

JF Also within the Udf you were saying...?

ANS No, I'm saying its not just UDF that is immune from that particular problem. It clearly is a problem that needs to be addressed. UDF itself within its various forms, National General Councils, AGMs and at regional level, has passed these motions indicating its belief in the leading role of the working class in the struggle and the need to increasingly develop working class leadership, working class participation within our affiliates and within our sort of leadership ranks. And if you look at leadership in UDF you will see in fact, I mean if class origin is to mean anything, obviously it doesn't entirely, workers are capable of betraying their own class interests but there's a substantial number of people of working class origin in the leadership of UDF.

If you look at the Western Cape the president of the Western Cape Udf is President Zale Mlindi who until very recently worked as a garage attendant, who's now retired from there but worked all his life as garage attendant and various other jobs. Our Vice President is a worker, a clothing worker who has lost two jobs because of his political activities, was unemployed but um, that's Wolf Rodes. The other Vice President is a person called Christmas Tinto who started life as a mine worker on the compounds in Jo'berg, was thrown out in the late '40s for strike activity and then came to Cape Town where he worked as an ordinary worker and then became a SACTU trade union organiser and organised the railway workshops in the Cape Town. So that's his background and you could go on. Clearly you people like myself who are intellectuals rather than working class people but the major leading positions are occupied by people from working class backgrounds and who have been workers, who are workers.

Someone like Qumbela who we were talking about who is a cleaner in a clothing factory. So at that level I think UDF in the Western Cape has as good a record as the unions and bearing in my ^{ind?} we are only 22 months or whatever old. The ability to develop working class leadership, people from working class background has been quick and you know, reasonably impressive which is not to say that, that process is complete. People like myself need to be increasingly peripheralised or phased out, I mean to an extent at least.

Clearly others have skills and the ability and knowledge which makes them so much better equipped to play leading roles.

JF ...phased out to the point that, how do you reemerge when the struggle succeeds, I mean..can you say something about that in terms of defining the role of whites and non racialism, you know now and ultimately the goal. I mean I'm interested in you pointing these things out to me.

ANS Yes. I think maybe using the word phased out is not the right one. I think it applies to blacks and whites equally but um....(I think see from a larger standing that.....non racialism - where do whites fit in then and then there's this phasing you know, but what does that say about whites role in a future S.A. or how do you envision it?) Well, I mean over the longer term I see no special role for whites in the future S.A. I think whites will be ordinary citizens hopefully of a socialist S.A. and um, they would have the same rights and above all the same duties as all others living in the country.

So one talks of special roles and special problems of whites in the current situation because that reflects a variety of concrete things about S.A.present, but one's working for a situation where the special character of whites will..not exist at all. (Just this...) We do have to watch the time, maybe five minutes?

JF JA. The one area which um, seems to be coming out of the closet and if anyone can answer it you can although^{if} you can't you can say: Do you think at a certain point um a lot of the debate about the UDF and LeGrange's ideas not withstanding, I mean (ja) disregarded, but that there's a sense of what a popular democratic organisation... what a kind of ^{front of} counter forces ^{that} brings in different racial+class groups as about that had been ⁱⁿ bodies in the ANC and then there's a front of the UDF; I mean do you some of the..do you think any of the ~~critique~~ critique of the UDF or any ~~the~~ general criticism of movements in S.A. represents criticism of the ANC, and why do you think there are critics of the ANC? I mean there's probably outright criticisms, well I mean you can just do without, I mean how do you assess that kind of criticism?

ANS Um, ja its um...just sort of trying to get a point of entry. Um, there's a lot to be said about it. I think that you're right um, a possible point of entry of mine would be something like this: that a lot of ones within the white left currently there are a number (sort² of I call) which is a term that's used but its an

ANS appropriate term so critical intellectuals around um, often operating Marxist terms, terminology and often invoking the speaktives Zimbabwe and Lancaster House and those kinds of things and imposing that, that sort of code onto the current situation in S.A. and saying the greatest danger in S.A. to a socialist future or whatever is a Lancaster House um, is a sort of petty bourgeois betrayal of the struggle and so forth.

Um, now there are a whole lot of things that one can actually say that if one looks..I mean there are many lessons to be learnt for sure from the Zimbabwean instance - one of them I would draw is that Marxist rhetoric and Marxist Leninist programmes and so on are not necessarily a guarantee of a consequential socialism, scientific socialism and its it seems to me too often the critical intellectuals that ~~one's~~ one's talking about are precisely the people that insist that something like UDF should come up with with a scientific socialist programme and there is not enough Marxist Leninism in the discourses of UDF.

And then they invoke a question of ZANU and Lancaster House and Zimbabwe - well, I would draw almost exactly the opposite conclusions from that situation but um, the use of Marxist Leninist rhetoric and, I'm not opposed to Marxism or Leninsim, but the kind of rhetorical use of phrases and concepts and so on um, is often a peculiarly sort of petty bourgeois intellectual, so in the name of the working class working with leadership and so on, things which are often peculiarly ah, petty bourgeois intectuallistic get invoked. And I think a lot of this talk is that kind.

I think that a sort of scientific understanding of the struggle is an important one and an important one to achieve at the level of mass education but to begin to do that you've actually got to organise and mobilise millions of people and if you went onto the Cape Flats or Crossroads or whatever here in Cape Town with a Marxist Leninist programme um you wouldn't actually..people wouldn't understand what you were talking about. I know that..I mean I've been involved in quite a lot of mass education since I got out and um, sort of very basic things people don't like..what is socialism or what is capitalism, whatever. Not understood by people even by people who've been relatively active in the struggle for the last several years.

Um, no, I mean it's not a cause of smugness, I mean it shows that very basic things have to be learnt and worked through. But that's

ANS the point, that's what we're here to do, what we need to do; we're not going to guarantee a socialist outcome in the S.A. struggle by this stage writing um or talking in a particular rhetoric.

Um, you've actually got to organise working class people and their allies and begin to educate them and one educates not just by sitting down at seminar sessions and talking or whatever. But above all in and through struggle itself. I mean that's the great school not on its own but um ja. (Just in...) Ok, one last question, ja.

JF Well, ok. Um, one important thing is just you coming out of prison what you decided ^{to do} and whether you were worried about your..keeping your ? clean and call that but maybe most important what I wanted to say was I heard someone say that I'm not a good conspirator and I'm professional and I'm just gonna do my own thing and you know that's that; there's nothing you can do...were you a good conspirator is that what the struggle's made up of a few people who feel like they've got top talents ^{underground} and choose that route or..I'm just interested in that abdication of a role, because you took up that role.

ANS Ja I think that first of all, the options are not in a good conspirator and not in doing too much and increasingly as we've been seeing earlier that's increasingly less the case. I mean, I think that um perhaps I shouldn't say this but I think its..certainly there are a lot of..clearly there are a lot of good conspirators ~~still~~ around judging by events that go off around us. I'm certainly no longer involved in such conspiratorial action because um..... as..it would be foolhardy for myself personally to be involved in that having dangers to others I might implicate and um, you know, I'm too well known but I think that there are other roles as well which can be, which are at the level of mass organisational work. And legal work; I mean the bounds of legality are always tenuous and what one imagines might be legal proves ^{not} to be the next day or whatever, but clearly when I was working in '73, '74, '75 ~~and~~ '74 '5, '6 I was very aware that I was working illegally um and adopted all the techniques of underground covert work. Currently I'm not involved in that sort of work at all. But..I mean that's ..what I would like to be involved in, in the broad national democratic struggle of S.A.

JF did you think after what you'd been through, ^{better} just get back to academia, poetry or....

ANS Um, no not really, but you're right in a sense, but I mean the situation has changed a lot so there are more possibilities for the ~~the~~ kind of work I'm doing. Ok.

JF You didn't say anything about poetry, you know.

ANS Let me, ok, give me five minutes, I'd like to...(I'm sorry) Ok, perhaps we could talk about that because um, when I was in prison writing the poems I had ~~the~~ a very tenuous, in fact didn't really think I would..maybe I'd get some readers for the poems eventually. ^{What's} been incredibly exciting getting out has been the sort of growth of mass organisation of all kinds, um has also created the space and facilitated the possibility of reaching audiences in my poetry. I've been in a lot of performances around in townsh~~es~~ like Lange and Soweto, in Natal in the townships there as well. Also at political rallies, funerals, for matyrs of the struggle but also in the white areas as well, so that I've been read on campus; I've most recently read some poems to Smuts Hall which is a sort of white residence at UCT, where the sort of rugg~~er~~ buggers are concentrated and they were very interested in inviting me because they'd heard that I'd been a political prisoner and were very interested to hear about the ANC and of course not that I could speak on behalf of the ANC but I told them about my experiences and also read them some of the ~~the~~ prison poems. And although I felt the persuading was there, necessity was there, trying to call off the New Zealand tour, um they at least began to think about some of the assumptions that they..were too cosy about but the major experience and most exciting one with regard to the poetry was performing to black working class, largely working class type audiences.

And that's had everything to do with this flourishing of mass organisation because its..they provide..sort of the possibilities of doing that. Learnt a lot about the poetry as poems themselves, poems which work performed aloud and others which don't so much.

One of the questions ~~less so~~ now but..one of the questions I used to get addressed was when I read the poems was among mass black audiences, I think I was ~~saying~~ yesterday was, Are you S.A. and they didn't really believe that white South Africans go to jail for the struggle and so forth. Ah, which was fairly amusing. So the poems

ANS have been a way actually of um, a vehicle say, talking about non racial struggle and solidarity and so forth and the...apart from John Mathews poem which people seem to like quite a lot performed 'The Death Row' poem where I'm talking about three young AMC comrades, sentenced to death and sitting on death row and their sort of tremendous courage and so forth in that situation. That's the kind I read a lot around and um...

JF Does that also say something are you S.A. or are you African is there an African South African culture that's not European and just...?

ANS I think growingly there is. The nicest thing that anyone's ever said to me about poetry performances, it happened in 'Maritzburg recently, when I was reading to a UDF type audience, and (mixed) ja, mainly black, and a black guy came up to me and said 'you read your poems just like an African' and I'd been waiting for some..a long time for someone to come and tell me..I hope that's the case because I've learnt a lot from that generation, the 1970's generation of ^(black) poets, who really pioneered again, I mean it was not yes, I suppose pioneered performance English language poetry and sort of opened up these channels of mass meetings, rallies and funerals and so on as places where poetry could be read and performed. Um, but at an aesthetic and stylistic level a lot of what they were doing was very interesting. They're pulling out from earlier oral traditions, prose poetry, jazz as well, also quite an informative kind of thing, the rythms and so on and often they'd perform to..with township type jazz bands and percussion going, while they incant their poetry.

Also freedom songs and often they would come on as a group singing freedom songs and their ensemble would drop back humming the haha... harmony, one person would come forward and incant the poem.

In the poems themselves there would be a lot of oral devices which would..are found in most oral poetry: repetition, parallelism and so forth and I studied very closely a lot of that and some of the poems, particularly say, the 'Death Row' poem and to a lesser extent the John Mathews poem, which involves quite a lot of parallelism, and repetition but working changes in and through repetition, um I was learning that from the black poets, from what they were doing and the poems which use those sort of devices as opposed to other kinds of poetic devices like the metaphor and visual imagery and

ANS so forth which tend to look better on a page and less..well, to a mass audience. But one gets to see that those poetic devices are in fact functional devices which work in a noisy hall where people have just been singing a freedom song and kids are getting up and mothers are shouting at their kids and so forth. You've got to actually pitch into that and if poetry is going to live and be alive in S.A. it can't be the holy object before which a few sort of silent critics sort of whisper and genuflect.

One has actually to have a poetry which can go out into townships which works there. Um, when I went to white audiences sometimes to Black Sash or whatever someone gets a cough and there's a lot of embarrassment that this is disrupting the muse and ah, I have now written a poem says more or less what I've been saying now which is that poetry has to survive in the real world of struggle. And it can't be some sort of sacred object.

So anyway that's been a very exciting experience for me. Again this is um, part and parcel, I think of, a small part and parcel of the emergent national culture which is developing around which one sees in a variety of forms. I mean freedom songs are probably the key component for the moment of the emergent struggling national culture.

JF Which is a black and white mix in every bit of Western Africa..?

ANS Ja, mainly African, a lot of the time but not only, ja.

JF African, but not by West African standard, I mean.

ANS Yes, it's S.A. JF Ja.