, 30 March 1989).

Detainees Aid Committee, `Sidla ekhaya - We shall eat at home: The detainees' hunger strike in Pietermaritzburg, 1989' (Pietermaritzburg, Detainees Aid Committee, 1990).

Draper, M. `Interview with Musa Zondi: Chairman of Inkatha Youth Brigade' (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Sociology Department, 30 January 1990).

Forsyth, P. `The past as the present: Chief A. N. M. G. Buthelezi's use of history as a source of political legitimation' (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1989).

Hayes, G. `Inkatha, an analysis', paper given at Southern African Studies seminar (Pietermaritzburg, 10 May 1979).

Jeffery, J. `Witness to the crisis: The Inkatha interdicts' (unpublished seminar paper, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, August 1988).

Morris, M. `South African violence and sabotage, July 1984 to June 1985' (Cape Town, Terrorism Research Association, 1985).

Mkhize, K. `Reporting the violence: An insider's problem' (unpublished seminar paper, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, April 1988).

Nash, M. `Reform, Repression and Resistance', Report of the Black Sash National conference held in Cape Town on 12-15 March 1991.

Ngubane, T. `Speech delivered to the Annual General Congress of South African Youth Congress' (Pietermaritzburg, 12 May 1990).

Peel, H. `Sobantu Village: An administrative history of a Pietermaritzburg township 1924-1959' (unpublished Honours thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1987).

South African National Students Congress, Newsletter (University of Durban Westville, 1986).

Sitas, A. `The making of the Comrades movement in Natal, 1985-91' (unpublished paper, Oxford University, 1991).

Sitas, A. `Political violence in Southern Africa: Historical, comparative and contemporary perspectives' (St. Antony's College, Oxford, 25-27 June 1991).

Smith, T. `They killed my children: One community in conflict 1983-90' (Pietermaritzburg, PACSA, 1990).

Van Wyk, J. W. `An explanation of the conflict between the UDF and Inkatha in the Greater Pietermaritzburg area, September 1987 to June 1988' (unpublished Honours thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989).

INTERVIEWS

All interviews took place in Pietermaritzburg, and were tape-recorded unless otherwise indicated. Tapes and transcripts are in the possession of the author.

Bawa, Ahmed	22 June 1995
Carrim, Yunus	14 October 1994 and 7 November 1995
Chetty A. S.	4 October 1994 (telephonic interview, not tape-recorded).
Dlamini, Sobhuza	7 October 1994 and 6 June 1995 (e-mail messages).
Gabela, Nkosinathi	3 July 1995
Gardner, Colin	22 August 1994
Hadebe, Ruth	7 November 1994
Hassim, Lyov	8 October 1994 and 12 November 1995
Irshaad, Kaseeram	17 September 1995
Kaunda, Lakela	14 October 1994
Kerchhoff, Peter	5 August 1994 and 29 September 1995
Keys, Radley	25 October 1994 (telephonic interview, not tape recorded).
Khoza, Makhosi	4 April 1995
Kunene, Lungisani	20 April 1995
Lubisi, Cassius	6 September 1994, 28 July 1995 and 20 August 1995 (e-mail-messages).
Magaqa, Mzwandile	30 August 1995
Majola, Nkosinathi	9 September 1994
Makan, Kay	23 September 1994
Makhanya, M.	17 September 1994
Mkhize, Gcina	5 September 1994
Mkhize, Khaba	30 August 1994
Mkhize, Sibongiseni	30 August 1995
Mohamed, Jorry	28 May 1995

Mseleku, Thami	27 October 1994 (telephonic interview, not tape recorded).
Mthembu, Zola	30 August 1995
Naidoo, Vis	6 June 1995
Ndlovu J. M.	14 March 1995
Ndlovu, Mduduzi	8 June 1995
Ndlovu, Thami	16 August 1995
Ndlovu, Themba	27 October 1994
Ngubane, Weekend	3 July 1995
Ngubane, Zithulele	24 April 1995
Nzimande, Blade	5 October 1994
Phungula, Dumisani	30 October 1995
Selepe, Isaac	17 March 1995
Sithole, Jabulani	20 March 1995