

JF ..the reasons I'm sorry if I'm stretching..is that one of the reasons why you think its worth working in the white community, ah you know with ordinary people?

ANS Definitely ja. Increasingly, and just this last week um in UDF in the Western Cape there were three areas...the UDF is rorganised basic area committees and form part of larger regions which then form part of sort of provincial type structures. In the Western Cape provincial area there are three white area committees, ah, effectively white I mean coz they by and large organising white areas and um, the two strongest ones are Clairmont and Observatory. Increasingly they've been looking..in the course of ah, the first 21 months or so of UDF's existence um the role of activists in those area committees and I suppose they have something like 60 all told pretty active members, but then our sort of wider membership stretching to about 200 or so people.

But we've been working largely as a task force, not entirely but as a task force in the wider campaigns - I mean the signature campaign the anti election campaign and so forth. Um, working in the black areas or assisting black comrades in the struggle. But now in this new phase of the struggle where a lot of emphasis is going on rebuilding organisation in communities and developing localised initiatives which would unite in various ways but where a lot of emphasis goes on house to house visiting and that kind of thing. Clairmont and Observatory committees are very much addressing the issue.

We held a workshop and I think something like 80 people came to it this past weekend addressing the <sup>whole</sup> issue of a ~~whole~~ programme of action with regard to the white areas. And prior to this workshop we've been looking at the the history of the struggle in the white areas. We've been looking at the Springbok Legion and the Torch Commandos and so on that emerged out of servicemen, progressive servicemen after the second world war. And their struggles against what they saw as the development of Fascism in S.A. having fought Fascism in Europe. They now saw the same thing emerging in S.A.

So there are experiences of white struggle in the past and we've been considering those. Also the kind of failures of things like the Liberal Party, the role of Black Sash and all those things.

We have talked through quite intensely with a view to understanding

ANS better how to work in white areas.

What's been extremely interesting is that its now <sup>?</sup> we've actually been holding mass rallies, meetings, ~~parties~~ public meetings for the first time in white communities for 25 years and there've been about eight such public meetings. Many of them held in ~~the~~ Clairmont civic hall, others held in ~~the~~ Observatory in a church hall here and with...we started off getting about ~~four~~ hundred people to our ~~surprise~~, mostly white. We now are somewhat blase if we only draw about two thousand people to such meetings in Clairmont civic. So that...these tend to be a range of people; some are students, but a lot of the audience tends to be 30 years old professionals; young lawyers, teachers, nurses, that kind of grouping who are not necessarily activists in UDF ranks, but are coming to ~~our~~ meetings and are being reached through newsletters and things like that.

Um, within our area committees, Clairmont's and Observatory's, specifically, we're finding that we're not just getting people coming out of universities, which is interesting and important, ah, we haven't really got working class whites. There are one or two, I know scattered around S.A. who are coming to UDF ranks and there's a fitter and turner in P.E. who's dragged up as one authentic <sup>white</sup> working class person around. ...you did right.

Um but we've got nurses, and ah, people who we think are office workers, typists and estate agents and things like that which... represents quite a change from ~~out~~ <sup>my</sup> time. Both in terms of quantity but also one featuring different kinds of sectors now as well. Its not just that um liberal professionals, student groupings although it tends still to be that.

JF Um, just because its happening its kind of nice not to have this issue discussed in a vacuum I mean I may be pushing things but just I'm interested in that kind of potential for out reaching possibly how it might have tied into you experience or maybe coming out of prison; the new era you've found. I mean what did you find? Are there a lot of issues to handle like why you work with whites? I mean Lewis yesterday felt the thing was redundant with the PFP you know which well could be addressed. So, maybe I haven't phrased the question but I mean (yes, why..) linking it possibly to when you went in and how marvellly you were about the phenomenon of John Mathews and why you think that there more....why generally there were more whites ~~than~~ that proto type of left intellectual,

JF or else just in getting ah why work with a larger white population. But again let me locate it so it comes out of what you're saying, otherwise....

ANS Ok, I think I could do that. I think there are a whole lot of factors now which...are becoming increasingly important in order to make work in the white areas significant. I mean the old argument and perhaps I used to propound was that if one does try to work in the white areas one's trying to disorganise whites. Basically demoralise them or get them not to be such firm supporters of the white laager and that was it.

Um, but I must say that experience...I tended to hold onto that view somewhat even after getting out of prison feeling that one could certainly win over individuals and see myself as an example of that but that seemed to be pretty much the horizon of possibilities. But I've certainly changed my views in that respect quite a lot, um, through experience over the last...period since being out. I think there are a number of factors which make it possible.

Its true that perhaps some of that work is going to be disorganising work....at the very least one's got to make people less rabid followers and less rabid believers of the official line.

But firstly since 1976 since the probably, ah, since the fall of colonialism to the north of S.A. um, whites have become much less self-certain searching, much more querying, not all of them though but a lot more have become that, um, a lot more aware that the golden life cannot continue for all time...(JF because why <sup>become suddenly</sup> aware..?) Well, there's a kind of <sup>al</sup> fatism almost which sees this inescapable/inexplicable march southwards type whatever..I would call it liberation forces, they might call it other things. Um, and this was often a variety of attitudes : the one is a kind..which have been around a long time but which has surfaced very strongly since '76 sort of, the barbarians are coming which I talked quite a bit about in that address to Wits...the academic freedom one. But that's probably still the dominant mood in white literature, English and Afrikaans language. That..itsan attitude which um, has it both ways in a sense. Its frightened, scared, of the future; scores points off the current white situation; it has a rather cynical attitude towards it and dwell in black tornadoes, or the black flood or whatever as a... its making like a solution to..resolution to proposit your often <sup>living</sup> personal problems - ah that sort of oedipal hangups of somebody in a white suburb or irritations of someone not getting promotion in

ANS the academy or universities or what ever. But never mind the um, barbarians are coming and they're going to knock down this white smug world.

Now that's a very prevalent attitude that indicates the kind of growing sense of foreboding and so forth in the white community. That..its a fairly..it ah, masquerades often as being a fairly progressive attitude. Its certainly better than a rabid racism or smugness um, but its not much better than that: it perpetuates the whole colonial myth that basically the blacks are barbarians. Its a helluva insult to the democratic, political traditions which go back a long way -to at least 1912 in S.A. But also its very disalien with regard to whites, I mean how do you stand shoulder to shoulder with some kind of natural catechism which is about...I mean it doesn't really enable you to...ah but that for the moment probably characterises the..certainly the literature takes that kind of attitude, thinking..

Ok, but ah, it does reflect a wider malaise and despair ah, which doesn't mean one can talk into that and actually organise whites in a much more positive direction. Coupled with other things, I mean whites by and large clearly have a good life and so on in S.A. as a result of the oppression of the majority. Um, but the economic crisis is hitting them to an extent, but more significantly um, the growing militarisation of the society, the wars being fought in Namibia and into Angola and so forth don't appear to be ending.

The attempted solutions have been to the <sup>internal</sup> crisis not working and there's..in many ways whites are beginning to catch on the rebound some of the effects of their re oppression that they impose on blacks. Above all in the area of conscription and its interesting that the end conscription campaign has made huge strides in the short period of its existence. Ah, clearly indicating that ones now beginning to convert whites to an alternative picture. Not only through moral and intellectual conversions, although clearly part of ECC are doing that a great deal but, also because they're actually feeling it now.

Whites don't actually wake up in the morning and wonder where, by and large, where the next five cent piece is going to come from in order to pay for bread or milk or whatever. That's how many, many millions of blacks get drawn into the struggle, through basic things of that kind. But even in a small way now one is seeing..the quality of life ironically being affected by the priveleges which they

ANS are being compelled to defend and which will...its a price of defending that thats getting high. That's an interesting development which makes new possibilities.

Then the whole other area which I think is an important one is that um, a lot of whites who've been you know, not rabid racists have found some kind of political home in parties like the PFP, Progressive Party and so on and the reform measures in many ways that new so called tricameral parliament has in many ways debased the character of that so called official opposition, or rather the Progressive Party...ah PFP. The parliament itself is one...a much more toothless entity than its worth, than it was as a result of the growing militarisation, increase of executive president power politics that prevails now.

But also because PFP has been diluted. Its effectivity within parliament has been diluted by the existence of other so called opposition parties. Many MPs now, because of you know, the total um, the fact that the tricameral parliament enjoys no legitimacy what so ever in the black communities..um there are MPs in parliament who are there with 43 votes, others have been nominated etc. So the whole thing has become, I mean, <sup>parliament</sup> for whites has always been quite an important thing and um, although you can never speak of having had a parliamentary democracy in S.A. across the board within the white community itself there's always been something of a parliamentary democracy. We've been..had elections in the white community. There have been real debates within the parameters of white interests. Um there's been an opposition press within the parameters of white politics and so on.

So that the competition for parliament was severely...I mean the horizons of that thing was severely limited to say the least but it was a real competition..and a really sort of parliamentary politics operating within those strict bounds. And increasingly those things have you know, become less significant as a result of a variety of dynamics. I think that again makes a possibility and one's actually seen that in practice.

There are numbers of youth involved in...PFP. PFP Youth organisations of various kinds who have come now into UDF circles, in the course of the sort of drying up of the significance of that.

So all of those factors make it possible now to work in..a meaningful way....

JF In a way that this didn't exist when you went in?

ANS Ja.

JF And um, ok. And do you feel like there are successes and you don't feel like its a drop in a bucket?

NAS Um, you know, Mao Tse Tung said that the long march begins with the first step. And um, obviously you know one is making an error if you think you're going on a long march when in fact there aren't possibilities and what I've been trying to say is that I think that these are smallish beginnings. And I really don't....think that perhaps the major reasons, all the things we've been talking about...has been the growing opposition of the majority of people in S.A.

We've talked about parliament, we've talked about the militarisation of our society, all those sorts of things but of course all that needs to be seen in the context of something else which is the increasing opposition of black people: increasing organisation, militancy and so forth. That's the prime thing that has caused all of these other things factors which then makes recruiting of whites into a wider structure more possible; into a wider struggle more possible,

And as that major thing increases as I think it will then the possibilities of work in the white communities will also increase. Right. But I think that one..I mean, in saying that it is important work to be done, I clearly wouldn't want to be misconstrued as saying that's the priority. Um, organising the working class and organising the black oppressed majorities clearly must be where the emphasis must lie.

JF How do you answer the kind of response that Lewis gave me yesterday that you know, that its all fine and he thinks that the PFP is doing a nice job and in this area. I mean he kept talking about the PFP. Um, with the ultimate factor that's going to move whites is when their pocket book starts pinching and when they see that you know that the struggles of the working class succeeding and my question then was what does that say about the future of S.A.? You get this coward you know, minority that's just thrust if not into the sea but somewhere (right) in a <sup>pretty uncomfortable</sup> position - I mean how does that talk about building non racialism and I guess his answer was well, we'll sort it out when hit happens, but you know these guys

JF must be the vanguard of the struggle da da da da. I don't know what that means about his position or your position, Helen Susman's or PW Bothas's position. What I ... can you answer that?

ANS Well, I mean I sort of feel at a theoretical level I find it ironic that people who often accuse those of us who see the national democratic struggle being the major content of the present phase ah, but at the same time would like to see a socialist solution to our..to the..ah, the socialist development of our country and see the working class as important we get accused of saying that there..we have a two stage theory in the struggle. That first we talk about national democratic struggle, let's not even think about socialism at this point, only to consider it at a later moment.

Ah now, you know those things are very dialectically<sup>inter</sup> related. One must, I think that the major um mobilising factor in S.A. currently is the question of national, racial oppression. But at the same time in organising people around that issue, mobilising them and so forth, around issues of the pass laws, forced removals, high rents, Bantu education, ? education, those issues which effect black communities very strongly. Working class but also other blacks as well. In mobilising and organising in the first instance around those things with a perspective of a national democratic transformation of our society doesn't mean to say that one doesn't talk about socialism at this present or doesn't see the mobilising and organising of the working class as particularly important with in the struggle for national democratic revolution because real mass liberation and real democracy in S.A. are only going to be possible if things are lead primarily, the struggle is lead primarily by the working class. And if a sort of working class perspective is imposed upon that struggle then things are interrelated.

Now in a similar kind of way I would say um, in looking at whites the same thing you see, is said. That idea that we address questions when they come up or later ah, is to have a very two stage approach to the struggle, ah a very mechanistic idea of how struggle is waged. Um,..

JF Who says we'll address it later?

ANS Well, you were quoting Lewis, you were saying you know we'll think about it later. Now you see of course we're<sup>not</sup> now talking about the relation of the national democratic struggle to socialism, we are talking about the question of the whites to the struggle. Um,

ANS Um, I think that's equally a very mechanical attitude towards struggle. The..I would say that obviously one's got to prioritise and in so far as what has been said is that our priority is certainly not white sector. I would agree to that. But if one is saying there should be no work or one should not really think or strategise around the issue of whites in S.A. at the moment um, then in the first instance I would say that you're, it's not as though you are going to first resolve the problem and then you can..uh the major problem and then we can address whites. Whites are part and parcel of the major problem and to strategise and develop organisation, tactics and so on around the issue of the white community is to begin to advance the resolution of the problem.

It's not as though you can forget about that issue. Ah, perhaps you can but I don't see that as actually speeding up the process of liberation. One has to struggle on all fronts, clearly prioritising and part of strategising is working out where, how to prioritise better.

And I would say at this stage it's not as though um, I mean increasingly one has to make whites aware that..I'd agree with Lewis, so far as he's saying that probably the majority of whites aren't going to change until they're hit in the pocket books. But um, in so far as one can begin to win over whites then one does that. And I really do think that is possible, showing that in practice currently.

JF And what about it's just not cost time effective that if it's that one Jeremy Cronin is all you've got to offer then, rather, you should throw it all into the working class and not waste your time at meetings in Observatory?

ANS Well, um, I wouldn't like to personalise it like that but (any persons should not spend their time, if they couldn't have anything to offer more to the working class, I guess) Well, I think that's all right. First of all the point you were making earlier about.. I see obviously one must...use this..first of all be guided by mass organisations and by the people themselves and if um, blacks feel that you had a role to play in assisting them in the organisation and so forth then you do what you can. But black organisers, black workers in a variety of areas are so much better equipped in principal to lead trade unions, to work in civics and so forth.

Clearly there are sometimes intellectual skills that they have been deprived of but our task as intellectuals in the struggle or whatever



ANS ever, is to very rapidly ensure that people who have a much better understanding than we can possibly begin to have, who speak the local languages and so forth that increasingly they acquire those skills and we phase ourselves out as much as possible and as rapidly as possible from key positions in organisations. And one of our major tasks is building up African, black and working class leadership in all our structures and all our organisations.

Now that might be...mean work by whites like myself to ensure that we do <sup>to</sup> phase yourself out by actually doing active work in those areas. But we're talking about hundreds and hundreds of whites, I mean around S.A. there are probably several thousand who in varying degrees have committed themselves to the struggle and they've..many of them are working in the black areas and so forth. But many don't have that possibility would like to characteristically whites much prefer working at Crossroads whatever, to..in the white community - the work is harder there, less attractive, less romantic or whatever, ( Why do...)in the white areas, in some senses clearly. But growing numbers of these people realise the need to do that and want to do that work. It's not a question of saying no, hang on, you must go and work in trade unions and in fact there isn't space for them in trade unions and they're very keen to do that work - to do house to house work in the white areas and so forth. And I think that um, they 're proving in practice that its possible to do that.

JF Just maybe to close off this whole ... these kinds of debates, or issues is the UDF moving towards essentially socialism, Is there a hijacking by bourgeois elements and is there debates between those groups? I mean do you actually have people of different camps? And then to pull back, I mean is this just a little thing going on between a couple of schools of academics and a few white university centres on a very, very intellectualised level - I mean ultimately do you think when the history of the struggle's written there's gonna be ah, even a footnote about the great debate about bargeois elements in the popular democratic struggle? I mean how do you, you feel any sense of how you see it having a bit of a longer history? I'd like to locate...

ANS Um, I think perhaps one couldn't be quite as dismissive as you're suggesting one might be in regard to the debate. I...think its an important debate to conduct. I think that um...first of all

ANS UDF is not a socialist front. Its a front of organisations. Some of our organisations' affiliates have varying degrees socialist programmes. The space for, I mean the legal space for articulating socialism as a programme is not very clear to anyone, whether one can get away with it and how long and so forth is not so clear. Ok, so that will be the first thing. So that agreed, UDF is not a socialist front. Its a front of ....its a broad front.

But many, many of the activists in our affiliates and in UDF itself are..would certainly regard themselves as socialist and I think that um, apart from the trade unions in S.A. some of whom are affiliates, others are not ah...The one area in which mass organisation and mass mobilisation has been occurring has been under, apart from unions, has been under the broad aegis of UDF and I would say that its the task of people with a socialist perspective to throw themselves into organisations, into the struggle under the umbrella of the UDF.

Because if one is serious about socialism then one understands that socialism is not a theory that gets honed in seminar sessions and on campuses but it is something that is going to be won in struggle through the mobilisation of millions of people. I think Lenin - I don't know if I should quote him - said that politics begins when we talk about millions of people um and that applies clearly to the question of socialism.

In the first instance I was immobilising the working class but not just the working class - nowhere in the world has socialism been won without also winning over to the side of the working class broad strata, middle strata of all kinds and in S.A. given the nature of national oppression it is indeed possible to win over into the struggle you know, in alliance with the working class, broad strata, particularly of the black oppressed and the middle you know, strata - teachers, nurses and so forth.

Now, I think that..that the struggle to develop a socialist understanding or perspective of our struggle in S.A. that..that needs to be waged not on the periphery, you know with a safe critical distance um, from the campuses or whatever, but needs if you are serious about socialism, then they should be involved in mass struggle and they should be bringing those perspectives to bear from withinside organisation and so on.

And as for talk about bourgeois, petty bourgeois leadership of say the UDF um, I think that um that is clearly whether ones.....

A and that is not just if one looks at the unions too.  
There's always the danger if one looks at white middle  
class intellectualls will come to play a leading role.

Q But where..you said also

End of tape.