

New Unity Movement



the

2nd Biennial

(27th National Elective Conference)

Presidential Address

CPUT Campus (Western Cape College of Nursing)

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2013

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Comrades, friends, and honoured guests, I bid you all a warm welcome to this first open session of this our 2nd Biennial National Conference (BNC). For the record it should be noted that our first BNC was held in Johannesburg in 2011 and that this is our 27th National (Elective) conference since the New Unity Movement (NUM) was founded in 1985.

But this is no ordinary BNC as our meeting here in Cape Town this weekend is taking place in conjunction with the commemoration of two important milestones in the history of our organisation.

These two milestones are: 70 years of the founding of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) in 1943 and 100 years of the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA) which was founded in 1913. The TLSA of course was not only an affiliate of the NEUM but many of its members played important roles in formulating its principles and policies.

We have devoted the whole of tomorrow to commemorating these two events and I trust that all of you here this evening will also join us then.

The programme for to-morrow has been designed to show the significant contributions that these two organisations have made both singly and together, to the theory and practice of the liberation struggle in this country.

The programme consists of a multimedia exhibition and interactive sessions designed to stimulate discussion and debate relating to the contribution of the UM to the liberation struggle.

A decided highlight on our programme for tomorrow will be a lecture to be given by Prof Jonathan Jansen on the state of education in this country.

It is hoped that the programme we have arranged for to-morrow will be successful in countering some of the negative perceptions held by some concerning the UM's contribution to the struggle for freedom and democracy in this country.

For it is true to say that the UM does have its detractors, be they political opponents or academics, who have a penchant for either misrepresenting its policies or dismissing it as irrelevant. Thus the UM has become a victim of an attempt from the side of the new ruling class to falsify the history of the Liberation struggle in this country.

The programme we have arranged for this weekend must therefore be seen also as an attempt from our side to counter this trend.

Thankfully a number of academics like Robin Kayser, Mohammed Adhikari, Corinne Sandwith, Bill Nasson and Paul Hendricks have published more balanced critical appraisals of both the UM and the TLSA and we are extremely grateful that some of them have accepted our invitation to participate in our programme tomorrow. Their participation will be valuable in putting the role and influence of the UM into perspective for us.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the main focus of my address this evening will be a look at 70 years of the UM against the background of current events and developments. And given the fact that this country after nearly twenty years of democracy finds itself in a deep social, moral, political and economic crisis gives us the opportunity to show how the UM's perspective on the situation might be of some merit.

It is also quite fortuitous that our decision to celebrate 70 years of the Unity Movement and 100 years of the TLSA this year coincides with at least two other significant milestones and an event which took place in July this year, which provides one with some added points of reference for what one wishes to convey in this address.

The first of these milestones was the celebration of the centenary of the founding of the ANC which took place last year; the second, the centenary of the promulgation of the infamous Natives Land Act of 1913 which happened in June.

The event I am referring to was a lecture delivered by Pallo Jordan, a leading ANC ideologue and a former cabinet minister in the first ANC-led government.

The lecture was delivered at the opening of a conference dedicated to the life and work of Cde Neville Alexander who died in August last year. The event took place in July this year at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth. The lecture was titled: "Waiting for October: Revisiting the National Question".

While I will focus on a specific lecture that was delivered there I must, in passing, say that this was a landmark event and one looks forward to seeing the published proceedings of the conference which deserves to be disseminated to a wider audience and thus serve as the basis for ongoing discussion and debate on many of the themes addressed there.

In comparing and contrasting 100 years of the ANC with 70 years of the Unity Movement one wishes to show that the history of the ANC is one of collaboration with and capitulation to capitalism-imperialism as opposed to a history of ongoing struggle against that pernicious system from the side of the UM. And in doing so I hope to rebut certain statements and assertions made about Cde Neville Alexander and the UM by Jordan with the added objective of countering the blatant falsification of history by the ANC and certain academics.

The centenary of the promulgation of the 1913 Native Land Act was highlighted by the Conference on Land, Race and Nation in South Africa: A Century Of Dispossession 1913 – 2013 which was held at UCT June 19- 21. The publication of the book "The Promise of Land", edited by Hendricks, Ntsebeza and Helliker, which is a compilation of the papers presented at the conference took place at the same time.

A brief review of this book will be done in order to highlight the UM's position on the land question which was and still is one of the cornerstones of UM policy and practice.

However, before going into the above I think it important to first reflect upon certain relevant facts of the history of the UM, not only against the background of the socio-political circumstances prevailing today but also to show that the principles and policies, the core values upon which the NEUM was founded, are still relevant for us today.

I believe that our commemoration events give us the opportunity to place the principles, policies and programme of the Unity Movement into perspective and will enable us to show a new generation the continuing validity and relevance of these.

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: THE ROLE OF UM IN THE NATIONAL LIBERATORY MOVEMENT

In giving a brief overview and a timeline of significant events in the history of the UM I also hope to set the scene for the programme and discussions that will take place tomorrow. In the course of doing so I will emphasise the core values, the key principles and policies of the UM and show how they have become transformed whilst yet retaining continuities with the founding ideas.

The NEUM may be considered as coming into being as a federal organization in December 1943 at the Preliminary Unity conference which took place in Bloemfontein.

It had a "three pillar structure" made up of federal bodies representing the three national groups amongst the oppressed, namely, the All African Convention(AAC) representing the African section, the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department Movement (the Anti-CAD) representing the Coloured section and the Anti-Segregation Council, the Indian section . It is a fact of history that both the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) declined to become part of it.

This history has been documented from the UM perspective in "Majority Rule: Some Notes". The author of this history which was published in serial form in the Educational Journal of the TLSA in the seventies was Cde Victor Wessels writing under the pseudonym of Sarah Mokone.

During its first ten years of existence the NEUM developed and implemented a number of policies and principles which came to define it. These policies and principles were based upon ideas and theories which had been developed as the result of thoroughgoing study in organisations like the Workers Party of South Africa and the New Era Fellowship in the 1930s. It was members of these organisations who went on to become leading figures in the NEUM.

These core principles and policies were: Non-racialism, the building of a single undivided nation, non-collaboration and anti-imperialism, the Ten Point Programme of non-negotiable minimum demands.

From its inception, the NEUM found itself at loggerheads with the state and the Liberal white establishment on the one hand, and with the Congress movement led by the ANC which in turn was strongly influenced by the then Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) with regard to the theory and practice of the liberation struggle, on the other. More of that later.

An important milestone in the history of the UM was the split within its ranks that occurred in 1958.

The reasons for the split were for many of us who were recruited into the UM in the 70s, shrouded in a certain amount of mystery and intrigue and is still today the cause of speculation and dissension. This is not the time nor the place to go into it, suffice to say that it involved polemics related to the interpretation of point 7 in the Ten Point Programme which deals with the land question and the attitude to African nationalism as manifested in countries like Ghana, at the time.

Nevertheless the split led to the creation of two sections of the NEUM, one of which became the African Peoples Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA) in 1961.

The other section of the NEUM operated largely clandestinely, mainly in the TLSA, in civics as in the Federation of Cape Civic Associations (FCCA) and in educational fellowships like the South Peninsula Educational Fellowship (SPEF).

After the leadership of Apdusa was forced into exile they established the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA) in 1964. UMSA was based in Lusaka.

The Educational Journal of the TLSA which continued to be published during the dark years of the 60s and the 70s played an important role in keeping alive the ideas of the NEUM and in effect served as the mouthpiece of the one section of the NEUM.

It should be noted, however, that by this time most of the leadership of both sections of the NEUM, including those of its affiliates, were banned under the Suppression of Communism Act as were successive editors of the Torch newspaper, the official mouthpiece of the NEUM.

The split in 1958 was extremely acrimonious. So much so that individual members belonging to either section would refuse to acknowledge each other even socially. Nevertheless, both sections remained loyal to and fiercely defended the programme and policies of the NEUM of 1943.

After 1976 and in the wake of the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) the idea of reconstituting the NEUM arose. Exploratory talks between members of the two sections eventually led to the founding of the New Unity Movement (NUM) in 1985, albeit that it did not enjoy universal acceptance by certain sections within UMSA.

Thus the NUM came into being in 1985 as the reincarnation of the NEUM. And as such it stood firmly on the principles and policies enunciated by our predecessors who established the NEUM in 1943, believing that while certain objective conditions have changed over time, the fundamentals on which the NEUM were founded were immutable and therefore still very valid and applicable to the present conjuncture.

Sadly, the formation of the NUM despite its initial promise was to founder on differences over the application of our policy and our programme, in relation to the new dispensation ushered in by 1994.

Since 2000 however the organization has undergone a process of transformation and renewal which culminated in the adoption of an updated and revised TPP and a new constitution, just last year. This has been done, we believe, without compromising the basic tenets and principles on which the NEUM was founded. I will return to this matter later on in this address.

The presidential addresses delivered at annual conferences of the UM over the years have played an important role in setting out the UM's position and by way of example I would mention the address by Cde Leo Sihlali, the president of one section of the NEUM, given in 1962, titled *"The philosophy, tenets and traditions of the NEUM"*.

Similarly, the Preliminary Conference of NUM in 1983 was opened with an address given by Cde RO Dudley titled *"The Nature of South African Society and the Nature of our Struggle"*. His address given in 1991 was titled the *"Revolutionary Road to Liberation"*.

Since 1994 we as the NUM have had to contend with a number of developments which have led to us reviewing our understanding of the challenges that confront the people of this country.

Based on our analysis of the post-1994 dispensation and on understanding of those challenges we, as the NUM, have developed the following outlook.

Whereas our forefathers might have been reluctant, because of the prevailing circumstances, to say so outrightly, we profess that we are committed to the building of a People's Democracy which is grounded in Socialism as the only alternative to the barbarism of capitalism. Thus in 2011 the point was made "that after 1994 the struggle in this country has changed from that of resolving the national question to that of addressing its class nature and striving to establish a People's Democracy in which the interests of the urban and the rural poor shall be paramount, and that our programme of transitional minimum demands calls for actions that are predicated on the building of a new society that is responsive to the needs of the majority of the people and not that of an elite".

Hence, the theme for our first biennial conference in 2011 was based on the slogans “Towards a People’s Democracy” and “Uniting Social forces for alternative Power”, and one will endeavour to show the continuity of thought dating back to 1943 that has made us to arrive at those formulations.

I now return to a consideration of the ANC centenary and Pallo Jordan’s lecture as points of reference for comparing their view with ours with respect to the liberation struggle in this country.

THE ANC CENTENARY

The year-long celebration of the centenary of the founding of what was then known as the South African Native National Congress and renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923, kicked off in Bloemfontein on 8 January last year.

This celebration which cost more than R100 million of taxpayers’ money, excluding the R12 million spent on hosting visiting dignitaries, was lavish in the extreme. It included, amongst other things, a special golf tournament, musical extravaganzas and a special centenary torch, which was sent from province to province throughout 2012 “as a reminder of the ANC’s history”.

The lavishness of the celebration belied the objective reality that the ANC had in its 100th year of existence become defined by corruption, cronyism and factionalism; while the majority of its supporters were mired in deepening poverty, unemployment, a lack of housing and sanitation, not to mention failed education and health systems.

That the ANC has failed to deliver on its promises is clear for all to see. And now, nearly twenty years after assuming political control, the ANC is being confronted by an incipient rebellion from within the ranks of its own supporters. So much so that commentators are predicting an “Arab spring” in South Africa, with Moeletsi Mbeki for example predicting that South Africa will experience a “Tunisia Moment” by 2020!

The bare truth of the matter is that while the ANC has succeeded in wresting political power from the Apartheid regime it has failed to gain economic power. Objectively the reasons for this failure can be traced, in the first instance, to the very principles and policies and the theories that underpinned their approach to gaining the majority rule that they aspired to. And in the second instance it is the result of their acceptance of Imperialist domination through the wholesale adoption of imperialism’s neo-liberal economic policies.

The ANC together with its alliance partners, Cosatu and the SACP, were firstly led into accepting the negotiated settlement. Their subsequent effective jettisoning of the Freedom Charter and the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) in the aftermath of bringing into being the seriously flawed bourgeois democracy ushered in by the first democratic elections of 1994 has simply aggravated matters for themselves.

In my view the outcome of events in this country were entirely predictable, given the principles and policies that informed the ANC’s approach to the liberation struggle.

What are the theories, principles and policies that informed their approach to the liberation struggle and the attainment of majority rule?

These are: The theory of colonialism of a special type (CST), the Two Stage Theory of attaining socialism via the national democratic revolution (NDR) and the Four Nation Thesis.

I would argue that it is as the result of their adherence to these theories and policies that we see the state of affairs currently prevailing.

The outcome of the NDR is well described by Cde F van der Horst in a document circulated by him recently, titled "Grave crises facing the South African capitalist system".

The document is a compilation of facts and statistics which clearly spells out the dire straits that the country is in. In his introduction he says: "The 1994 negotiated capitalist reforms (not a revolution) was a neo-liberal co-option by imperialism of the local emerging bourgeois elites. The apartheid laws were scrapped but SA's economy, property and wealth (mines, banks, industries, prime residential or agricultural land, elite education, private health care, tourism), retained under the control of rich corporations mainly white or overseas capitalists."

Over and above this, one must make mention of an event that occurred during the ANC's centenary year, that has served to define even more clearly the nature of the regime led by the ANC. I am referring to the Marikana massacre,

Because of time constraints I will restrict myself to making only a few brief comments in this regard.

Marikana has been correctly described as being a watershed event in our history. Like Sharpeville in 1960 this event will affect developments in this country in a similar way.

Our position is reflected in the following statement:

"Today, on the first anniversary of the Marikana Massacre, it is important for the workers to remind themselves of all the factors that gave energy to their movement in August 2012. They should recall their distaste for pauperisation. They should treat the old labour regime with hatred. They should learn to understand the motives of all allies. They should search for the type of politico-economic solutions to their plight that will guarantee the salvation of the entire working class. They should learn to ask difficult questions and be well advised of the fatal solutions being proposed by their class enemies. **THE STRUGGLE FOR LIVING WAGES IS THE STRUGGLE FOR A NEW ECONOMIC SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA**"

There have been a number of developments in the aftermath of Marikana.

One notable outcome was the launch of the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) on 21 March this year. The launch of WASP has forced the question of the need for a Workers/Socialist Party in the RSA onto the agenda of all left wing formations in this country. This is so despite the fact that we find their declared aim of contesting parliamentary elections problematic.

Other notable outcomes have been: the dramatic decline in influence of Cosatu amongst workers in the mining industry, the split between unions within Cosatu and the fallout between Cosatu and its alliance partners, the ANC and the SACP.

These developments will be dealt with more extensively in a paper on the National situation.

President Jacob Zuma in his opening address on the 8 January made specific reference to the pursuit of the armed struggle as being a difficult decision to make and implied that it was a major factor in bringing about our freedom.

However this and other assertions made by him and the ANC propaganda machine during the time of the centenary celebrations have been refuted in a paper which was written as a response to certain statements made by Thami ka Platje.

This paper, titled: "The Antimonies of National Liberation Theory and Practice", was written by one of our vice-presidents, Cde MP Giyose.

In this paper he deals with the 100-year history of the ANC under five main themes which demonstrate very well the true nature of this organisation, feted in the media as the first liberation movement in Africa.

Comrade Giyose prefaces his dissertation with some remarks about the armed struggle by arguing that contrary to what happened in countries like China, Korea, Cuba and Vietnam where armed struggle had played a major role, the ANC's version of the armed struggle was pursued largely as a tactical means to its ultimate aim of a negotiated settlement and demonstrates how the ANC's armed struggle, to use Chris Hani's words, was simply "armed propaganda".

The first theme he addresses is called "African Traditional Rulers" where he shows how, true to its founding by African chiefs and intellectuals who were conservative and traditionalist to the core, the ANC has revealed its true character, as a typical nationalist organization which has since coming into power in 1994 championed the cause of African chiefs. In this section he shows how the ANC supported and indeed encouraged chiefs to become involved with the Native Advisory Council set up in terms of the notorious Herzog Bills of 1935 which also entrenched the Native Land Act of 1913 and then later going on to encourage their involvement in the Bantustan parliaments.

Arising from this background he says: "It is no accident that today on its 100th anniversary, it is resuscitating the ghost of the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act in the form of a Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act where the chiefs will enjoy even more powers than they did in the Bantustan regimes of the National Party". And as an aside, it bears noting that it is a recorded fact of its history, that the ANC produced a 7-point programme in 1947. And point 7 of that programme stated: "The re-establishment of the status of the African chief in our national affairs."

The second theme deals with the ANC's relationship with the trade union movement. Here he shows how the ANC virtually ignored the first militant trade union movement amongst the oppressed in this country, namely the ICU. He describes how SACTU became the fifth component of the Congress Alliance in 1955. However, the most telling point he makes is with regard to the fact that the ANC in concert with the SACP reined in the militant trade union movement under Cosatu which had called for socialism and worker control in the eighties and forced them to become a party to the negotiated settlement.

The third theme deals with the ANC's abysmal record in resolving the land question, which I will deal with later.

The fourth theme is headed Liberalism and Nationalism and deals with what he calls the ANC's "Unbelievable attitude against political theory". He then describes how the ANC, firstly, came under the influence of white liberals and members of the SACP in terms of developing their approach to the national question and, secondly, the influence of Gandhism, and describes how as a result of these influences they ended up with a neo-colonial settlement in this country. As he says, "Throughout the 1940s and 50s the ANC was repeatedly warned by the Unity Movement of the unmitigated dangers of nationalism and its political methods of struggle.

The fifth theme is headed Imperialism and shows how the ANC in adopting the SACP-inspired NDR has brought into being a constitutional democracy which is no different from what "the social cousins of the ANC has done in India, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe." He argues that the theory of the NDR does not allow for a transition to socialism and when the ANC

took power it had to come to terms with the fact that imperialism is firmly in control of the economy. So much so that it had to obey "a number of sealed orders" which included:

- payment of the Apartheid debt,
- allowing corporations to transfer their investments and profits offshore,
- being a signatory to the WTO agreement on agriculture and the Uruguay round and
- instituting Nepad which ties South Africa and Africa into the "new investment mode of neo-liberal imperialism".

In conclusion he states that, for example, the ANC's version of national liberation theory and practice "can form a noose for the emancipation of the oppressed and exploited masses in colonial countries when it is not formulated in a properly theorized manner".

In concluding his speech at the opening ceremony, Zuma, without a hint of irony, said: "As we mark the ANC centenary, this is the right moment to pause and ponder the future of South Africa and of the ANC over the next 100 years. We must ask and answer the difficult questions about the future of our country. We must bring new energy and new ideas into the kind of society we want to build over the next few decades ... We call on all our South Africans to join in a national dialogue on the future of the country."

I somehow doubt whether he will like hearing what we have to say about what needs to be done!

I will now turn to what Pallo Jordan had to say in his lecture in order to deal with these differences in more detail.

REBUTTING PALLO JORDAN

Using Neville Alexander's book "One Azania one Nation" which was published under the pseudonym No Sizwe in 1979, as his reference, Jordan sets about criticising the UM position on the National Question (NQ) and extolling the virtues of CST.

Although Jordan says he approaches Neville's take on the NQ as a critical supporter he sets about doing so by debunking most of what Neville had to say on the NQ.

The basic thrust of his address was to show that Cde Neville had a flawed political outlook and that despite his undoubted intellectual prowess he could not overcome or outgrow his "baptism" into the theory and practices of the UM which true to its Trotskyist origins was unable to become practically involved in bringing about the South African October that they espoused.

He deals extensively with the famous letter written to members of the WPSA in 1933 by Leon Trotsky advising them on aspects of what he perceived as being their objective of bringing about a South African October. Jordan uses selective quotes from this letter to show that in effect the members of the WPSA, some of whom were to become the leaders of the NEUM, spurned Trotsky's advice and that it was the SACP and the ANC which did so!

To illustrate his point that action is more important than theory he uses Clifford Odet's play "Waiting for Lefty" which he contrasts with Becket's Waiting for Godot. and likens Neville Alexander, and by extension, the UM, to characters in these plays who in the one case sit around theorizing and in the other embark on action before the arrival of someone who is meant to give them direction. The Odet play features a group of taxi drivers in Chicago who

decide to go on strike while waiting for Lefty to arrive and give them direction on whether to strike or not.

He uses the analogy to this play also to illustrate his point that the UM was abstentionist and refused to get involved in mass-based action to challenge the Apartheid system.

He argues that they came up with fine theories and resolutions but did nothing to implement any of them.

Now, in my view he is very unfair to Cde Neville; firstly, in so far as he paints him as being some kind of unreconstructed UM hack and, secondly, he makes very little mention of the latter's political activism independently of the UM.

Before dealing with his calumny against the UM, I need to make the following points:

His depiction of Cde Neville in this way is unfortunate because it does not reflect the at times strained relationship that existed between NA and the UM.

Firstly, although he had been a member of UM organizations like the Cape Peninsula Students Union, the TLSA and of Apdusa, Neville Alexander became very critical of the UM and this fact led to his being expelled from Apdusa in 1961. He subsequently became instrumental in the formation of other organisations like the Yui Chui Chan Club, WOSA, The Workers List Party and the Truth Movement.

Secondly, certain views expressed by him in "One Azania, One Nation" and other writings were criticized by UM writers, IB Tabata and MP Giyose in particular.

Cde Neville had a number of criticisms against the UM.

One of the criticisms was actually in support of one leveled against it by the ANC, namely its abstentionism with respect to getting involved in mass mobilization.

This so-called abstentionism on the part of the UM has been widely accepted as being true and is captured in the statement often articulated by its detractors, to the effect that unlike the ANC or the UDF, for example, "The UM lacked the ability to translate sound theoretical principles into actions that was embraced by the masses".

Cde Neville was also critical of the UM's policy of non-collaboration and the use of the boycott weapon and I will deal with this later in this address.

Now, returning to Jordan's diatribe against NA and the UM which has merit only in the sense that it serves to bring into sharp focus the two contending theories which were to inform the struggle against colonial oppression in South Africa and enables one to understand why matters have turned out in the ways that they have done.

In this sense the lecture reminds us that the theory of revolution espoused by the ANC/SACP stood in sharp contrast to that proposed by the UM and by his account the former has proven to be correct!

So while dismissing the NEUM leadership as being beholden to theory as an end in itself, and in fact being incapable of putting it into practice, he argues that the SACP and its surrogate the ANC did put their theory into practice.

Of course, one cannot deny that the UM regarded theory as being important for it was Cde Ben Kies, a leading theoretician of the NEUM, who made this statement in an address given at the Preliminary Unity conference in 1943. The statement was made to criticism from “activists” who despised “talk”. He said the following:

“The programme does matter. Theory is important. Your political theory means the way you sum up things, where you consider the interests of the oppressed to lie. This determines direction; it determines the type of demand you make and the type of organization you admire or follow or join; it determines your political activity.”

He went on to say:

“When we say that the programme is of prime importance, we mean that without the right programme, the right theory, we will never get the right practical activity and the desired practical result.”

Jordan in effect claims that the ANC and the SACP, unlike the NEUM, acted in line with Trotsky’s advice which he interprets as supporting the CST. Thus he reasons that the letter written by Trotsky supported the CST and quotes his statement that “a black majority government will put a certain imprint on the state” as having in fact been realized by the ANC.

While acknowledging what he calls Alexander’s withering attack on the CST he nevertheless ends up defending it.

He also deals extensively with the perceived abstentionism of the UM, dismissing the leadership as being covert revolutionaries who sought to direct the national struggle from their armchairs, whereas the ANC embarked on mass protests and mass mobilizations which challenged the hegemony of the Apartheid state and that it was this approach that resulted in the 1994 breakthrough.

However, he omits to say is that while we now have a government in power which is supported by and representing the black majority, there are objective facts which indicate that contrary to what the ANC had promised its followers, the dawn of this new democracy has wrought the following outcomes: increasing poverty and unemployment, racism, tribalism, and corruption; nor does he say that these outcomes can be directly attributed to the theories and policies followed by the ANC and its alliance partners.

In his lecture Jordan poses a rhetorical question: “Have we solved the national question?” The answer to the question of course is no! This is so because the NDR which he champions is incomplete. For while they have achieved the primary objective of the NDR, namely to promote the development and interests of a black middle class, they have done so at the expense of the well-being and advancement of the majority.

And instead of eradicating racialism and ethnicity, they have entrenched it even further. Furthermore, instead of rooting out tribalism and group identity they have entrenched it in the

constitution and introduced a Traditional Leadership Bill which will, as I will show later, also have a negative impact on the resolution of the land question in the interests of the rural poor.

The theories and policies propounded by SACP ideologues and adopted by the ANC and Cosatu, namely the Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) with its two-stage theory, the four nation thesis and the Freedom Charter lie at the heart of the failed NDR.

It was through their obeisance to the principles and policies mentioned above that the ANC and its alliance partners, Cosatu and the SACP, were firstly led into accepting the negotiated settlement and subsequently the jettisoning of the Freedom Charter and the RDP in the aftermath of the bringing into being of the seriously flawed bourgeois democracy ushered in by the first democratic elections of 1994.

WHAT ABOUT THE POLICY OF NON COLLABORATION?

Completely absent from Jordan's analysis is a key aspect of UM policy, namely the policy of non-collaboration.

Stated simply, non-collaboration, as articulated by the founders of the UM, meant refusing to work the machinery of one's own oppression. This policy was given practical effect by implementing the weapon of the boycott which was deployed not only against institutions and agencies of the state but also against persons from within the ranks of the oppressed who were found to be guilty of collaborating.

The policy of non-collaboration and the boycott weapon were seen as being integral to the philosophy, tenets and practice of the NEUM and as being inseparable from the TPP.

It was this policy of the NEUM which was found to be unpalatable to both the ANC and the SAIC and was the main reason for both organizations refusing to become part of the NEUM. For the ANC, boycotting institutions like the Apartheid-imposed Native Representative Councils (NRC's) and Bantu affairs boards, was anathema.

And yet one can cite instances, that only when it suited their opportunistic and short term interests, the ANC invoked the policy and encouraged the use of the boycott.

In a paper entitled "Non-collaboration: A theory of social change" published in 1983, Cde MP Giyose dealt with this subject very well.

He describes non-collaboration as "a distinct outlook, a worldview". It was a policy conceived of as a tool for educating the masses to recognize their enemies.

In this paper the author rebuts assertions made by Neville Alexander in "One Azania, One Nation" and, amongst other things, he specifically addresses the argument that the NEUM was abstentionist. In doing so he makes the following statement:

"It is well known that both the Defiance Campaign of Six Unjust laws and the Stay-at-home of 1958 were concocted by the neo-liberals of the (former) Communist Party (C.P.) and handed over to a Gandhist Congress. In 1952 the ANC was induced to head off into the prisons of the Herrenvolk hundreds of unfranchised defiers of some Six Unjust laws indiscriminately picked out as Segregationist laws. The ANC's defiance volunteers were not set off even for the purpose of

making those chosen laws unworkable, no, rather with the aim of pressurizing the white voters into discarding the Nationalist Party (Nats) and replacing it with Smuts' party in the 1953 Herrenvolk parliamentary elections. Again the three-day stay-at-home called by ANC on the eve of the 1958 Herrenvolk elections was part of the mobilization of "*a broad front of democrats*" including the United Party (U.P) to "get the Nats out of parliament" via the white voters. Once more the 1961 ANC's Stay-at-home was part of the All-in Convention movement initiated by Jan Steytler's Progs and supported by Allan Paton's Liberals and the now Mandelaist Congress to "stop the Nat Republic" by convoking a new National Convention to perpetuate a reformed Union of South Africa; once more the functional court of appeal was the white voters in the Republican referendum of May 1961."

He went on to say the following: "It should be clear by now that any participation by non-collaborationists in such ventures in any but an oppositionist way would have constituted an unprincipled betrayal of the, peoples interests. These were liberal and nationalist stunts designed to chain the oppressed to the apron strings of the "liberal" Herrenvolk.

"It would have been a play at a parliamentary cretinism of the most venal kind. And it is ironical today that we have to be debating such elementary matters with Neville Alexander; nay, embarrassing as well. Leaving aside the question of the indivisibility of oppression, there was no question either of participation "in order to widen the vistas of the action", as our "lefts" are so fond of saying. For, how do you widen the "vistas" of a liberal stunt? And *what* are those vistas?"

He then goes on to give an example of a mass action supported by the UM when he says, "Bus boycotts are a different matter. As far as we are aware non-collaborationists have always taken part in these. For the record, the non-collaborationists led the biggest of these in the 1950s' Alexandra Bus boycott. This was done, not for the sake of the vulgar type of activism Alexander now seems to be advocating, but rather for two reasons. Firstly, they comprise an elemental defence of the workers' real incomes; secondly, they are organically linked to broader issues of the political struggle. They are one of Alexandra's day-to-day problems of the working class. So this rejoinder also exposes the lie in some of other such allegations. As for the T.A.R.C. issue Alexander has already been rebutted in advance by Sarah Mokone in her booklet "*Majority Rule: Some Notes*", so we shall not follow him there. We should for purposes of our own self-instruction, too, add that we contributed our energies to the national protests against the Langa – Sharpeville massacres as public street actions of mass indignation and revenge, while spurning any quasi-religious notions of "*A Quiet Day of Mourning and Silent Contemplation*" as Albert Luthuli wanted; nor could we support the 1960 P.A.C anti-pass stunt."

WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE OF TLISA AND CATA?

It is a fact that teachers as a group had a disproportionately large representation in the leadership of the UM. And it is also true that important affiliates of the UM were the TLISA and the Cape Teachers Association (CATA) which became involved in resisting and impeding the introduction of Christian National Education (CNE) which had such a devastating effect on retarding the liberation struggle in this country.

The banning and dismissals of leading members of the TLISA, the editors of the TLISA journal, the dismissals of the entire executive including 55 teachers belonging to CATA and TATA had a crippling effect on the ability of the UM to prosecute its work. These facts are mentioned to counter the claim that the UM was abstentionist.

THE LAND QUESTION: STILL NO ANSWERS?

As mentioned in the introduction the centenary of the promulgation of the land act of 1913 was commemorated with a conference which was set up to address the fact that South Africa's Land Reform programme, comprising Land Tenure Reform, Land Restitution and Land Redistribution, had failed or reached an impasse. According to the organisers the conference was designed to discuss ways out of it.

The organisers point out that "The notorious Natives Land Act of 1913 confirmed in law, the spoils of the wars of colonial dispossession in South Africa. It ushered in a system of territorial racial segregation in the country with white settlers claiming, owning and occupying the overwhelming bulk of the country. The Act demarcated 7,13 percent of the land surface as African reserve territory and strictly prohibited the purchase of land by Africans outside these areas".

"The consequences of this law are still felt today, a century later. The constitution of democratic South Africa takes this dispossession at face value, safeguarding the existing property holders in their land rights and excluding the majority from ownership. In the process it provides a legal sanction for colonial land alienation. Within this legislative context, the land reform programme of a democratic South Africa is severely circumscribed. The division in access to land remains utterly racialised, fracturing the nation into opposing identities of white ownership and black dispossession. Imagining a unitary South African nation in the face of these ongoing colonial land divisions is extraordinarily difficult. Thus, resolving the land question is crucial to resolving the national question in South Africa."

Arguing that the transition to democracy in 1994 has not translated into a meaningful process of decolonisation in South Africa, the book suggests that the very structures of colonialism and apartheid remain intact, since racial inequalities in both access to and ownership of land continue today.

With state-driven attempts at land reform having failed to meet even their own targets, a fundamental change in approach is necessary for South Africa to move beyond the deadlock that prevails between the objectives of the policy and the means for realising them.

According to the authors, social movements have a critical role to play in initiating the necessary changes, both in respect of access to land and in influencing broader policy options. Struggles from below are crucial for rethinking purely statist efforts at land reform and the book grapples with the interplay between oppositional campaigns of social movements and the state's policies and responses.

However, the prospects of social movements doing so to any meaningful extent seems unlikely, given that to date they and NGO's have not made any significant impact.

I have already alluded to the fact that a key concern of the UM was the land question and it is therefore appropriate to quote the NEUM leadership on this matter because as

I said in my presidential address in 2009:

"The founders of our predecessor, the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), emphasised the fact that the Land question was central to the national question in South Africa; that the struggle for national liberation had to go hand in hand with the struggle for land. But, more than this, there was a need to emphasise the inextricable link between the struggles of urban and rural workers and peasants. It was for this reason that the Russian revolutionary slogan "Land and Liberty" was adopted and popularised by the NEUM. It reflected their thinking on the prime objectives of the struggle. It was arrived at after an in-depth study of the Russian revolution and

was the result of applying the methods of historical materialism and dialectical materialism to our struggles here.”

Thus it was Cde IB Tabata who said: “The agrarian problem is the fundamental problem in this country. It is the pivot and axis of the national movement. Anyone who intends to take his politics seriously must understand this fact Whoever flounders on the agrarian question is lost.”

And another luminary of the NEUM, Cde Goolam Gool, said: “We in the NEUM have always maintained that the Land Question, and a proper understanding of the Land Question, is the very core and the very heart of the National Movement.” (Addressing a meeting of the SOYA in 1954)

In the presidential address given by Cde RO Dudley, to the 9th Annual Conference of the NUM in 1993, he had the following to say in relation to this matter. In his address he brilliantly showed how the franchise was meaningless to the people living in the former Transkei and Ciskei for example, unless it went together with the full implementation of Point 7 of our Programme, which deals with the land question. He pointed out that unless the problem of landlessness, which was the root cause of the extreme poverty that existed in that part of the country, was addressed, voting for the ANC or any other party would not bring them any relief from their misery. He said that this was so despite the fact that these homelands had been fully re-incorporated into South Africa but, more importantly, because the ANC had done nothing to address the land question. Cde Dudley also had this to say: “As we move forward to a socialist resolution of our political and economic problems, the nationalisation of the land will be a central part of the agenda”.

And as I said in comment on the above quote in my address in 2009: “We can say now that today, 20 years after the attainment of the right to vote by the people of that region, or any other former homeland, nothing has changed!”

I said further that “having the right to vote has served to deflect people’s attention away from the realisation that without free and unfettered access to the land there can be no true freedom. Like the Zapatista Movement in Mexico we must once again popularise the slogan, ‘Land and Liberty’”.

On the question of the need for a rural peoples’ movement Cde MP Giyose made the following observations in 2004:

“It is becoming urgent that the rural movement should convene an independent National Land and Agrarian Summit. Broadly, a primary perspective of the Summit, from the point of view of the rural masses.” He pointed out then that there were a number of aspects that needed to be addressed. These included:

- a. A new division of the land in the country in accordance with the total population who aspire to live by the land.
- b. The provision and access to raw water resources in accordance with need.
- c. The building up of a financing arm for production and marketing of agricultural goods.
- d. The setting up of distribution networks for the same inside and outside the country.
- e. Defending the people against the inroads of GMOs and the unfair advantage exercised by the big companies.

- f. Devising a rural production and distribution process that stands in conformity with the Environmental requirements of Biodiversity in the countryside.

“This is the primary platform, which the rural movement must develop themselves as its minimum position. This position is not negotiable; it is a bottom line beyond which the people cannot retreat if they want to ensure their survival, given the furious attack under which they are suffering today.”

And, “For the rural poor, the question of an agrarian overturn is not a simple matter of agricultural production. It is a broader matter of rural development.”

He then went on to make a number of practical proposals this regard, which, as far as I am aware, have not been addressed.

Given the challenges that we face in addressing the land question in South Africa, it is perhaps relevant to examine developments in Zimbabwe around this matter.

The land question in Zimbabwe is addressed in the book cited above and by Jos Martens of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

In its attempt to resolve the land question in that country, the Zimbabwean government hosted a land conference in 1998. That conference essentially failed to come up with answers and this led to the Zimbabwean government embarking on its Fast Track Land Reform Programme in the year 2000.

It did so in response to the pressure created by a wave of land occupations and after a draft constitution had been rejected in a referendum. We are told that by 2004 more than 3,000 of the 4,000 white-owned large-scale commercial farms had been compulsorily acquired.

The South African government has responded to attempted land invasions here very ruthlessly and has established Anti-Land Invasion Units in Cape Town and Durban, for example.

According to Martens the debate around this matter focused almost solely on the issue of land grabbing by the politically connected elite. He says that the discussion was generally blown out of proportion and obscured the fact that Zimbabwe’s agrarian structure had fundamentally changed as reflected by the following facts:

“Between 2000 and 2010 about 28% of all land (9,100,000 hectares) was redistributed of which around 60% went to 200 000 small farmers and 30% to 22 700 new middle-size farmers; some 5% was taken by 217 new large-scale commercial individuals. As a result, in 2010 small farmers occupied almost 78.6% of Zimbabwe’s land compared to less than 49.2% in 1980. Large-scale commercial private farms were left with 3.5% of the land compared to 39% in 1980. Middle-size farms now occupied 13.4%, up from 4.2% while the remaining 4.5% (down from 7.7%) remained in the hands of corporations, parastatals, conservancies and other institutions.

“While the reform programme thoroughly disrupted and largely crippled large-scale farming, production in the communal areas continued during the first years of the new millennium. National maize yields in the good rainfall years of 2003/04 and 2005/06 were still substantial and the acreage under maize increased. While total yields were well below the national needs, it was not too bad considering that most of the maize now had to come from communal and resettlement famers who previously had produced some 60% of the nation’s harvest.”

An obvious question to ask is what lessons can be learnt from developments around the land question in Zimbabwe? Answering this question may well reveal some lessons for SA which, as the deliberations at the land conference mentioned above revealed, is no closer to resolving the land question after nearly twenty years of democracy.

What is clear, however, is that we do need to revisit the national question and that there appears to a definite course to follow:

Firstly, we need to revisit the national question.

Secondly, given the present state of affairs there appears to be a need for the building of a new national liberatory movement like the AAC and the NEUM.

BUILDING THE UNITY OF THE LEFT: THE WAY FORWARD.

The decline in influence of the Left is an ongoing cause of concern for us.

In my address in 2010 I referred to “the beginnings of signs of a regrouping of forces on the Left as exemplified by the Conference of the Democratic Left (CDL) and Truth Conference (TC) initiatives” and asked, “Where do matters now stand?”

In truth we have not come very far, because as the signs of crisis within the body politic become more evident every day, especially within the tripartite alliance , the progressive left in this country seems incapable of organizing and mobilizing the oppressed and exploited masses in support of the building a true people’s democracy in this country.

Patrick Bond has identified a number of organisations that comprise the “Extremely fractured South African Left”. These include: The DLF, the Marikana support campaign, Khanya College, NGOs like The socio-economic rights group, Sonke Gender Justice, Studies in Poverty and Inequality, Students for Law and Social Justice, Treatment Action campaign, Section 27 and what he calls critical, independent progressives such as Patrick Bond himself.

Having demonstrated that the ANC /SACP theory of CST and their conception of the NDR is the reason for their failure to deliver on the promises contained in the FC, and given the state of the nation spawned by the 1994, what is the way forward?

In building a new movement, I believe that we should learn from our history.

Colonialism and its apartheid offshoot brought forth two distinct responses from the side of the oppressed.

The two responses came from:

- (i) The NEUM.
- (ii) The ANC/SACP or Congress Alliance.

The challenge mounted by the NEUM, though grounded in sound political theory, failed to capture the support of the majority, whereas the congress alliance was very successful in doing so, with the result that as Pallo Jordan says triumphantly, “We prevailed!”.

However, it is now clear to see that theirs was a pyrrhic victory!

But that is not all, because true to the theoretical basis of their approach the ANC have introduced a Traditional Affairs Bill which will have the effect of re-enforcing tribalism and ethnicity which in turn brings xenophobia in its train.

The phenomenon of xenophobia which burst on to the scene during 2008 is dealt with by Cde Neville Alexander in his posthumously published book "Thoughts on the new South Africa". In a chapter titled *Afrophobia and the racial habitus* he deals with racism in post-Apartheid South Africa, delivering a devastating critique of the ANC's affirmative action policies. He also deals with the phenomenon of xenophobia which burst on to the scene so dramatically during 2008. He refers approvingly to Mahmood Mamdani's commentary on the reasons for the Rwandan genocide and says the following: "For it does not take a leap of the imagination to realize that what is happening to African people seeking refuge in the supposedly non-racial, democratic South Africa, can easily be directed against people of Indian origin, "coloured" people, "white" people and ultimately against people labeled Zulu, Tswana and so on"

He warns that "things can fall apart very rapidly. It took 100 days in Rwanda"!

There are of course entities on the left who espouse a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. For them the way to go is to build a revolutionary mass workers' party. The question is whether this is a realistic option at this point in time.

Whenever capitalism finds itself in crisis, as it has been since 2008, elements on the left raise the question which brings to mind the polemic around reform or revolution - the Rosa Luxembourg / Bernstein debate of the 19th century. This debate is relevant only in the first world.

Here we still have to resolve questions like who / what is the South African nation? And to debunk concepts like race and ethnicity and resolving the question in terms of NA's formulation of defining the South African nation in terms of colour-castes.

It is nevertheless instructive to consider debates currently raging in Europe as a means to finding our bearings here. An article by Ed Rooksby that appeared online in International Socialism on 7/10/13 is an example.

He says: "Several years of deep capitalist crisis together with the almost total capitulation of social-democratic parties across Europe to the austerity agenda have opened up clear space to left wing organisations." – This development has led to the posing of the following question: how and to what extent capitalist state power might be utilised for socialist objectives.

He refers to the rise of organisations which espouse socialism as the only alternative to capitalism as being labeled "left reformist" because they "combine electoral and parliamentary activity on the one hand with extra-parliamentary mobilisation, on the other".

This position is countered by the SWP as not capable of "opening the way to socialism", because left reformists end up taking responsibility for managing rather than seriously challenging capitalism, no matter how radical their original intentions may have been.

So, internationally we have those who may be described as radical Marxist-Leninists who advocate the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the working class. This viewpoint necessarily envisages the establishment of workers' councils or soviets.

Rooksby says it is unclear to him how a revolutionary situation arises in the current conjuncture. Here he is clearly speaking with reference to Europe where the question of the establishment of such workers' councils does not appear to be on the agenda there.

Similarly, as is clearly spelt out by Cde Frank van der Horst, capitalism is in "grave" crisis in South Africa and he alludes to the possibility of the austerity measures currently being experienced in Greece being applied here in South Africa. And just as in Europe there are no signs of soviet power emerging here.

This, I believe, is where Trotsky's programme of Transitional demands comes in. The transitional programme was designed to bridge the divide between the "minimum programme" of reform and the "maximum programme" of revolution.

Then there are those who have been labeled left reformist in that they advocate socialism being achieved via left leaning governments as described above by Rooksby.

Or is there "a third way", as advocated by some authors like Richard Wolfe?

But, more importantly, are these theoretical positions applicable to South Africa, if at all?

Rooksby concludes the article cited above with the following statement: "Nobody really knows - nobody can know until it happens, if it ever does – how to make a socialist revolution today. There are no blueprints. Nobody has all the answers, and we all have much to learn – from each other and most of all, from the struggles ahead."

This statement is relevant to our discussion around building the unity of the left and of a United Front in this country. But more pertinently it suggests that we need to follow Amilcar Cabral's advice and return to the source by recreating the forums that gave rise to the NEUM.

Our proposal has been to call for the building of a People's Democracy based on a programme of minimum transitional demands and in doing so we are mindful of Eric Hobsbawn's statement wherein he describes a People's Democracy as a formulation for the gradual and peaceful transition to socialism which he says is an alternative route to the one taken in Russia in 1917.

Clearly, we need to clarify all of these ideas for ourselves while at the same time engaging with others.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to show, firstly how the principles and policies elaborated by the UM are still relevant in our day. That in effect the national question has not been resolved nor will it be unless the UM approach to nation building and the resolution of the land question through the application of a policy of non-racialism and striving to implement a programme of transitional demands which is inextricably linked to a policy of non- collaboration with local and international agents of imperialism, is implemented.

Finally, we intend bringing out a special edition of our Bulletin to commemorate the 70th and 100th year anniversaries of the founding of the UM and the TLSA. This edition is dedicated to our forefathers who set us upon this path 70 years ago. We do so with the sincere hope and belief that a new generation of freedom fighters might be inspired to become involved in completing the unfinished work started 70 years ago.

Let our watchwords be: Mobilise, Rebuild, Organise.

For the building of a new movement against capitalism-imperialism - A MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM!

Forward Towards a Peoples Democracy

A Luta Continua!

I thank you for your attention.

Basil Brown

President

13 December 2013