

Editorial

By Martin Nicol

N*ew Agenda* 89 features three articles that look back 40 years to the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). It is comforting to look back. We can wonder at the principles, sacrifices – and compromises – made then to forge a united front to stand against apartheid.

Look at the *New Agenda* cover. This cartoon, by a very young Zapiro, on a legendary UDF calendar, was immediately banned by the authorities. It depicts the UDF just three years into its active life. Optimism, determination – and lots of humour – in the face of brutal oppression.

It is also so much easier to look back than to confront what is happening now, with apartheid defeated and 29 years of ANC government.

Dr Allan Boesak writes a searing reflection on the present by comparing it to past ideals. He was the person who made the call for the formation of the UDF. You can recognise him on the cover – with his trademark glasses – in a meeting venue that has features from the Rockland Civic Centre in Mitchell's Plain where the UDF was launched on 20 August 1983. Religious leaders, activists, and community and trade union members organise and march peacefully together against the might of the police and army.

Devan Pillay looks at the often uneasy relationship between the unions and the UDF, contextualising this against the history of union development and tensions between “workerist” and “populist” interpretations.

Bruce Kadalie reports on the Institute for African Alternatives' commemorative event on 9 May 2023



to mark the historic UDF launch. He writes of the different opportunities that might be attached to the 2023 commemorations of the UDF – from wallowing in nostalgia, to discussing lessons, to engaging the sceptical youth, to launching a modern revival.

There is a feature on the first workshop held by IFAA's Defend our Constitutional Democracy (Decode) project, which considered Parliament's progress (or lack thereof) to date in responding to the Zondo Commission's recommendations for parliamentary reform. Panelists from the Parliamentary Monitoring Group, Unite Behind and the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (Casac) addressed the current crisis within our politics – starting with the most obvious question: ‘Where to for Parliament?’

The policy of land restitution after unjust dispossession has long been one of the pillars of land reform in South Africa. Ben Cousins considers

problems experienced in the process of land restitution from 1994 to the present and points to the need for an alternative approach to land redress and transformation.

The challenges of organisation and campaigning against state power are highlighted by John Okot in a fascinating report on community reactions to the construction of a controversial oil pipeline in East Africa. The governments of Uganda and Tanzania have allied with French and Chinese investors who need access to land across thousands of kilometres. There are concerns about climate implications and the dispossession of rural families.

Kudzai Mpfu and Simbarashe Tavuyanago unpack the right to strike – guaranteed by section 23 in the Bill of Rights – and the limits placed on this right for essential services workers, as illustrated in a recent court case lost by the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu). They point out that unions and their members have shown a disturbing tendency over many years to disregard not only labour laws but orders of court as well. Are more powerful enforcement tools needed? Such as sending offending unionists to jail? *New Agenda* would welcome responses to this article. (Send comments to production@ifaaza.org.)

Also in this issue is a review of Kumi Naidoo's autobiographical memoir and an update on progress with the transformation of *New Agenda* into a 21st century journal with Department of Higher Education and Training accreditation. **NA**