# Building a Movement



UDF UNITES - APARTHEID DIVIDES

UDF

UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

FORWARD TO PEOPLES' POWER !

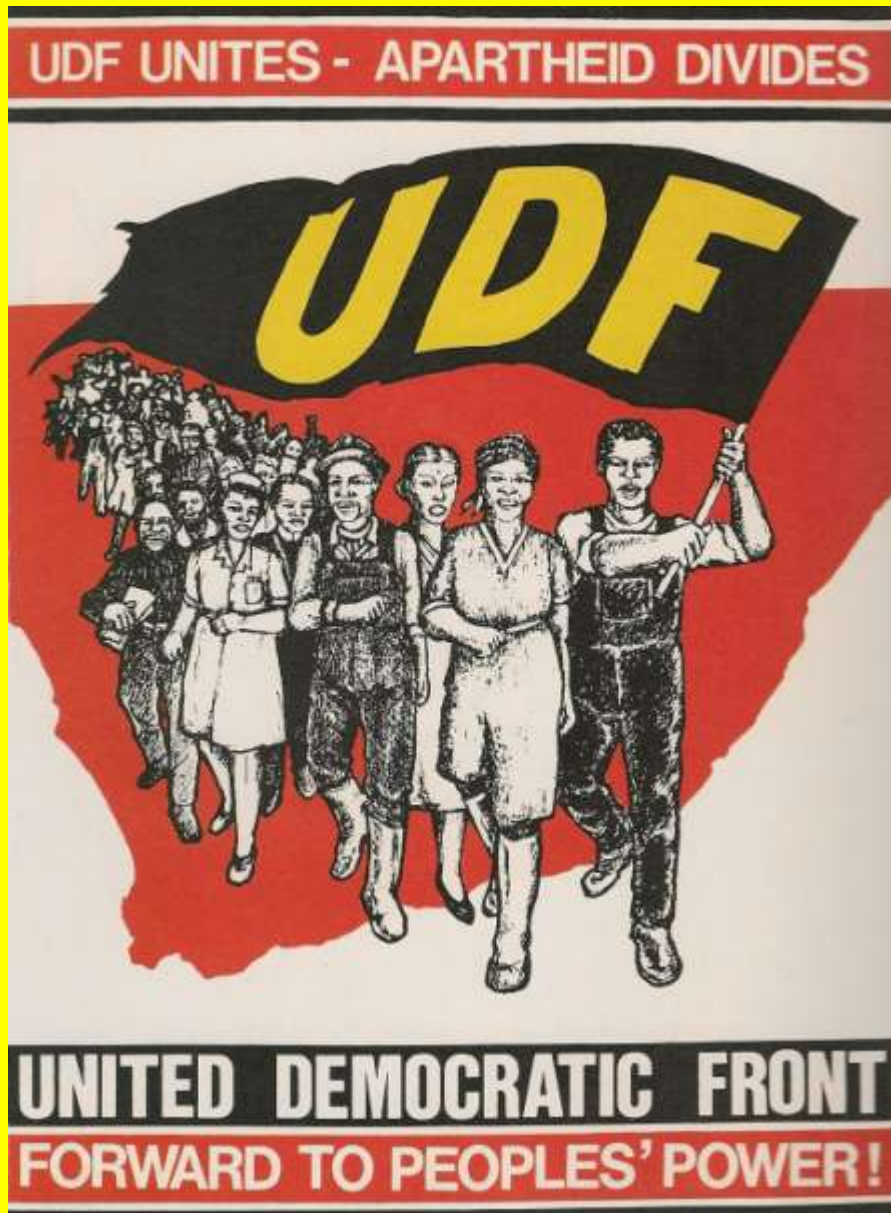**The United Democratic Front**

South Africa

1983 - 1989

# What is a movement?

Sustained mobilization around a strategy to achieve an objective

Terminology in South Africa of the 1980s:
- 'The Movement' (the ANC, the liberation movement, illegal)
- CBOs, MBOs and NGOs
- UDF, COSATU and MDM
- Fronts, 'fronts' and alliances
- When does a Front become a Movement?

"South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." Azaso, Nusas and Cosas leadership share a platform, demonstrating the non-racial unity on which the democratic struggle is based.

# What's needed for a successful movement?

- A vision

- A 'trigger'

- Leadership
- An organisational base

- A strategy

- Broad unity with a range of allies

# Elements of the movement

- Organisational structure
- Leadership
- 'Branding' and public presence
- Mobilisation and spreading/repetition/simultaneous use of same tactic in many places
- Sequencing of tactics to build pressure
- Local flexibility and creativity (tactical innovation)
- National strategy and direction

# Phases of the movement

- Phase I: Development of mass-based organization around local issues (1980 – 1983)
- Phase II: Formation of national coordinating structure (UDF) in 1983 to counter government reform strategy and run campaigns against Tricameral and BLAs (1984) and 'delegitimise' them.
- Phase III: Render government institutions unworkable ('ungovernability') (1985)
- Phase IV: Put into place alternative institutions of popular power (1986)
- Phase V: 'Holding strategy' in response to repression and beginnings of negotiation (1987-8)
- Phase VI: Defiance of remaining apartheid laws and repression (1989)
- Phase VII: Collapse of homeland structures (1992-3) and negotiations around new local government structures (1989 – 1994), together with national negotiations for new constitution and transitional government (1990 – 1994).

WE DEMAND:
THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN

U D F SUPPORT THE CONSUMER BOYCOTT!

# Campaigns and tactics

- Tricameral parliament: election boycott
- BLA: election boycott; pressure on councillors
- Apartheid education: boycott
- 'Black weekend' and 'Black Christmas' campaigns – consumer boycotts, work stayaways
- Anti-repression campaigns: Free the Children; Troops out of the Townships
- Alternative institutions: street and area committees, people's courts, self-defence units, anti-crime committees
- One City campaign, occupation of BLA Council offices, rent boycotts
- Campaign vs Labour Relations Act, stayaways
- Hunger strike
- Claiming the cities and towns: marches to city centre

# Critical issues (1) Leadership

- Nelson Mandela and the role of the 'big man' in history
- 'Absent leadership' can have positive effect of empowering ordinary people
- Strategic implications of movement leadership being in different places (prison, exile, legal mass movements)
- Leadership in negotiation and of mass mobilisation (see eg of Mkhuseli Jack)

# Critical issues (2) Strategic coherence

- Different interpretations of the same movement – ref Anthea Jeffery, *Peoples War* – contrast with Zunes, Schock

- Nonviolent strategies of mobilisation effective but contradicted/undermined by violence OR

- Strategic coherence of Peoples War and UDF a 'front' for revolutionary/militarist strategy (Jeffery) OR

- Mass mobilisation as one strategy ('pillar') in parallel with other strategies (armed struggle) which combined put pressure on the apartheid regime but NOT strategic coherence. 'All means of struggle'/'mixed struggle'??

- Tactical integration? Did mass actions rely on coercion? Was violence contradictory to successful mass actions?

# Critical issues (3): Coalition-building, hegemony and tolerance

- Jeffery: UDF a 'front' for the ANC/SACP/CPSU

- Building alliances: principled, strategic, tactical; long, medium, short term

- Who was in and who was out of the UDF?

- How did the UDF build organisation, expand, build legitimacy/hegemony?

- Territoriality and intolerance of 'outsiders'

# Principles of successful NVA:

- Unity (yes, but with caveat above re intolerance)

- Planning (yes, but high level of defensiveness, responsiveness, spontaneity, local initiative)

- Discipline (in some respects, but not non-violent discipline)