

SAHA IN THE CLASSROOM

THE UDF AND THE NATIONAL FORUM

A set of classroom materials
produced by the South African History Archive
for Grade 12 learners

SOURCE BOOKLET FOR LEARNERS



THE SAHA IN THE CLASSROOM SERIES

This series of booklets comprises an introductory booklet on how to use the SAHA in the Classroom series and 9 source booklets for learners, with corresponding guide booklets for educators, exploring the following aspects of South Africa's history from 1976 - 1994:

The 1983 Constitution

The United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum

Formal repression in the 1980s

Covert repression in the 1980s

Resistance in the 1980s - civil society

Resistance in the 1980s - militancy

Resistance in the 1980s - international pressure

The move to democracy - negotiations

The move to democracy - the role of violence

The South African History Archive (SAHA) is an independent human rights archive committed to recapturing lost and neglected histories, documenting past struggles against apartheid, as well as ongoing struggles in the making of democracy in South Africa. SAHA's central mission is to bring South African history out of the archives and into schools, universities and communities in new and innovative ways. SAHA is also dedicated to using South Africa's Promotion of Access to Information Act in order to extend the boundaries of freedom of information in South Africa and to build up an archive of materials released under the Act for public use.

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INTRODUCTION

These historical sources and questions are produced by the South African History Archive (SAHA) for Grade 12 History learners. They form part of a broader historical study of South Africa in the 1980s.

This booklet examines the role of the United Democratic Front and the National Forum in opposing apartheid structures during the 1980s. Both were formed to oppose reforms introduced by PW Botha, specifically the new Tricameral Parliament. While the National Forum ultimately faded into the background, the UDF played a central role in the transformation of South African politics from its launch in 1983 until it was disbanded in 1991.

In the national examination, you will be asked questions on a wide variety of different sources. These will include written, oral, visual and other material useful to the historian.

There will be questions on both **primary sources** and **secondary sources**:

- **primary sources** are sources that come from the period that is being studied
- **secondary sources** are sources that are produced after the period of history that is being studied

Before getting to the sources, you will be given the historical context of the formation of the United Democratic Front and the National Forum in the 1980s. This text is much like a secondary source, as the information comes from the books written by historians who have researched this period. The sources themselves are drawn from the archives of SAHA, and will, more often than not, be primary sources.

These learning materials are intended to:

- provide you with an opportunity to use source material to **help your understanding** of South Africa in the 1980s
- provide you with **practice** in answering source-based questions
- guide you on **how to approach answers**

Some tips:

- Always look at the mark allocation to guide you.
- In this material, two marks are given for each point that can be explained and backed up with evidence from the source.
- A two-mark question will usually award one mark for identifying evidence from the source, and one mark for your explanation.
- When you answer a question for six marks, you need to explain at least three points and provide evidence from the source to back up each point.

After the sources and questions you will find a glossary of difficult terms and a list of books for further reading.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE FORMATION OF THE UDF AND THE NATIONAL FORUM – A RESPONSE TO THE 1983 CONSTITUTION

The so-called constitutional reforms introduced by P.W. Botha in 1983 led to the formation of two important organisations – the National Forum and the United Democratic Front (UDF). Both were created in order to oppose these reforms, and in particular, the new Tricameral Parliament. However, while the National Forum ultimately faded into the background, the UDF was to play a central role in the transformation of South African politics from its launch in 1983 until it was disbanded in 1991.

THE FORMATION OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF)

'We want all of our rights, we want them here, and we want them now ... Now is the time!'

– Alan Boesak

When the UDF was first formed in August 1983, it had only a vague sense of what it was trying to achieve. Its broad aim was to oppose the apartheid government's so-called constitutional reforms, and particularly the new Tricameral Parliament, which excluded the African majority from any kind of political representation. It also objected to the Koornhof Bills, which provided for African representation in local councils. The UDF wanted to build a broad front or alliance with Indians and coloureds to reject the state's reforms.

The UDF was created as a broad-based, non-racial alliance of organisations that supported UDF aims, but at the same time, kept their own autonomy. It brought together about 400 national, regional and local organisations, consisting of trade unions, student organisations, civic organisations, women's groups, church groups and political organisations. The UDF deliberately created an alliance of different organisations, which may have had little in common with each other, in order 'to unite a broadest possible spectrum of people across class and colour lines...to bring together a maximum number of organisations of the people.'¹

The UDF identified itself with the ANC and the Congress tradition, and accepted the broad non-racial principles of the Freedom Charter. It was also supported by the ANC-in-exile.

Despite widespread protest, the UDF was unable to prevent the Tricameral Parliament or the black local councils from being formed. It was then forced to examine the aims and direction of the front. In response to the growing protest in the townships from 1984 onwards, the UDF decided to transform itself into a more party-like organisation, rather than a front. It aimed to provide effective political leadership and build an organisation that would facilitate the intensification of the revolt in the townships. It became a far more centralised organisation that played an important role in the struggles taken on by its affiliates. As the struggle against apartheid intensified, grassroots organisations mobilised around local issues such as consumer boycotts, rent increases, education and health problems. The UDF linked these local grassroots issues to the broader national political

1. Quoted in *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* by Jeremy Seekings, David Philip, 2000, p. 17

demands. But the UDF should not be viewed as a movement that took over its affiliates. Many of the affiliated organisations may have identified with the UDF and used its resources, but they kept their independence.

The UDF was forced to operate under increasingly hostile and repressive conditions. In 1986, the state declared a nation-wide State of Emergency, and many of the UDF leaders were detained or forced into hiding. By 1988, the UDF itself was banned, and was forced to continue under the guise of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). This was a general term used to identify the organisations that could not organise openly under the State of Emergency. In 1989 there was a general reawakening of active protest against the state, and the UDF declared itself 'unbanned'. It carried on playing a role of public protest.

It is clear that the UDF played a very important role in the transformation of South African politics. In its eight-year existence, the UDF succeeded in achieving the following:

- It inspired and mobilised people to resist the apartheid government's policies.
- It helped to build an organisational structure from the local to a national level.
- It coordinated a range of different protests and campaigns.
- It promoted the ideals of a non-racial and democratic South Africa.
- It kept alive the spirit of the ANC.

THE NATIONAL FORUM

In June 1983, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) and its Cape affiliates formed the National Forum, a loosely coordinated united front of organisations which believed in the ideology of Black Consciousness. Following in the tradition of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), the National Forum was an exclusively black organisation and believed that the basis of the struggle for freedom in South Africa was a class struggle between the working class, who were black, and the capitalist class, who were white.

There was a strong socialist core within the National Forum. They identified apartheid with capitalism, and rejected the participation of the aspirant black middle classes, as well as white participation, in the struggle. In its manifesto, the National Forum recognised the exploited African working class as the driving force of the liberation struggle.

*'There can be no place in our struggle for our class enemies, collaborationist elements, and representatives of the aspiring black middle class.'*²

– Statement by the Disorderly Bills Action Committee (1983)

Like the UDF, the National Forum organised boycotts and strike action against rent increases, transport costs and education. However, despite the fact that they supported similar issues and promoted similar campaigns, there was tension and antagonism between the National Forum and the UDF. The National Forum objected to three central aspects of the UDF, including its multiracial approach, the participation of whites in the struggle and the controlling role of underground ANC activists in the UDF.

2. Quoted in *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* by Jeremy Seekings, David Philip, 2000, p.68

SOURCE A: Pamphlet – Declaration of the United Democratic Front (UDF) (1983)

Declaration of the United Democratic Front



We, the freedom loving people of South Africa, say with one voice to the whole world that we

- cherish the vision of a united, democratic South Africa based on the will of the people;
- will strive for the unity of all 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 ideals

- we 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. A South Africa free of bantustans and Group Areas;
- we say, all forms of oppression and exploitation must end.

In accordance with these noble ideals, and on the 20th day of August 1983 at Rocklands Civic Centre, Mitchell's Plain, we join hands as trade union, community, women's, student's, religious, sporting and other organisations 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 the United Democratic Front on this historic day;

We know that

- this government is determined to break the unity of our people; that our people will face greater hardships, that our people living in racially segregated and relocated areas will be cut off from the wealth they produce in the cities. That rents and other basic charges will increase. And, that our living standards will fall;
- that working people will be divided. Race from race; urban from rural employed from unemployed, men from women. Low wages, poor working conditions, attacks on our trade unions will continue;
- students will continue to suffer under unequal education, created to supply a reservoir of cheap labour. Ethnic control and unequal facilities will remain. Apartheid will still be felt in our classrooms;
- the religious and cultural life of our people will be harmed. The sins of apartheid will continue to be stamped on the culture and religions of our people;

- the oppression and exploitation of women will continue. Women will suffer greater hardships under the new pass laws. Women, will be divided from their children and families. Poverty and malnutrition will continue to disrupt family life. The brunt of apartheid will still be carried by our families;
- non-racial sport will suffer. There will be less money for the building of sports facilities. And, forced separation will deal non-racial sport a further blow. 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, banning, 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**

- organise and mobilise all community, worker, student, women, religious, sporting and other organisations under the banner of the United Democratic Front;
- consult our people regularly and honestly, and bravely and strive to represent their views and aspirations;
- educate all about the coming dangers and the need for unity;
- build and strengthen all organisations of the people;
- unite in action against these Bills and other day-to-day problems affecting our people.

And now therefore

We pledge to come together in the United Democratic Front and fight side by side against the Government's constitutional proposals and the Koornhof bills.

A pamphlet produced by the UDF.

(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2431: A1.2.1.4, UDF Collection)

QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE A

A1.

According to the Declaration of the United Democratic Front, what were the main aims of the UDF? (10)

A2.

Using Source A and your own knowledge, explain what the Government's constitutional proposals and the Koornhof Bills were. (4)

A3.

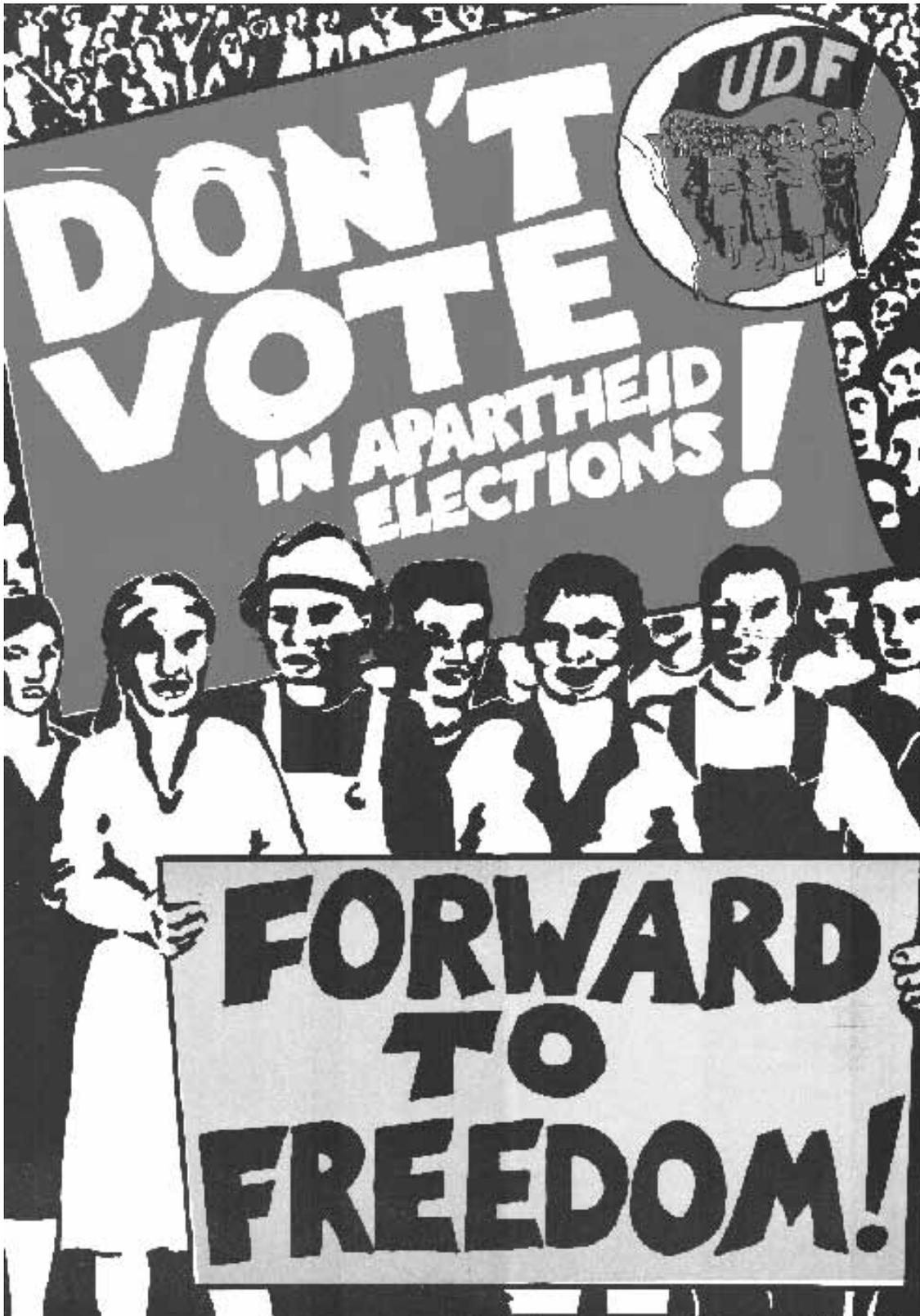
What kind of audience do you think this declaration was aimed at? Substantiate your answer. (4)

A4.

Do you think that this source is biased? Substantiate your answer. (4)

(TOTAL MARKS: 22)

SOURCE B: Poster – Don't Vote in Apartheid Elections (1984)



A poster produced by the UDF
(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2446: 0182, SAHA Poster Collection)

QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE B

B1.

What issue is this poster about? (2)

B2.

Why did the UDF target this issue as a source of protest? (2)

B3.

How does this poster, including the banner of the UDF (seen at the top of the poster), show what kind of organisation the UDF was? (4)

B4.

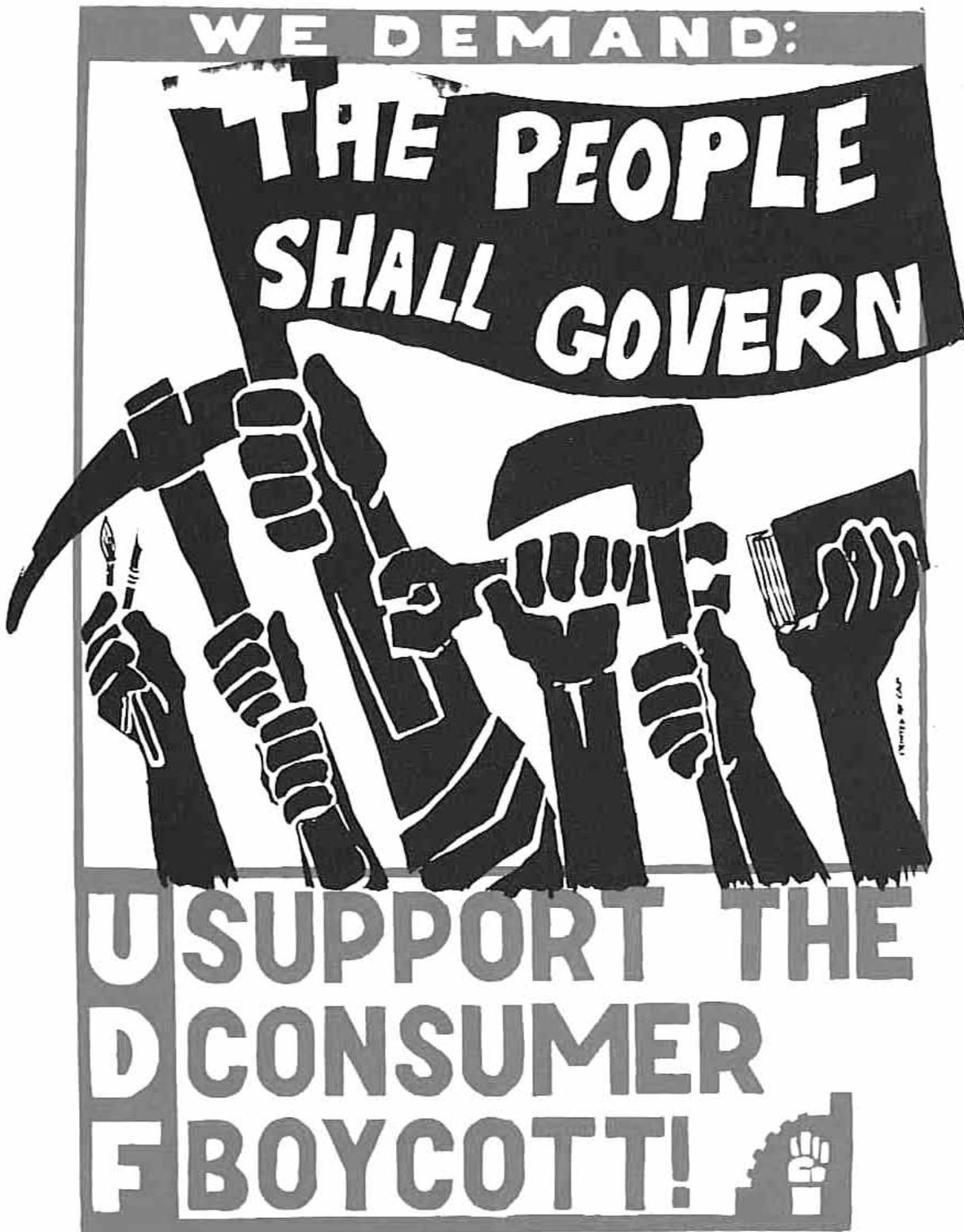
In the 1980s, political posters became an important form of protest. What do you think were the benefits of using posters as a form of protest? (4)

B5.

Do you think this poster is an effective form of protest? Substantiate your answer. (6)

(TOTAL MARKS: 18)

SOURCE C: Poster – We Demand: The People Shall Govern (1985)



A poster produced by the UDF
(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2446: 2622, SAHA, Poster Collection)

QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE C

C1.

What do the six items held in each fist represent? (12)

C2.

What is the effect of using them in this poster? (2)

C3.

What does the use of the slogan 'The People shall govern' say about the ideology (belief system) of the UDF? (4)

C4.

In what way had the UDF changed direction by 1985? Use the poster to back up your answer. (4)

C5.

Which poster (Source B or Source C) has more of an impact? Substantiate your answer. (6)

C6.

*Using your own knowledge and the available sources, select a campaign that the UDF was involved in. Design a poster to promote this campaign. Your poster should reflect the aims and identity of the UDF. (12)

(TOTAL MARKS: 40)

SOURCE D: The Manifesto of the Azanian People (1983)

The Azanian Manifesto

Our struggle for national liberation is directed against the historically evolved system of racism and capitalism which holds the people of Azania in bondage for the benefit of the small minority of the population, i.e. the capitalists and their allies, the white workers and the reactionary sections of the middle classes. The struggle against apartheid, therefore, is no more than the point of departure for our liberatory efforts.

The Black working class inspired by revolutionary consciousness is the driving force of our struggle for national self-determination in a unitary Azania. They alone can end the system as it stands today because they alone have nothing at all to lose. They have a world to gain in a democratic, anti-racist and socialist Azania, where the interests of the workers shall be paramount through worker control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. In the socialist republic of Azania the land and all that belongs to it shall be wholly owned and controlled by the Azanian people. The usage of the land and all that accrues to it shall be aimed at ending all exploitation.

It is the historic task of the Black working class and its organisations to mobilise the oppressed people in order to put an end to the system of oppression and exploitation by the white ruling class.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Successful conduct of the national liberation struggle depends on the firm basis of principle whereby we will ensure that the liberation struggle will not be turned against our people by treacherous and opportunistic 'leaders' and liberal influences. The most important of these principles are:

- *Anti-racism, anti-imperialism and anti-sexism.*
- *Anti-collaboration with the ruling class and all its allies and political instruments.*

- *Independent working class organisation, free from bourgeois influences.*

OUR RIGHTS

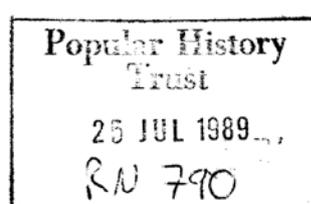
In accordance with these principles the following rights shall be entrenched in Azania:

- *The right to work.*
- *State provision of free and compulsory education for all. Education shall be geared towards liberating the Azanian people from all oppression, exploitation and ignorance.*
- *State provision of adequate and decent housing for all.*
- *State provision of free health, legal, recreational and other community services that will respond positively to the needs of the people.*

OUR PLEDGES

In order to bring into effect these rights of the Azanian people, we pledge ourselves to struggle tirelessly for:

- *The abolition of all laws, institutions and attitudes that discriminate against our people on the basis of colour, sex, religion, language or class.*
- *The re-integration of the bantustan human dumping grounds into a unitary Azania.*
- *The formation of trade unions that will heighten revolutionary worker consciousness.*
- *The development of one national culture inspired by socialist values.*



Below are reproduced excerpts from the manifesto. Read this and then answer the questions that follow.

Our struggle for national liberation is directed against the system of racial capitalism, which holds the people of Azania in bondage for the benefit of the small minority of white capitalists and their allies, the white workers and the reactionary sections of the black middle class. The struggle against apartheid is no more than the point of departure for our liberation efforts. The black working class, inspired by revolutionary consciousness, is the driving force of our liberation struggle. They alone can end the system as it stands today, because they alone have nothing at all to lose. They have a world to gain in a democratic, anti-racist, socialist Azania. It is the historic task of the black working class and its organisations to mobilise the urban and rural poor, together with the radical sections of the middle classes, in order to put an end to the system of oppression and exploitation by the white ruling class.

(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2457, H6.1.3)

QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE D

D1.

Find three examples in the *Manifesto of the Azanian People* which show that AZAPO believed in socialism and the working class struggle. (6)

D2.

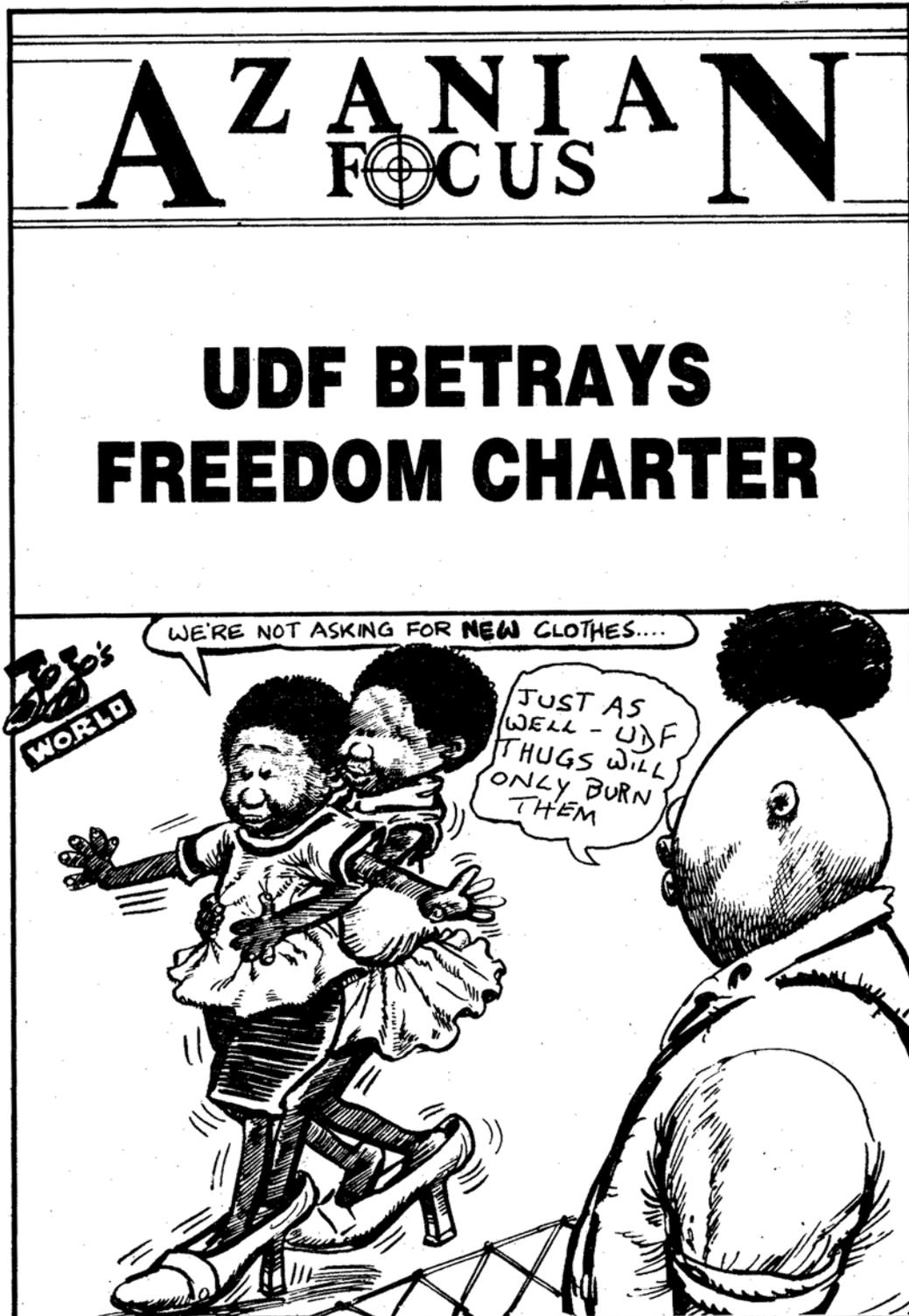
Using the source and your own knowledge, explain why AZAPO and the National Forum were opposed to working with whites in the struggle against apartheid. (4)

D3.

In what way do the aims of the National Forum, as represented by the *Manifesto of the Azanian People*, and the aims of the UDF, as represented in the *Declaration of the UDF*, differ? (8)

(TOTAL MARKS: 18)

SOURCE E: Extract from AZAPO publication –
“Azanian Focus” (1983)



QUOTE

Let us realise our oneness is suffering at the hands of the boycotters and their exploitation.

We are not going to stand idly by and watch our people robbed and assaulted by boycotters again and again.

We need to pitch our power – BLACK POWER – against the perpetrators of this boycott that has brought us misery, poverty and had divided us.

WE MUST NEVER ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE DIVIDED AGAIN.

STOP PRESS

STOP PRESS

UDF MISLEADS ON EDUCATION

Once again, we have witnessed the UDF leading the Black man to the brink of chaos because of its short-sighted stupidity. In doing this it has once again violated the Freedom Charter.

Freedom Charter: "The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened. Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children".

The UDF betrayed this principle by using our youth to serve the UDF's own narrow political ends. We all know the apartheid Bantu Education is thoroughly bad. It will go – we will see to that. But until that happens our youth must still be educated. Without education the day of liberation will fade away from our eyes.

The UDF has fallen into the White system's trap. By wanting to keep the

Black youth ignorant, the UDF is supporting Bantu Education.

AZAPO welcomes and praises the wise decision taken by the National Parents Crisis Committee in Durban on 31 March 1986 to have nothing to do with the UDF education boycotts. UDF BE WARNED. The people of the nation have voted against you. You have betrayed the Freedom Charter again and the Black majority will never forget or forgive this TREASON against our cause.

WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS OUR FREE AZANIA. WE WILL REMOVE ALL WHITE APARTHEID. WE DO NOT NEED UDF AND INKHATHA LACKEYS IN OUR STRUGGLE. WE WILL REMOVE BANTU EDUCATION IN OUR OWN WAY.

FORWARD TO AZANIA.

**ONE PEOPLE – AZANIA
FREEDOM – NOT BOYCOTTS!**

Published by the Frank Talk Editorial Collective on behalf of the
AZANIAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION, P.O. Box 19360, Dormerton, 4015, South Africa.

This is an extract from the AZAPO publication *Azanian Focus*.
(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2431: A1.26.1.4, AF, UDF Collection)

QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE E

E1.

Why does the publication *Azanian Focus* argue that the UDF has betrayed the Freedom Charter? (4)

E2.

Using your own knowledge and the source, explain why *Azanian Focus* would have taken this position. (4)

E3.

Give two examples of the use of emotive language in this source. (4)

E4.

How does the use of such emotive language affect the reader of this source? (4)

E5.

What message is the cartoon on the front cover of *Azanian Focus* trying to give about the UDF? (4)

(TOTAL MARKS: 20)

SOURCE F: Open letter to Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) (1985)

SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY ARCHIVES

UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

UDF UNITES! APARTHEID DIVIDES!



NATIONAL OFFICE

KHOTSO HOUSE
42 DE VILLIERS STREET
JOHANNESBURG
P.O. BOX 10366
TEL: 29-1916
29-1917

6 May 1985

OPEN LETTER TO THE AZANIAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION

Compatriots

We write to you at a time when our struggle has reached a new and unprecedented height - at a time when white minority rule has shown an incapacity to contain the People's will to be free; at a time when our people in increasing numbers are laying down their lives for the future of our country.

Over the past few weeks we have witnessed an escalation of the conflict between members and supporters of our organisations. In the Transvaal and Eastern Cape, violent clashes have been reported. The situation in the Eastern Cape is particularly serious as simmering tensions have now resulted in bloody confrontation.

It is patently clear that the agents of Apartheid have been trying their utmost to fuel the conflict. Pamphlets have been distributed, purportedly in the name of our organisations attacking each other; homes of our members have been attacked and petrol-bombed by these very forces; certain sections of the mass media have, in their own interests, played up this conflict and thereby exacerbated the tension. In particular the S.A.B.C. has exaggerated and distorted the real situation.

We believe that the crisis which Apartheid is going through has reached unmanageable proportions. It is therefore not surprising that its agents and apologists have been trying everything in their power to undermine the possibility of unity within the ranks of the Liberation Movement. At the same time these forces have unleashed a reign of terror against our people on an unprecedented scale.

That there are differences between our organisations in our understanding, interpretation and possibly methods of struggle is undeniable. But we cannot accept that these need be destructive. Surely our common repugnance for the system under which we live far supercedes the differences between us.

History has taught us /

Presidents: Oscar Mpeha, Albertina Sisulu, Archie Gumede
Eastern Cape President: Edgar Ngoyi
Border President: Steve Tshwete

National Treasurers: Cassim Saloojee, Mewa Ramgobin
National Publicity Secretary: Mosiuoa 'Terror' Lekota
National Secretary: Benn Motlana

History has taught us that minority governments and their imperialist friends will stop at nothing to create divisions amongst Liberatory Forces. We must not allow these agents to deflect our struggle. We both know who the real enemy is.

It is therefore imperative that we take decisive action to resolve the conflict. To this end we are prepared to meet with your organisation if necessary. We have also begun to address the question of discipline within our ranks and trust that you will do the same. In addition we have instructed our legal advisers to explore the possibility of instituting legal action against the S.A.B.C.

The masses of our country will judge our maturity and commitment to the struggle by the way we deal with this issue. We are confident that you will view this matter as seriously and with the same urgency as we do.

Yours in the struggle

SAMSON NDOU : On behalf of the National Executive Committee

A letter written by the UDF.

(Archived at SAHA as Collection AL2431 A1.26.1.1 & SAHA, AL2431: A1.26.1.2, UDF Collection)

QUESTIONS FOR SOURCE F

F1.

Using your own knowledge and the source, explain what the UDF meant by the statement that 'our struggle has reached a new and unprecedented height?' (4)

F2.

Using the source, describe actions taken by the apartheid state to intensify the disunity between the UDF and AZAPO. (6)

F3.

Using both Source E and Source F, explain how the division between the UDF and the National Forum worked to the advantage of the apartheid state. (4)

F4.

Imagine that you are a member of the National Forum. Write a reply to this letter from the UDF, explaining why you believe it is impossible for the two organisations to work together. Use information from Sources D, E and F, as well as your own knowledge. (14)

(TOTAL MARKS: 28)

GLOSSARY

affiliate – a person or an organisation which becomes closely associated with another organisation but still retains its own identity

alliance – a joining together for a common purpose

bondage – a state of subjection to a force, power, or influence

constitutional – relating to the constitution, which refers to a set of rules and principles that define the nature and extent of government

grassroots – involving the common people as constituting a fundamental political and economic group

mobilise – gather and move together

FURTHER READING

Culpin, C. *South Africa since 1948*, John Murray, 2000

Seekings, J. *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991*, David Philip, 2000

Worden, N. *The Making of Modern South Africa*, 4th ed., Blackwells, 2007

South African History Archive (SAHA), *Images of Defiance: South African Resistance Posters of the 1980s*, 2nd Ed, STE Publishers, 2004