

BB ...various people, I suppose politicians, I hope writers and some other people actively in cultural life also...

JF...ok, the way I've been starting with people in these interviews is that I'm quite interested in the basic facts of where you were born and when and what your family background was like.

BB Alright. Born 1939 in the south western part of the country, that is about 150km from Capetown in a very small town called Bonnyvale, Scottish word, probably called that because there used to be...they used to have a Scottish missionaries in that area. It's quite near a town called Robertson. And then there's another town there called Montagu, and there's another little place called Macgregor...so I assume these were named after the Scottish missionaries who were there at the time. I was born there, it's a very small town in a wine growing area, I grew up there, basically in the south western part of the Cape Province, my parents moved around quite a lot. My father was a small farmer. At one point he owned his own farm. That didn't last long. He was not very successful at that...and like many other people of the lower middle class if you can call it that, among the Afrikaner whites, he changed jobs, and we changed residence quite a lot but always in the same area more or less. Then I ended up doing my secondary studies at Wellington, which is a fairly big town, still in that part of the world, quite near Capetown, quite well known for its colleges and schools, then went to university in Capetown, the University of Capetown. Left the country ~~xxx~~ at the beginning of 1960, and have been abroad ever since.

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JF: To go to ^{UCT} ~~UPC~~ was already not a very Afrikaans thing to do. What did your parents think of that?

BB: They didn't particularly object to that, so long as I made a success of whatever I was going to study. It came about because I had been given a bursary to go to University but to go and do a BA with languages, with Afrikaans as my main subject probably, ^{literature} I wanted to do fine arts. The bursary was to take me to Stellenbosch University where normal Afrikaans speaking youth should be going. But they weren't teaching any fine arts so I went to Capetown where I tried to do both things at the same time. Fine arts during the day, and my BA at night. Of course it didn't work out.

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JF: The way you were raised, your home and family background, what ...were you aware of...what kind of values did your parents have? what were their views of blacks, their views of English speakers?

BB: I think I would say that the family background, or atmosphere was quite a tolerant one. You know of course that in the south west of the Cape at least, there's been a long history of coexisting, not with the black community so much, but with the so called coloured community. Which of course is very much based on relationships of paternalism. ^{if that} But there was no overt animosity to other ethnic groups that I can remember. The English/Afrikaans question...again, in the Cape area, in the western province, or the Boerland to give it its other name, it was not really an issue. For instance I've always gone to school with 40...60% English...Afrikaans speaking...and that never seemed to be much of a question. I don't know to what extent my parents are typical in that, I think that there's a streak of rebelliousness in the family. Which seems to express itself in many ways. It may be that my father was not very much in the mould of the normal Afrikaner of his age group. I remember for instance that he's certainly not a rabid Nationalist, a supporter of the Nationalist Party the way some of his friends were or people of his age group were.

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meaning not clear?

JF: Was he UP or did he just not vote either way?

BB: He in fact was UP. He made quite a point of showing that he was UP at certain times. But I think that was more of a need to buck the establishment than anything else.

JF: What generation...?

BB: My father is now 85 years old,

JF: But what generation South African... are they from way back..?

BB: Oh, I see...it goes a long way back...as far as I know, though I've never made a point of trying to find out these things...but the family name of Breytonbach first turns up in company records in 1656 ...some fellow called Breytonbach who was a military man. ...probably a mercenary, ^{or} some kind of hired soldier from one of the Germanic countries. He was in the service of the Company at that time. For my mother's side, they were called Clouties, her father's name and that goes back a long way too. I know we were certainly not recent immigrants. In fact I think there was a lot of mixing going on... ^{both} first between people coming from various European

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countries but I think also quite a bit of mixing with the local population . Some members of the family through their nicknames can be seen to be quite dark skinned.I have an uncle who is very dark indeed. My eldest brother is very darkskinned too. And I think it's now an accepted fact that no so called white family, having been there for several generations...could not be mixed in some way or another with other people living in the country. particularly in the Cape.

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book.

JF: So that book that's caused all the trouble.....you'd think that's a bit of a silly controversy?

BB:Of course...it's ridiculous...it's like kicking in an open door..

JF: OK. What I'm interested in is why you left the country, what views you had then, what spurred you to go?

BB: It's a bit tangled because some of the motives were fairly personal, more the need to find my feet as a writer and as an artist abroad than political, but coming from Wellington which is a fairly enlightened provincial town, many of the students came there from Capetown to secondary school there...it used to be the custom for students to come and board, the schools were quite well known...and so I was exposed to city views more than would have been the case otherwise. But still coming from Wellington and being dropped into a university environment where for the first time you actually go to class with people of other groups...Indians, so called coloureds, black people, going to class with them...

JF: Where was that?

BB: In Capetown, UCT, 1958/1959...in fact it stopped in 1959...that was quite an eye opener for me, because of course you socialise with people, you suddenly see their point of view, and the way they live, and you see a bit of reality through their eyes. which is quite a shock. And being interested in both writing and painting automatically brought me into contact with other people with similar interests in the Capetown area living in Capetown, many of them had been abroad, and that exposed me a bit broader view, say a wider European influence. And these people were also quite close to political activists of the time . I don't know what it's like now, I think perhaps to some extent it's still so, but at that time there was a close intermingling of writing worlds, and political activist worlds..because so much of



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the political activism was in fact journalism, New Age and other news papers of that kind, Fighting Talk etc being published in that area.

So I got to know and was exposed to strong radical views. Then came the period of trying to segregate the universities, and like my fellow students, I became involved in ~~tryin~~ demonstrations protesting this my social life quite rapidly integrated people of all the different backgrounds. I remember for instance having a party in the house where I lived...I lived together with some other students in a kind of a pad, which was later called a commune, and we'd have parties which of course were open to all our friends, and the police turning up and raiding the place, looking for mixed couples, at that time it was ^{still} illegal to give alcohol to so called blacks, you could ~~nt~~ offer a coloured friend a drink, but not a black friend. and I remember the police busting the apartment I was living in, trying to prove that Peter Clark, a black painter friend of mine, ~~was~~ who was supposed to be coloured, to prove that he was not black, that he was coloured, that he was allowed to have the glass of wine we were having together. that type of thing. So I had my brushes with the security police, as did everyone else at that time, of the people in the milieu I was moving in. So I wouldn't say that political causes made me leave SA. I was aware ...starting to become aware of some of the political implications, I knew what some of my friends were going through, but i was not very politicised to the extent of belonging to any ~~or~~ organisation or any party. And I think I should say I left more for personal reasons, to get a larger view, with the intention of coming back after a year or so. I never thought I'd be away...you know I'd literally dropped out of university, worked for 6 months to get enough money to pay for my boat fare, pack my rucksack and left.

JF: A lot of the people I interviewed in SA mentioned names of the people who affected them, were there any people...you mentioned publications, so I can figure who that would be, but were there any you specifically met who had some influence on you?

BB: At that time? Yes. I would say that some were close friends of mine, some who ended up in prison later on, like Marius Schoon, who ended up with a long 12 year stretch...there was... 2 black writers, one called Richard Rieff, another one ~~is~~ less well known, called Kenny Parker who was exiled and has been working for the liberation movement abroad ever since. There were older writers, people likewh's an elderly Afrikans poet who spent many years abroad, particularly the Civil war years in Spain...

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233? K...on the side of the Republican forces. He wrote a fine book about his experiences, and I think that affected me a lot. Someone like who is a senior writer, who had also spent many years abroad, Ronald Segal who I didn't know very well but who I'd met a few times, who also left the country not long after that. There must be quite a few people like that...

JF: Is Marius about your age?

BB.: Yes, he must be about 2 years older than I am.

JF: Was he also at UCT??

BB: No he went to Stellenbosch, but at that time he was living in Cape town, and we shared ...we were living in the same place...

JF: Did you, just in a kind of general way, did you see him moving in a direction you disagreed with, or didn't feel was right for you,...surely even at that stage he...must have been quite..

BB:...he was, yes...

JF: was he in the Congress of Democrats or was he a bit young for that?

BB: I don't know if he was in the Congress. I know he was far more actively political than I was at that time. But looked at from outside it looked a bit messy, and many people were a bit skeptical. In fact many people I remember were quite wary of Marius. people like K Jack Cope, whose writings you may know, and others living in Clifton, which used to be the area where writers lived then, or some of the writers lived. People like Ingrid.....and others. They were quite suspicious of Marius, because he was so obviously trying to make a point, as it were radically, that people thought...you know there's always this tremendous skepticism in these liberal milieus, everyone's looking on every one else as a potential spy .or as an actual spy, or as an infiltrator. this was a time, as you may know, of a lot of spying on the campuses, the police infiltrating, the various student organisations and so on. I remember a lot of people were not taking Marius very seriously. they thought he was protesting too much as it were, to be genuine, but I wouldn't say I was disapproving of the direction he was going. I was perhaps disapproving of the way he was going about it. In any event he was very young. I'm talking about 18-19, and it's very difficult to put myself back in that position...

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JF: So you were how old when you left in 60?

BB: 19.

JF: and in abrief way what happened...you went overseas...to...

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BB: travelling 4th class on a Portugese boat, or travelling kaffir(?) class, arriving in Lisbon with 25 English pounds, and with no return ticket, and quite naive, thinking that I could find my way around Europe quite easily, and of course it turned out to be far more difficult. and then I drifted around Europe for 2 or 3 years before finally settling down in Paris.

JF: And was it then, immediately that you met your wife?

BB: I met my wife in Paris end of 1963, we were married in 1964.

Jf Was it meeting her that made you decide you couldn't go back...you sad you planned to go back....what happened?

BB: I planned to go back...well...first I was not very rapidly in a position to work up enough money to go back even if I wanted to..but I also...it turned out to be much more difficult...I wasn't going to go back on a defeat as it were, not having done..because I thought I want at least to get some painting, do some writing in Europe, and all I was doing was just surviving. that was part of it. another part of it was that quite soon after my arriving in Europe, there were the Sharpeville massacres in SA and I remember distinctly crossing the channel from Paris to London, just to be able to understand what was going on because I didn't understand any French at the time and I realised something big had blown up in the country and I was completely out of touch, and ~~IXXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~KNOWXXXX~~ I want to know...and this is terrible...and many of the people I knew were being arrested and so on, and of course and that event was like a kind of shock wave for me too...it ~~went~~ probably crystallised many things ~~for~~ for me then seeing the country from a long way away, and seeing it perhaps also clearly for the first time. And automatically finding myself as a stranger abroad, a foreigner, not knowing anybody, I was gravitating to other young South Africans in similar situations. Many of them were political exiles, and many of them were also working in some form or other with the liberation movements, anti apartheid organisations, or directly with the ANC. So that quite soon, I was in fact quite soon having regular contacts, and becoming friends with black SA exiles, abroad. So the question of returning to SA was just receding. Once I married my wife there was no question of that then.



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BB: Although even then I think...it's difficult now again going back... what was going on in one's mind...did I really think I was going to be away forever...or did I think things were going to clear up in a year or two's time?or did I think I could go back and be of some use inside the country..all these things must have gone through my mind. it was more a pragmatic thing...living from day to day turned into weeks and months and then years and I was still there.

JF: I'm just wondering...as I'm looking at the role of whites, did you have a sense ~~of~~...when you were inside the country, did it change when you were outside the country, about the role of whites...I mean did you feel when you were there that it was good for you to go and that there wasn't much point doing things there, or did you see people doing things who were white...I'm wondering about the feeling of you as a white South African, perhaps even as an Afrikaner white S. African, what it was like then, when you left, and how that changed.

BB: Yes. well, of course, the late 50's and the early 60's was a period of the huge mass demonstrations by the African people in the country. I think that even then I must have known that the whites involved in political actions for change in SA were very much in a supportive role to the black organisations or to the black people. The leadership was very clearly in the hands of the black people. The white people were involved I think I sensed at that time, I don't now want to put too much of a hindsight view on it but, I think I must have sensed that the white people involved were involved for ideological reasons. They were people ...I sensed that there was a strong ideological commitment, and the ideology was interesting to me. in other words it was very much on a level of theory and arguing about theory, Marxism, Socialism, all the other theories were being debated. It was either like that or it could be confined to a more specific role like what could a white ^{Afrikaner} writer for instance do in such a set up. As a young Afrikaner writer, very much in rebellion from the beginning against my own confreres, my colleagues, my fellow writers, against the Afrikaner establishment...that was a thread that was present from the beginning and has gone on ever since. And a lot of my rebelliousness against the Afrikaner writing establishment was for ethical or moral reasons, that the Afrikaner writing establishment cannot be separated from the general Afrikaner establishment...in fact they prop up the Afrikaner power structure. And that a writer's role ought to be to see the political implications of the situation in the country and define himself vis a vis that situation, and fight the establishment in the name of justice, greater consciousness, ^{greater awareness} etc. for me there was... -354

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 ...a kind of instinctive marrying a la Sartre or a la Camus, if you want to call it that, between the writing and the political implications of the writing. But I don't think that at any time I considered this to be definitive. or that this would be decisive, in that this would change the country. the change was not going to come from the whites. The whites the white establishment, the white parties, I think fairly early on for me became the forces preventing this from taking place, a kind of damper on the situation, and this had to be done away with, either transformed, this was an attempted realistic approach, to the situation, or removed, dismantled in some way or another. but I don't think I ever thought the whites could take the lead or even play a decisive role in the necessary changes.

JF: And so did that view change? I mean, take me to the point where you returned to the country...what happened? first of all fill me in on what happened during these years...what you did in those years, chronologically...but again...thinking...

BB:I think that one could go fairly rapidly over those years...on the one hand there's my private situation, where being married to a woman who by their laws is not considered to be a European, a white person, in other words my marriage was illegal, in fact at that time they amended the law to make mixed marriages illegal...they must have had my case in mind...it became illegal to be married to someone of another ethnic group outside the country. so there was that, of course. There was my activity as a writer, because from 1964 onwards I started publishing in SA in Afrikaans, working quite closely with a group of young Afrikaners writers called the ~~Seesterhood~~^{NO}...at that time...people like Jan..... and Andre Brink, Eddie Lerue and others and I remember we had big arguments running through a magazine called ~~Seesterhood~~...too, in which I pushed the line that writers ought to become far more involved politically, there is no such thing as non-political writing. And constantly trying to talk, to put forward the actual situation in the country, but we'll come back to that in a little while. I see what we were doing in that time in a slightly different light...i think it was a lot of dust and not very much contents, but we'll talk about that...so on the other side in Europe itself, I was becoming more deeply involved through my friendships with SA exiles. with anti apartheid groups, and to a lesser extent with the liberation movement, the ANC itself. So there you can see my development, if you can call it that, ~~wir~~ or progress. Now when I returned to the country then in 1973 for the first time, we had come back to these regions twice before that. I had been down to Tanzania for a UNESCO conference, and we'd also been to Swaziland and Mozambique where my parents

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BB:...where my parents came to visit us. But we couldn't get ~~xxvixx~~ into the country. They wouldn't let my wife have a visa. And in 1973 I was told, although we hadn't applied then for a visa, but my case was continually coming up in the newspapers, because of my writing activities basically....and this love/hate relationship with the Afrikaner people, being appreciated as a writer, and being rejected entirely for both my private life and my political views and my political activities.

By that time I was already quite clearly branded by the security people as a subversive element...from time to time little articles obviously inspired by them would surface trying to brand me as a Communist for instance...

At any event in 1973 I was informed by my family that if I wanted to come back to the country for a visit, now was the time to apply. And so we did, I was made to understand that I was not to indulge in any political activities, not to make any political statements, there was no formal agreement along these lines, but I suppose my family who were very keen to see me, must have given them a promise of some kind.

Then we came, my wife and I, went to South Africa, spent 3 months. I took part in a symposium at the UTC, a summer school, which was in fact a review of the 60's, what had happened. had it had any effect, etc. It turned out to be a very political statement, which I was very much attacked for.

All of these experiences were described in a book called "The season in Paradise" which has since appeared in various countries. And I got pulled in by the security police in Kimberley, for visiting Robert Sibukwe without having a permit to be in a black township.

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I went to see him with Sonny Leon who at that time was the leader of the Labour Party and then I was pulled in again, not by the Security police, but this time by the Bureau of State Security, they got me to come to a hotel in Paarl, which is quite near to where my parents live in Wellington, and grilled me for a few hours.

Very nicely...there were photos of atrocities committed by the Liberation forces here in Zimbabwe, or Rhodesia as it was at the time. The kind of paternalistic approach..you know...you don't realise what you're up to, you don't know what you're doing. You're giving guns to those black bastards who are going to kill our wives and our kids.

Once they've used you they'll just discard you...which is an argument often used by people like that. Which I think is in fact quite an interesting argument...the whites ...

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JF: That was an interesting argument...

BB: I think it's an interesting argument because it touches of course on a fairly raw nerve. I think that many whites involved in...well, let's call it the struggle for liberation ...it's a cliché because it covers a very large area ...they must subconsciously have the feeling of irrelevance, so I can imagine if people come at you with the argument...well, you're just being used, that you'll be chucked aside once you've served a purpose, probably touches an echo somewhere, it's something you have to ~~xxx~~ make clear for yourself...

Anyway, in 1973 when we were in the country you must take into account that I'd then been living in Europe with little odd trips to Africa, I'd also been to N. Africa, for 13 years and of course by then I was quite influenced, apart from the open...the running sore of my SouthAfricaness, ~~and~~ having to define myself constantly for myself....how do I relate to the country, where do I situate myself, what do I do...where do I come from, where do I belong etc...

A kind of continual search for roots and for relevancy...but apart from that, there's also the European side of it I'd lived through the student uprising of 1968 and I'd become I'd say probably very radical in my political views. So that my opinions and my views on SA grew from both my own personal background, my youth, and my contacts with S Africans abroad and inside the country.

But also to a large extent from a general overlapping theoretical training as it were, auto didactic but training still in the European context.

JF: left...?

BB: Left...yes *very much so*...and there was also the Vietnam war going on. All of these things were happening at the time and one was very much aware of the international implications of these wars. I remember saying that after Vietnam the shift mustn't be to Southern Africa ...there were wars going on..or beginnings of liberation wars here in Portugese colonies, and we thought it would only be a matter of time. So there was a tremendous elan of resistance and revolution as it were.

JF: Now was it coming back after the experience in SA that made you feel you had to do something, that prompted the whole Okhela...

BB: No, in fact I was already involved in Okhela activities, before coming here in 1973. That must have ...my involvement with the liberation movement, or with sectors of the ANC, goes back to the late 60's and in the early 70's it was concretised, it ~~was~~ became concrete in the formation of various underground cells which I was involved, so when I came in 1973 it was also with a mission of trying to see what could be done here...

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BB: ...in the country, already then.

JF: Are you saying you worked from outside the country with cells inside the country, back in the 70's?

BB: No, it wasn't so much that as rather forming support groups outside the country which ^{would} be in a position to support active whites, or radical white groups in this country who would need this kind of support...it's a little bit putting the cart before the horse...

We were involved in forming the support groups before the need for the support groups had been expressed. They'd been expressed by sectors within the ANC but we were forming a network that could help sustain this resistance in this country, before this white resistance had asked for anything like this to come about.

JF: Are you saying with hindsight that it was premature? that you should have waited for a mandate?

BB: Yes, but you do what you can do and what you have to do where you are at that particular time. I would have said yes, if I'd lived in the country, yes, if I had then lived inside SA with something like that happening outside I would have said no, you're being stupid. You're rushing the gun as it were,

It's a complex matter, because when you start putting together an organisation of that kind it takes on a life of its own. And the whole question of where the impulse should come from, ^{are you} from outside as it were, trying to suscitate some kind of impulse from inside the country, or responding to demands coming from within, knowing that the people have to be very careful, and probably quite timid, and that you are probably more radical outside than they ^{can be} are inside.

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And you can afford to be more radical outside than inside.

It's a delicate matter. That's one of the reasons I came back in 1975, because I felt with the other ~~SA~~ South Africans with whom I was working outside that we had no mandate. And so we could not pretend to exist with any real purpose outside unless we had something happening inside this country, unless we knew what the people inside this country really wanted.

Now to know what these people inside really wanted, one had to go inside and talk to these various people, and perhaps nudge them... ..and I felt strongly for that...to nudge them into organising themselves, into taking the situation more in hand. In other words, ~~making~~ the step between, the step from what was at that time very much radical student activism, but of a liberal kind, that is protesting, demonstrating etc, not necessarily involved in hard underground political activity, in support of the liberation movement. There had been some attempts in that direction, particularly



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...by the African resistance movement of course, of the early 60'S. But to my knowledge, apart from perhaps some underground activists from the SA Communist Party, there was not very much happening then.

JF: I'd like to back track a bit...I'm confused about a couple of things ...when you say sectors of the ANC what do you mean by that?

BB: Yeh..well...I was never myself formally a member of the ANC and ...this is now looking at it with hindsight. In the early 70'S I considered myself to be very left, radical, Communist, but not in agreement with the SA communist party which I considered to be pro Soviet, Stalinist, and I found myself in a very critical position, theoretically at least, to the Communist Party, but from the left, a Left criticism as it were. Again i must return to the period of the late 60's and early 70's in europe. The May uprising in Paris for instance, the influence of Trotskyism and Maoism, and various other spontaneous forms of Marxism or Anarchism for that matter.

So t here were other people in the ANC who felt similarly, who were very Left, but were not members of the SA Communist Party. And who had contacted me...like who?

JF: Whites of blacks?

BB: Blacks..no whites that I know of...there may have been, I don't know, not that I knowof.

JF:And they'd contacted you?

BB: And they had contacted me...we had been working together in other fields, anti apartheid activity, but they'd contacted me and through an underground ^{support} organisation based in Paris we started working together and I was very much aware that they didn't want, for security reasons, and also for political reasons, they didn't want the ANC as such to know about this work that I was involved in. That's why I talk of sectors in the ANC. At that point there were ..it was normal for any organisation as old and as ~~big~~ big as the ANC...there were various factions, perhaps factions is not the right word to use.. but there were differences of opinion...there was some people who were more nationalist...black nationalist, there were some people who were old hard line Marxist, some were perhaps more Chinese inclined, the se were differences of opinion and sometimes they came to the surface, sometimes with fairly important results...being excluded from the ANC for instance.

So I sensed that I was working with people who wanted to build up an alternative ~~to~~ within the ANC to the control they thought the SA Communist Party was exerting , at least in certain fields, in the ANC. That's why I say sectors, and not the ANC as a whole.

JF: And just tell me again, because it seems very different from your views initially, that whites had a certain very small role, that it could only be supportive and it was very limiting... I mean, did you change? did you come to think that whites could have more of a role? Just tell me, what was Okhela about in terms of what was it trying to do for whites?

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BB: OK...what had happened in the meantime...if you think of Okhela and you think of it as an idea, it's an idea which would be the product of white experiences, and the whites involved would be very often of student background.

and one of the decisive things that happened in the meantime was of course the importance of black consciousness, in the country particularly. The breakup of the National Union of SA students at that stage...for instance in 1973-74 I was one of the ^{honorary} Vice Presidents of the Nat. Union of students, and the black students had broken away and formed their own organisation, SASO.

One of the reactions coming from whites which I thought was a very healthy one, was again to look, at themselves.....what role do we play, if we're being rejected...if the blacks tell us that we can't move together, we can't work together in the same organisation because ...just in terms of class analysis we come from such different backgrounds that we cannot possibly identify constructively enough with one another to work together purposefully, then where do we fit in?

I think there was a kind of a germinating idea then that the whites need to be liberated also. from within as it were. But ~~then~~ you have to take into account that you have to probably work within your own environment. To do so effectively you have to do your work for change, for liberation, for transformation, as a white within your own background. By stepping out of your own background, and joining up with a predominantly black organisation, you lose relevance within your own community...and therefore the possibility of transforming it from within or strengthening the forces for change from within. And you do not really get accepted enough by the black community for whom you're trying to work, because you're still a white, however radical you may be, or you may identify with the cause.

277? It was a kind of a..... as we say in French, a realisation of failure, that many of our non racist, anti racist ideas were based ~~on~~ more on idealism than on reality itself. We weren't really able to functionally live out these ideals, even at a level of the organisations we were involved in. I think this is something we sensed at that time, which is again a healthy thing, because I think it moved, or it started to move the white consciousness about change...away from liberalism or charitable support, or paternalism, to a closer look at their own condition as whites within a community. And perhaps a more realistic appraisal of what they can possibly do and what they can't do.

The ultimate aim still remained the same. We ~~still~~ were working for the same goal, for a unitary state, working for a country which will be free, which will have majority rule. But it was tactically realised that we perhaps had to do so in our own ways. That I think is broadly speaking, the idea, the earth from which an idea like Okhela ~~came~~ could have grown.

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XXX JF: And how that fit with the ANC?

BB: Not very well, I think in that...I may be giving a one sided interpretation of what the ANC felt about these matters, but at least in practice the ANC had integrated its white members completely, through the party mostly...I don't know off hand of any white ANC members who were not also Party members. But the Party had always been an integrated structure, the Party never made ...although I'm sure the Party also said that these whites must also work within their own community...as much as possible, but structurally, in terms of organisation, they were integrated groups.

JF: Although on the ground, ^{inside the country} say in the 50's there was the Congress of Democrats, and now there are separate groups, resurfacing, so one might have said that outside the country was a bit different from inside...so in any case you weren't working with a mandate from the ANC as organisationally...?

BB: no, I was not, but I was always working under close control of people who were themselves office bearers of the ANC. The ANC, again is a vast organisation...to pin it down and say...is this a mandate or not...sometimes perhaps I was interpreting beyond reason .

JF: So your idea in going back ...was this just a kind of getting in touch with people, to speak to whites and say...look it's time to move and we've got a way to help you move...?

BB: No, it was already more advanced than that. We had already been in touch with some people, some people from inside had been out and spent some time with us, ~~with~~ ^{techniques} we'd given them some facilities for picking up ~~leads~~ in underground political activity and they went back with those techniques and we also had other people for Okhela who'd gone into the country and come out again.

So my visit to the country was no longer just an initial sort of scouting. It was building on something we already had going. But trying to build it now towards a fairly coherent structure.

JF: And then, so what happened? Can you speak about the experience inside as you look at it now? How did you go about it? Do you feel like it was unfortunate that you got caught? that you even did it? do you have regrets? why do you think you were caught?

BB: Well, why do I think I was caught? that's another story altogether. I prefer to look at it now, if you like...was it worth it? and I leave aside now the extent to which my going about it was or could have been mistaken, what I did was dangerous both to myself and to other people. Leaving all that aside, not because it's not important, but I don't want to talk about that now, whether such an attempt as that per se should have been undertaken at that time.

BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO.

BB: I don't regret it at all. That's a matter of principle, I don't regret anything that's happened in the past...looking back on it, some of it, it could have been done better, there's no doubt about that. The original reasons for doing so were correct, and I think ^{despite} the failure or the apparent failure, it left some traces and it was part of a developing history of struggle in the country and that played a small role ~~also~~ also. No I don't think it was a bad thing to do. I still feel that despite the obvious problems or difficulties I still feel that it is important for a white, and even a white writer to come to terms with these contradictions, with the need to be involved...

I'm not saying that the choices I made are necessarily...I would not prescribe them...to other people, but I would certainly prescribe or demand the hard look that one should have at yourself and that you should push yourself, going beyond the verbal protesting or just living as a maggot as it were off the rottenness of the society, which is what one normally does when you are a writer.

I think the situation is far too important, far too serious, for writers not to be involved politically. Now what form that involvement takes, now that is another area of debate. But that's always been a constant attitude as far as I'm concerned, and I always keep returning to that in many different ways, again and again, and I keep on attacking my fellow writers for the same reason. And when I assess the importance of writing ~~in a~~ ^{the} country for instance, the importance of white writing, and Afrikaans writing in particular, it's always through those eyes, through those views that I evaluate them.

That for me remains valid. The second thing that remains valid is the white people in the country need to come to an understanding of what they can do as whites within the setup. Dropping out as a white is not a solution. I don't think so. There are certain things which they can do, because they're whites, there are certain privileges they have, there are certain means of struggle at their disposal which other people do not have for instance. They have access to certain organisations, to certain forms of power even, through writing again, a very good example...there are certain means of pressure which they can use as whites which other people cannot use.

I think this should be taken into account when one talks about the role that the whites can play. And that...in other words I'm defining the specificity of the white as a white within the political setup of the country where the whites are the masters, the rulers, the oppressors. And what do you do then as a white if you are in disagreement? I think that is a constant need which needs redefinition again and again and which constantly changes. Because you've just pointed out one of the changes now. In the early 60'S there was this idea of being organised separately, the Congress of Democrats and others...and there was a period when one seemed to integrate entirely, and now it would seem to come up in different organisations so it would seem to change all the time.



BREYTONX BREYTONBACH, TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO.

BB: But there's a third realisation. If I may continue with that now, that's important to me now. And that's that the white in a country is a permanent fixture of the landscape. He doesn't have to ask anybody's permission to become involved in the revolutionary struggle. And in some ways he cannot be told what he should and shouldn't be doing, by a black revolutionary, even if the black represents an organisation which is obviously the majority, is the major organisation in the country.

In other words, I think that a white now, is no longer involved in the struggle from a background of guilt or atonement, or compensation, but fully, completely so, as a S African and as a white African. I think it's a form of liberation in some small way, again, the early seventies -- ideas like Okhela (E) and of course Okhela was not the only one -- there were other people in other forms of organisations doing similar things -- helped bring about. I think it's important that: a kind of freeing of the White consciousness. You can talk as equal because you are there as an ~~xx~~ equal, you're there fully so.

JF: Would that mean that you felt a lot closer to black consciousness as a philosophy, particularly as articulated by people like Biko, than you did to the ANC?

BB: Well, I've always been critical of the ANC, but then that's part of my own nature, because of what I thought was a lack of real activity inside the country. Remember that I'd been involved in anti-apartheid activity abroad for many years, helping the ANC in many ways, and I know that in many instances from public platforms or at conferences and seminars, I spoke out and made claims for the ANC which I patently knew were not true, you know, hinting at extensive networks in the country and that things were going to start happening soon soon, and I knew very well in my own mind that things were not going to start happening soon soon. One of the reasons I became involved with Okhela was because it was taking things a step further, it was getting down to doing something at last. I was sick and tired of being an exile and holding a line and becoming part of an establishment which thrives on being in exile too, part of an establishment, which in exiles, starts playing international politics, you know, third worldism, the Vietnam War, all the rest of it, supporting the Soviet Invasion of Prague or Budapest -- hewing your political line to power bloc politics, things like that, which my line was ~~xx~~ always, "Let's get back down to South Africa, let's have our actions -- let it be defined by the South African reality, let us develop our own indigenous socialist thinking, for instance.

Let's not parachute it from without, but let's do it from within, and get back on to the ground. Of course then, in that context, something like Black Consciousness, although I would say that something like Black nationalism as such, would be as abhorrent to me as White nationalism as such, at least these people were active, they were on the ground, they were working from within, they were right there.

Breyton Breytonbach, Tape One, Side Two:

They were protesting. At that time Black Consciousness groups seemed to be far more active than the ANC people. This is not an external mission directing things to be happening inside the country, these were people on the ground itself. I think their radicalism attracted me also. It was a freeing, as it were, which to my mind, was important, it was a freeing from White tutelage, which is important. After all you must remember that the breaking line within the ANC has ~~always~~ always been that one, the Black nationalist breaking away from the ANC, as happened during the time of the PAC breaking away because of rejecting White control of white thinking control.

To that extent I supported it entirely. I would not say, though, that I did not have my arguments, and I knew that the ANC ~~was~~ people, some of them were very worried about what was happening because it was something which was escaping from their control. But I thought it was a healthy threat, I thought it was a healthy development.

JF: Can I ask you if you can deal with some of the ~~critiques~~ critiques of the points you have been making. I'm just thinking that when you say there wasn't that much happening in the same year that you had your experience, there were people

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Breyton Breytonbach, Tape Two, Side One:

JF. perhaps people like they would say, look, you have to work within a framework, within a structure and the ANC did have a place for Whites and that a ~~critique~~ critique would be an individual kind of approach in terms of it having to fit in, because when you say the Black consciousness groups were active, at a certain point they were not threatening the government and that's why, I think, they existed for a long time. To say Black is Beautiful wouldn't get you banned, to start a lot of organisations which might eventually speak to the wrong people, etc, would get you .. Could you deal with that ?

BB: I quite agree with you. If we are going to say Black is Beautiful, that won't get you anywhere at all, but perhaps I should make it clear that what I approved of in the Black Consciousness movement is this idea of a community taking itself in hand from inside. This is, after all, coming after a long period of ~~political~~ silence politically in a country. I'm talking of ~~overt~~ overt politics now, I'm not talking of underground politics. Having said that the, perhaps I should also say, at the same time, that a lot of my critique of the ANC was probably brought by my being at the same time on the edges, on the verge of it, and not being inside. Had I been recruited into the ANC and had I been integrated in some function or some capacity in the ANC, I would never have done -- probably all of this would never have happened, I have no doubt about that and I am sure now -- it is a self criticism, -- I am sure now, with hindsight, that many things were happening that I did not know about. By the very nature of it, I mean if it was underground, then I wouldn't have known about it.

But also because I have myself, as I said a few seconds ago, was told to, as it were, hint at things that I didn't know about, that I ended up doubting anything happening at all and when people like Jeremy Cronin or Sumner, or others were arrested later on, that one realised that obviously, yes, things must be happening.

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Breyton Breytonbach, Tape Two, Side One:

Even so, I maintain my appreciation that, ^{I feel} the ANC could, those years, have been more active, done more than it actually did do. I am not at all disparaging what they did do -- it's not that -- and of course I agree entirely with the tremendous difficulties involved. But, having lived in the exile milieu, seeing that the exiles were doing, knowing what the exiles were doing and ~~xxxx~~ sometimes realising, for myself, in my own life, what a corruption exile is, because you adapt ~~the~~ to the society where you find yourself, you ~~find~~ adapt to the situation you find yourself in, the sharp edge of struggle becomes blunted.

You become a diplomat, you become an international travelling salesman, as it were and the motivation is no longer as strong. Perhaps I was putting question marks over the ANC which were not necessarily justified. Still, I think that we could have diversified the actions of the ANC inside the country. I think certain wrong decisions were made at certain points, there was too much reliance on the external mission, not enough being done inside the country itself, which history will show.

We are talking about a period -- let's underline that -- which, again, has been bypassed now.

JF: Just to follow up on that critique, what if someone were to say the fact that with your noble efforts in as much as you were working and had the goals that you did, that that failed so quickly and had no success, would just show how very difficult it would be to rectify the critique you were making of the ANC. Did you at all feel like, after you got caught and when it all got exposed, that this was one of the reasons why the ANC hadn't made/much ^{as} progress, because it wasn't that easy .. ?

BB: Yes. I would say the failure of the things that I was involved in could be ascribed to many reasons -- one would be, yes, the difficulty of the situation itself, which is why the ANC hadn't done more along those lines, certainly. Secondly would be my own way of going about it and perhaps the people I was working with. We were not distant enough, *disciplined?* we were perhaps not even humble enough to do it properly. Another reason, I think, and it's an important one, the things we were trying to do did not, in fact, reflect strongly enough, or ~~at~~ at least a need felt by enough white people inside the country to justify its coming about.

We...I think even if it had been done by someone else who was more disciplined, going about it in a much more intelligent way, I still don't think it would have been much more of a success because I don't really think ultimately that there were enough whites in the country young activists ready for that type of activity. Perhaps they were achieving more by doing things their way, in an open way, through student organisations or through their links to trade unions particularly, than Okhela type activity could have brought about. Certainly...we were over estimating the need for such a type of work. It didn't ~~ir~~respond really to a wish existing inside.

BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

JF: So that's interesting. You came with ideas, but did you also learn from the people you spoke to that those ideas needed to be critiqued? What did people say to you? I'm interested in talking theoretically, you don't have to give names, but some anecdotal material you could give...what was the reaction...thanks, you've come to save us?? or... look, we're doing things on our own? or what?

BB: There was a great wariness of course, because we are now talking against a background of long years, decades of disruption, of opposition activity, of spying, of infiltration, of the security police torturing people, of the whole panoply of repressive laws at their disposal that make all kinds of political opposition extremely dangerous. So that was the first reaction. Hey, who's this? what's this? What the hell are you trying to drag me into? After all I'm the one here on the ground, I'm the one who's going to have to go to prison, not you guys sitting out there in Paris or London or Amsterdam or New York.

150? So there's that, there's also a kind of buddishness, why the hell should we get involved in something which is being thought out for us from outside. After all we have our own reality. We've been working along quietly in our own way. We've been building up and we've got a body of thinking behind us. That I found very healthy and I was...my argument within the organisation at that time was very strongly that we should let the thinking come from within.

We should revert to what we were originally supposed to be, supporting what people need from outside, but in terms of their own needs, their own thinking, from inside. And we wanted very much the decision making centres to be shifted, to be coming from inside the country. We wanted very much to react to what people wanted us to do. But...so those were their reactions. They were wary of being manipulated. There's this curious tradition in white politics, probably in black too, but certainly in white, inside the country, you sort of work together with other people but you never really probe deeply into the ^{real} links or into the real motives of people. For security reasons, you assume that you all work for the same purpose, the enemy is so clearly defined as it were, apartheid, and oppression, and power monopoly

...capitalism, call it what you want. You assume that you're all on the same wave length. This is one of the weaknesses. Shying away from any formal organisations, because formal organisations get knocked over the head so rapidly. That there's a kind of lying low, merging with the landscape, working through front organisations such as student bodies and things like that. Without necessarily wanting to regroup behind that into something more cohesive that could be detected and infiltrated and therefore would be a source of danger.

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BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

BB: ...So there was a great wariness. I sensed that and I sensed a kind of rejection of why the hell should the thing come from outside. Why don't people react to what we want from inside?

JF: OK...some of the other critiques of it, did you feel it was a more individualistic point of view? I'm just thinking of you as a writer and an artist, so much of your personal and professional expression has been on an individual level. Rather than any kind of mass or organised...and certainly not taking any kind of leadership. You even spoke about your family tradition of rebelliousness. Do you think that ...again it's all in retrospect, is an element of what Okhela had been about, that in many ways it was a more individual approach, and do you in any way critique that now?

BB: True...one of the temptations of that type of underground organisation is of course that it is small, and that you become in your own mind very much a free agent, because you're not a mass organisation, I mean by definition, if you're a clandestine organisation, you're not a mass organisation. And although I very much support this idea of being led by mass feeling, of a power route really being given to the people, and of respecting workers' petitions and workers' ^{political} organisations, I know that in my own private way of going about it it was very individualistic, certainly. And I think you're correct ...it can be ascribed to my own particular makeup, and history...

...my own concerns. I'm, constitutionally, I think very reluctant to find myself in any form of orthodoxy. Even now I justify it to myself and say that if I have any kind of ^{positive} role to play it can be as a kind of renegade, as a kind of peripheral manifestation of alternative thinking. And perhaps being a bit unsettling. But of course there are limits to this. When you are working in an organisation this is not the kind of thing you should be doing.

I'm very afraid of the stultifying of thinking. Of perception, of the blunting of understanding. And I think as a writer, as somebody who through my work is essentially concerned with the nature of consciousness, the nature of awareness, and steering away from dogma, from clichés, which can so easily be manipulated by people who don't reveal to you what their real intentions are.

All of these attitudes must rub off on my activities, yes, on my life. But, yes, ~~the~~ critique would be that, given that then, this is something, we are now moving one step further, and are beyond the Okhela stage, now. That we define to some extent what I try to do now ...the realisation that I cannot do so within any organised form.

BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

BB:...I cannot be accepted in an organisation doing things like this, obviously. It's a source of insecurity to other people, even of danger. So obviously I'm not the sort of person who should be involved in organised forms of protest. At least not when it is discreet or underground, or whatever you want to call it.

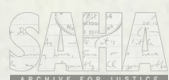
JF: So is that the lesson you took from Okhela? I mean would you at all have ...because so many people I interviewed, especially inside SA, spoke about going through stages when they had a very romantic notion of the struggle and felt that they kind of over emphasised their role...very candidly spoke about their mistakes, seeing it as a very romantic stage. I want to make it clear, what you're saying is the mistake of Okhela?

Would you say it was a mistake in terms of BB trying to work organisationally, or would you say it had to do with the mistake of taking an individual approach and not being more sober about things?

BB: It's a bit of both. If we'd been successful with Okhela at that time...if I'd been successful, within Okhela, had it gone further without being detected, and had we recruited more people, and had we corresponded more closely with what was happening inside, and had we shifted our locus of decision making to inside the country, etc, even then I would have out lived my own function, my own usefulness within a fairly short period. Because I think I would have felt restrained. Yes to that extent it was romantic. But I don't think that is necessarily a bad or negative motive,

Because after all we mustn't forget that however deeply we are involved in the mass struggle, and however deeply we are involved theoretically, in other words, it's a cast of mind which is important to us. But we are still, beyond that, individuals. We are also defining and finding ourselves through that process. Which is also continuing struggle. I think that is true for anybody., wherever he is, white, black, ANC, non-ANC or not.

So I think that in itself is a kind of romanticism, if you want to call it that. The kind of a self search which I don't think should be undervalued or under-played. That is not foremost, of course. One is not involved in that kind of thing out of a need to glorify, or find or shape yourself. But I don't think one should lose sight of the fact that it's also part of the process.



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

JF: Okhela, you said that there were black ANC people who were involved with it...was it any white ANC people?

BB: No...

JF: Was it white S.Africans?

BB: Yes...

JF: Ones who, again did not hold to the ANC?

BB: No, but who'd also been like myself, more or less involved with anti apartheid and ANC activities. Or activities directed by the ANC.

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JF: One thing I'd like to let you talk about, that you said you'd like to come back to was The retrospective view of the Sestigers. You seemed to have a lot of criticisms in retrospect. Tell me about that.

BB: No, it's just ..I feel...or we felt, during the 60's because we were attracting so much attention, by the media for our views. You know, we were fighting against some taboos. We were fighting against the idea of taboos as such, some were sexual, because people were writing far more openly about sex. Some was entirely just the way society perceives people of other ethnic groups. In other words we're talking about multi racial sex and things like that.

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BB: Some of it was also political, because casting a role for the writer which was one of contestation of authority and the establishment. These themes reflected differently by the various people involved, who were grouped rather arbitrarily as the Sestigers. But they were reflected by these people. And we were attracting so much attention because of this, as a kind of revolt from the young Afrikaner against their own people.

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Particularly the English media were giving so much prominence to this, that we thought we were doing something important. In retrospect I think it can be seen that it was not all that important at all. Because at the time we were doing this, and the media were going on about how we were bucking the establishment, a lot of other people were suffering far worse. In fact the black writers, the whole so calledgeneration, people like Can Themba, Casey Motala, Nat Nakasa, it was because all of them were exiles, and their works were banned entirely. After all our works were not being banned. We were a classical case of showing how a repressive society can become more flexible by allowing the rebellion from within which...

BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

....ultimately strengthens that society, it doesn't really question society. It doesn't really go in the direction of dismantling the power structures of that society. It teaches that society how to accommodate contestation from within. In some horrible, obscene way one could say in retrospect that this kind of contestation made the power structure more flexible and therefore tougher.

And this is part of the thing which is confusing the situation inside the country now. They've become far more relaxed about censorship for instance. They've learnt that they can let people express themselves and that it doesn't really change things all that much. And one of the results of that now I think, is the irrelevance now of the white Afrikaner intellectual, in the long run. Or the Afrikaans writer. He is no longer of very much importance in the country. It doesn't matter what he writes about.

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? I think that those who really know what power is about, who really have the power, have learnt not to be uptight about it. And in a sense, it was the Sestigers who taught them that. We were the tool, that made this possible, that made the suppleness as it were, made it possible for them to achieve. Of course this is something which is very much contested by other S.

? I never considered myself as S. because I always felt we were not doing enough. It was too much of a romantic rebellion and not enough of a real political contestation. I still go along to some extent with the ~~idea~~ that it is tactically possible and maybe useful to work within your own community without revealing the ultimate aims of what you're working for. To as it were blow up your own society from within. But I still agree with that to some extent, but I've become more sceptical about it because I think that one underestimates the dialectic of the powers ...let's put it this way, the society within which you work also rubbing off on you. If you work long enough thinking that you're working for change without necessarily being clear about it, you ultimately start accepting as permanent fixtures the restrictions which you impose upon yourself, and you don't go beyond a certain point.

It's a difficult idea perhaps to bring across and I might have to think about it more clearly, but what I'm saying is that contestation by the writers, ^{white} questioning by the writers has become an accepted feature of the SA landscape. And in fact has no more effect at all. And in fact perhaps the writers don't want it to be any different.



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

BB: They are quite...they get the necessary kick, in the sense of selfness, of self awareness, out of having rubbed society up the wrong way for some time. And having been recognised there fore, and perhaps they don't really want to change things. Perhaps it is true after all that is really no effective contestation coming from within the white community, not really so, not in any large way.

JF: I don't know whether the problem is that it comes from within the white community or without, This is putting it to you as my view, but the form it would take, and what's being ad vocated, I mean if ultimately all that's being discussed is race relations, and the government can get the jump on you, and... change the Immorality Act because it doesn't make any difference anyway...I think then the reality would be...I'd like you to comment on this...the reality would be in terms of how far the S. took it. Whether they would be saying arms struggle is ever on the agenda.

BB: Of course yes...and this is what I was trying to say to you a second ago. That my criticism even at that time was that we weren't going far or fast enough, that we weren't political enough, we weren't thinking through the political implications. You know there is a tradition about contestation generally speaking, I think we can even give it a certain percentage. At any given time you have up to 30% of the white population who are in disagreement with the government's policies.

Probably fairly honestly and actively so. It's always been there and it's never changed anything particularly. I don't think it's nudged things in the right direction, and in the Afrikaner community, that the writers, probably since the late 50's were in opposition, quite openly so, to the power establishment. but they never conceived for one moment going beyond the model questioning of the values of society.

In other words....now I'm interpreting a hell of a lot, I'm generalising a lot, ...what they ultimately...I'm interpreting general thinking because obviously none of them would agree specifically with what i'm saying, but in fact they never could conceive of being just a white Afrikaans speaking S.African which would mean to be part of a minority group with its own culture, but that that culture would probably merge with other cultures eventually, and that probably your Afrikanerness would probably eventually disappear.

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So much of what's happening at this particular moment, still, through an organisation like the Afrikaans..... is aimed at the preservation of Afrikaans.

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BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

BB:...and that ultimately must be the strengthening of the underlying ideology of those who are in power. ~~z~~ The separatenessultimately what those in power are concerned about, is not the differnec of the black but their own ~~ff~~ifference. Their own separateness, and they want to preserve that at all costs. Therefore they must be involved in preserving the identifying aspects of that difference. Of that differentness. So, the language...this is something that even I get accused of sometimes, abroad, which is a silly argument.

But it's also an interesting one. How can you come and, being an Afrikaans writer, and talk to us, as has happened to me lately in various countries, about the situation back home, about the trouble, about the armed struggle and so on, you're doing so and we cannot forget that you're an Afrikaans writer. And that you express these ideas in Afrikaans also. What you are in fact doing is confusing the people abroad. You are giving them a message, without necessarily saying so that ~~the~~ Afrikaansers can still be quite different among themselves.

You humanise the face of the enemy in other words. You are demobilising the opposition ~~to~~ the enemy by making ~~it~~...giving the enemy such a human face. Which is an interesting argument. Interesting to me in that ...I'm jumping now onto something completely different....

This for me is something of major ~~importance~~, that's emerging slowly, painfully from the S.African situation, is that, given the complexity of the problems, the cultural complexities also, the complexities of awareness, in thinking, the modes of action and resistance that we have to think through, that are being tried...and the long history that already exists, and all the fuck ups including my own, ...taking all this together, I think there's emerging a very complex perception, which is to my mind a step forward in human thinking.

We have a real contribution to make. Our problems are not simple. I think we have a real contribution to make even beyond our borders as it were. Because of this peculiar nature of our ~~d~~ structure. And of other tensions in the country. And this is one of it. Why can we not come to the point where the enemy would have a very human face also? We can go along those lines if you want to.

JF:OK. ...there are so many other things I want to ask you though...what I'm most interested in is when ~~did~~ you come to that realisation? that the S.and even your own opposition could in fact support the government in a certain convoluted way?

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BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE.

BB: Well...yes...I'm at themoment putting together a volume of essays called "Endpapers" which groups some of the things I wrote before going to prison and everything I've been doing since coming out of prison. And having reread that I see now that some of it was subconsciously present...some of this thinking was present from very early on, I remember coming back to a quote from Camus where he says that some forms of resistance can be de scribed as collaboration.

I think it's because all the way through...and this is specific to me perhaps...all the way through in my own poliycal thinking if you can call it that, and the translation of this thinking into forms of action, there was this one given element of being an Afrikans writer. In other words, what is the nature of my Afrikanerness, and I rejected that fairly warly on. I could not agree to being an Afrikaner in any accepted definition of that term.

Because obviously if you're going to say it's only a matter of language, then it cannot be white only. If you say it's a matter of certain political beliefs, including religious beliefs, then I didagree with those so violently that I couldn't condider myself an Afrikaner. But i couldn't stop being an Afrikaner myself...not that there's a deep urge in me to be one, it is a condition, it is that.

I mean, I express myself through that bloody language, and I find it a beautiful language to use, and I know it's been used by many other people. And it is not at all the possession of those who think they control the language, it's becoming something else, even while we're talking about it. So, intimately, all the time, the relationship between the individual, his own peer group, and the implications then of what he does in opposition to that peer group,is it a strengthening of at? or is it a weakening of it?...is permanently present. But it's something which has lately become more clear to me, yes.

and Side One

SIDE TWO

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JF: I didn't press you on this aspect...but in terms of the kind of language you're using, it's very much theory, or in a vaccuum. You haven't spoken much about incidents. I'm just wondering if there was any experience which made you feel this strongly. Or if there were views or feelings you came to feel in prison, or maybe at any junctures.

BB: yes, well, ...I...this is again a theoretical statement. I don't think one ever thinks through one's contradictions. You don't resolve the contradictions theoretically. You can only live them. And you have to live them fairly painfully because you cannot brush the....dissolution or the resolving of thosecontra- dictions.

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BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

BB:....Right...part of my contradictions would be for instance my family. I've got a brother who is a senior member of the SA defence forces. Now obviously this is something I have to live with. This is certainly...within the family unit , at one and the same time, the violent opposition with all the implications, knowing what they may be, knowing that if he's been given the order to kill me he probably will do so.

And yet at the same time there's a family link there, a link between siblings which is extremely strong. So it is concretely for me reflected in the type of confrontations I had with the Security police. Being interrogated in Afrikaans, for instance. With the complicity that that immediately implies. And sensing sometimes from them that for a few split seconds they forget what they are supposed to be doing too, because we are talking in the language which is by definition a complicity in the SA context.

~~XXXX~~ And talking about subjects which again imply some kind of complicity, an interest in sport for instance; a guy suddenly going off ^{typically} talking to me about the beauty of the Karoo landscape, a security policeman, which would ~~dit~~ be something I could identify with profoundly. And you know when peoplespeak to one another there's so much that happens below the words, or around the words ...a sense of sharing things. There's always this, the break and the share. They don't, I think, for them, see me as an opponent, they see me as a traitor.

Which gives it a peculiar colour. If they had a black activist in their hands, he's an opponent. He cannot possibly be a traitor. They would do the same thing if they were black. If they have an English speaking white, I think they don't take him to be a traitor either. They can justify or understand his being in opposition through many other reasons. He's probably of Jewish descent, therefore he's, as far as they are concerned, genetically against them, or ...you know all the justifications...then even the Boer War would come in...all the rest of it. It's the class distinctions. He's a rich bloody Englishman. He's a spoilt city brat. He's gone to university. He's a cosmopolitan .He's been exposed to international ideas.

He's not one of us. We grew up the hard way in a small town. On a farm, whatever the case may be. But in my case no. It is really being a traitor from within. And sensing this from them also gives me a peculiar relationship to them. All these are concrete contradictions now that I'm talking about. Living through them. The same thing happened in prison of course all the time. Living in close proximity to the warders who are Afrikaans speakers themselves. Understanding them, and being fascinated by them often.

BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

BB: Understanding them to some extent, and being fascinated by their backgrounds, from a writer's point of view....how the hell do they come to be warders? where do they come from?? listening to them talking, leading them on as it were, to talk about their youth on farms, growing up with horses, things like that....all of this part of my sub conscious, a sub strata, the cultural awareness, the cultural wealth that one shares. So, when I talk of opposition from within, the possibility of doing so, the possibility of transformation from within, the need to continually strengthen the forces for change wherever you see them manifest themselves from within, but ^{being} intensely aware of the danger that you expose yourself to, in that you may be captured by them...

...you may not be effective in dismantling them, but they may be effective in incorporating you. In other words having to keep a very close watch on yourself all the time, which means having to keep a very close watch on your own thinking all the time, because thinking is basically a very dishonest process..

You run away from yourself through your thinking, having to define yourself again and again. These things, by nature and by experience, made me more aware of the pitfalls, more aware of the nature of structures as it were. Of the oppressive structure, there is a kind of a blind force that sucks you in to this kind of thing. Where then do you situate yourself?

And when you break away to try and break that structure, how effective can you remain? If you've broken away. It's also that. It's a matter of sheer realism. You must remain inside to some extent if you want to be effective. That again leads us back to the other question. Can you, thinking all that, what shape do you give your political actions, and how can you make it merge with the political action of other people?

JF: You said that was a quote from Camus, about resistance?

BB: Yes...obviously I've transformed it a little bit...but yes, it is from Camus.

JF: You don't remember the exact ~~quote~~ quote?

BB: The exact quote, no. I've used ~~it~~ somewhere in my writings, but I don't remember the exact quote. *But that's in essence what it comes down to.*

JF: Do you see that brother who's in the SADF? Have you seen him?

BB: Not since I've been released from prison, no.

JF: But you saw him when you were released?

BB: No, I didn't see him then either. He came to visit me once or twice in prison.

BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

BB: ...but I haven't seen him since prison. Not at all.

JF: How do you feel about whether there's hope for moving the white community and the Afrikaans community? Those who say ^{It's really hopeless} just concentrate on the black working class, the rest will cope when they have to, they'll adapt or die, as P.W. says. Others say it's very important to work with them and they point to various few people. What do you think?

BB: I don't know what the other people you interviewed said, but I don't see a major role for the white people at all, in the transformation process. Not significantly so. despite the very best intentions and examples, despite the wonderful bravery and the individual sacrifices made by individual whites, right up to this time. I'm including those who are in the ANC.

WE are a marginal phenomena. We do not represent in any way a significant minority of whites, in that country at all. I don't think we should fool ourselves about that. The white community would have been of some relevance in the change that is taking place had we by now, say between 2-3 thousand political prisoners in SA jails. This is not the case, we've never had more than 15 at a time.

And that to my mind sums up the be all and end all of the significance. I'm not denigrating, in ANY sense the fantastic work that's been going on say at trade union level, which is an important part, or even within the churches, which is another important sector. or at student level, which is another very important sector. But I don't think we should be unrealistic and overestimate the potential importance of that. I think there are changes, there are shifts within the white community itself, I think that despite the very best efforts of those who are in power they've unleashed a momentum ...maybe not for change, but for them, for the whites, a momentum for insecurity, which will have surprising results in due time.

And if this ...a part of this surprising results would be changes in affiliation or perception of the white role, say among the white working class, or a significant enough sector of the white intelligentsia, this may happen. I personally don't think it's on the cards at all. I'm not saying that the white community as such will be marginal, but I don't think that change...

For me there are three essential points of reference. One would be that there is no way that the black community, the black majority, the majority of people in SA can accept the continuation of things as they are. In other words, change must come. It is coming.



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

BB: It's taking place right there at the moment. It's taking place all the time. It's a process. It has nothing to do with historical determinism. It's a law of nature. There's no way that things cannot be transformed, that things cannot change. That's point number one.

Point number two, which is of another order. The whites who are in that country, however conservative they may be, or extremist, are Africans. In other words, the solution that may come about, whether they themselves actively partake of it or not, will have to include them in some form. What's going to happen to them?

They are African after all. They cannot be seen, theoretically, as functionally, ^{as} outsiders to the situation. The impetus for change, even culturally, comes from the black world, not from the white world. It's not the whites who are going to change the situation. They...

in views

JF: Does this represent a difference ^{in views} from the Okhela days? Or is it at how you felt...

BB: I don't know...yes and no...I don't know...I don't really think it's all that different...I ...because having said all this, having been so pessimistic about the potential for change within the white community, ever being more than a small group of ^{from} individuals, organised or not, because this is really what it is at the moment, and this is certainly what it must have been like in Rhodesia as it was at that time. Having said all that I don't think it disposes of the necessity for the whites who feel like that to keep on trying to find ways to be effectively working for the transformation which includes organising themselves...

...which perhaps includes again things like Okhela. Obviously it will not be something similar, but ...no...the fact of it having been a failure doesn't mean they mustn't keep on trying.

JF: OK...just trying to clear up some loose ends here...Okhela.. what does it mean exactly? what language is that?

BB: It's Zulu for "making a fire", starting a fire.

JF: Is it the verb for starting a fire, ~~xxxxxxx~~?

BB: yes, with my very limited Zulu, one could perhaps translate it with "spark"...which takes it right back to the old Bolshevik days...

JF: ...and your works...the Albino terrorist book...why did you call it that?



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

BB: Well you'd have to take the whole title into account I think; it's rather laborious word play. The true confessions of an albino terrorist. Obviously I don't consider myself an albino, nor a terrorist. And as Andre Brink pointed out, rather rudely, I think, does this mean that these confessions are not true either? No, I wouldn't say that, but nobody can ever come to the truth entirely through words or confessions. I don't think so. It's always a haphazard approach. It's always an approach, it's never an end. We're right back to everything we've been talking about this morning. Even the whole political process is an approach. It's not an end.

JF: Did you write it in English only? Not in Afrikaans?

BB: No, but a lot of the material that went into it probably germinated at the Afrikaans level. To the extent that after all I've been writing for many years, for too many years by now, and that becomes a practice too. And you translate in writing in your own mind before it even gets down to the paper. And a lot of that was probably translated into Afrikaans in my own mind.

JF: Did you at a certain point start publishing in Afrikaans, or does this just happen to be in Afrikaans? I don't remember your previous ...did you...

BB: Do you mean parts of the book?

JF: no...over your history of writing...when you were involved, did you specifically want yourself to appear inside SA even though you were outside the country. And in Afrikaans?

BB: Yes, and in Afrikaans, although I never shared, and I still don't, thank God for small mercies, any sense of Afrikaner nationalism, even linguistically so. For me Afrikaans is a very beautiful tool, and I watch it with great interest to see how it's moving...I mean you hear ...into areas...I was in Lusaka yesterday, sitting in the Pamonsi hotel lounge, listening to two black guys speaking Afrikaans among themselves, or a form of Afrikaans. I don't know whether they were S.Africans, or Zambians who'd worked in SA, or whatever. So that's great. It's a creole language. It'll keep on being bastardised, and being mixed and developing, fine.

So I had.. would have had no qualms about being published in English rather than Afrikaans, but of course to the extent that if I could have had some ^{form} of function, it ~~would~~ would also, have been as an Afrikaans writer, writing in Afrikaans, and that's it.

JF: That was during the 60's. Did you change?

291? BB: Even more so now. The first book I published after coming out of prison was called "Mouvoir" (?) and was written in prison, and that was written partly in Afrikaans and partly in English, and the SA edition is published as written...in other words...

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BB: ...I ~~insists~~ insisted that even though I publish with people who essentially only publish Afrikaans writers, although they are a borderline publishing house, Taurus, John Miles and.....(?) but I asked them, and they immediately agreed to publish it as it is. In other words, half of it in English and half of it in Afrikaans. But I think this is a very artificial distinction.

By now, most of the people who read my work would read as easily in Afrikaans as in English. And I see no reason why not to use both of them.

JF: But you didn't write an Afrikaans version of True Confessions..?

BB: No, because at that point I didn't think there was any chance at all of it being published in SA.

JF: And who did it, Taurus again?

BB: Yes, they did it.

JF: Are you surprised that they did it?

BB: Very much so indeed. We had last week a human rights conference in Paris. Nadine Gordimer submitted a paper for that in which she analysed the present state of censorship in the country in which she pointed out some of the anomalies such as The Confessions being allowed, and Jeremy Cronin's volume of poems being allowed, some other people's work being unbanned, and then some work which you would never expect to be banned, being banned.

And it's a rather...another bag of worms. Why did they allow Confessions to be published? I have my own ideas about that. BUT I don't think it's particularly important. I think it's rather negatively important, in that it skows again the extent to which we are now spitting in the wind, we.....are kicking in open doors, as I said earlier on. It doesn't really bother them any more.

JF: Would you even go so far as to say that the REgime needs a BB, an incredibly talented, an Afrikaaner that was wayward, that can't be supressed, because to a certain level, it shows, it vindicates, especially the reformist government.

BB: Yes...of course yes, it's a terrible thing that one may become an emblem, a proof of their tolerance, well, I hope not. I hope that one can still surprise them. Besides that doesn't matter. I'll be damned if I'm going to shape my life or my thinking to what they allow, or how they interpret it. That's just bad luck.

This is something again which I think is not unimportant to point out. I don't think we should condemn something out of hand just because it's tolerated by the enemy. That makes you negatively beholden to the enemy, I mean, damn it.

JF: Has your work ever been banned? Have there been any volumes?

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BB: Yes, a volume of poems called "Skrate" (?) which is published in "Skryt"



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

BB: ...Holland, which is banned. It's still banned in the country, and then a volume of translated poems, translated into English, which was published during my period in prison, in London, by Rex Collins, including a few verses from the banned Afrikaans volume, that was seized by the customs officials when it was imported into SA, and it's banned too. "And Death White as words" it was called.

JF: But those were the only two volumes?

BB: Those were the only two.

JF: OK....Why...can you tell me just a bit...I mean I didn't want to ask you a lot of things which you've dealt with in your book... unfortunately I bought the book...I left it...I couldn't bring all the things back, and I didn't think I'd ever see you right away, so I didn't bring it...I'm really upset about that, so I haven't read it...yet I've heard some excerpts from people who have, so I just want to ask you a few things...if this is in the book we can skip it...did you talk about why you got out earlier...can you tell me why that happened? you were sentenced to 9, and you did what, 7?

BB: 7 $\frac{1}{2}$, yes, I talk about that not really in depth in the book. I don't know the full answer myself. Part of it was that the machinery for releasing people earlier were created about that time. In May 1982 the government amended the law that made it possible for the first time for the Minister of Justice to release political prisoners before their full time. Some of the black political prisoners had a few months taken off their sentence, got out a few months earlier, before I was let out, a few people since then have also profited from that,

But of course that is not the real reason. I think that again it's a combination of factors. My wife and the lawyers never gave up, struggling, there were international organisations who were petitioning the government, the French govt, intervening, the Dutch govt. exerting pressure, the French govt. towards the end were intervening quite actively on my behalf.

But I think there was also the perception from within the Afrikaaner ranks themselves. We're back to the same thing. Some of them must have said...in influential positions within the Party I can imagine, and even in government circles, must have said this is doing us more harm ultimately than good, after all what danger can this guy be to us, we can probably gain a lot by letting him go.

JF: OK...another thing, I don't know whether it's dealt with much in the book, but if you could tell me just briefly, ...

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JF:...You said very adamantly that you had no regrets. Yet at the trial when you were first tried you did make the apology. Now why was that?

BB:Yes. I think you should read that statement completely. I tried to perhaps indicate ^{briefly} how I came to believe, or hold the beliefs that I ^{do} hold, I tried also to indicate, perhaps not strongly enough, why I continued holding these beliefs, what I apologised for...or at least what I didn't apologise for but what I denounced to some extent was the particular form that some of my resistance took, or that my beliefs took. And then under strong pressure of the security police I apologised for one thing in particular, which was a poem I had dedicated to Vorster, called "Butcher".

...or "Letter to Butcher from abroad" in which I made a kind of a symbol of Vorster as the torturer, the man killing people. Well I can justify it in my own mind by saying however much of a bastard he ~~is~~ was, and he was, definitely, it is still unfair perhaps to isolate one man. It didn't hurt me, in my own personal beliefs to be apologising for that, because after all it's a bit propagandistic, and I'm structurally or functionally against propaganda.

As a writer, it's an empty process. So OK, I tried to put that one in perspective, it didn't do me much good. But I think the trial is perhaps ~~we~~ something we'll have to talk about more broadly in another context. And part of the contradictions of the trial reflect the contradictory situation I found myself in. Being caught and not being able to represent anybody at all. Not being able to speak on behalf of any political organisation at all.

Particularly not the ANC, because as I indicated to you before, something which I know more clearly looking back on it than I knew before, that in fact I was involved with elements within the ANC which did not necessarily reflect the authority or the wishes of the ANC as a whole. So here I was caught with my hand in the piggy bank as it were, but I could not say that it was daddy who sent me in to do the stealing.

Because daddy would have to disavow me entirely. That perhaps describes, or makes it a little bit easier to understand why I took a certain stand at the trial. But that I do talk about in the book, so maybe you'll have to read that.

JF:I'm just interested in, since you haven't been an ANC person, what your feelings were about other white opposition members, other white manifestations of opposition, for example do you ~~first~~ remember when you first heard the name Braum Fisher?



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

BB: Yes, of course. Bram Fisher to me has always been a source of immense pride, for what he's done, and for having been who he was, his fortitude, you know...there's just no two ways about it. He's a hero. When did I first hear about Bram Fisher? It must have been when I was already abroad I think, at the time of his trials. Perhaps I could have heard about him as a defence trial lawyer when I was already inside the country, but that would be unlikely.

JF: When you came out did you see the ANC? Have you spoken at length with them?

BB: No, I have not. That would be one of my regrets. It's something which I should have done. It's a pity that not one of the ANC has tried to talk to me about it, because I would have thought that it would be of interest for them to know. After all when you're being interrogated by Bureau of State security, or the security police, in what they ask you also learn a lot of what they know, and I thought that could have been of interest to the comrades.

And I was surprised that nobody tried to debrief me in a sense. Even if...I can quite understand why they wouldn't want to touch me with a barge pole, but I thought that strictly from a professional point of view, it would have been of interest for somebody to actually find out what really happened, what really went on. No, it has not been, but you'll also see in the book that I criticised the ANC for some things, a bit brutally so, a bit simplistically so, and I accept the argument that I have heard sometimes used against me that in criticising the ANC I am probably playing into the hands of the enemy,

I accept it to some extent but not completely so. Underneath that there's for me something important. Even in exile, even in opposition, even at this crucial point, of the struggle, we must for the sake of the quality of the struggle keep the dialogue...even if it is sometimes bitter, we must keep it open. We mustn't be simplistic. Again I'm narrowing it down to something perhaps that I can be involved in, and perhaps it's a very personal and egoistic way to look at it. But I do think, that we owe it to the quality of our struggle to bring the differences to the surface.

And to talk these things out, to thrash them out as much as we ~~may~~ can and if we believe that a party has taken the wrong turning, or that a movement has become too authoritarian, or that alternative opinions are being suppressed in the name of unity, if we believe there should be far greater unity among the opposition groups, that we should have a common front, or something, we should talk about it. I feel, perhaps, not being a member now, free to bring these out in the open.

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BB: ...to serve as a kind of a lightning conductor, and in the ...if in the process one treads on toes and one makes wrong statements, because of being ill informed, not knowing what's goig on inside the organisation, such as underestimating the importance of whites in the opposition, or even if in the process one is feeding thoughts...not thoughts, but feeding arguments to the enemy, I think these are part of the risks. It makes it a little bit uncomfortable for oneself, but I think this as something I've got to try to keep on doing.

But now..... END TAPE TWO

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BB: .. BUT I think that I Want to make it cery clear that my implicit support for the ANC is still very much there.. Even at the very rational level of saying ~~that~~ when I get the chance to, the ANC represents the majority of the Suth African people. To my mind that is an article of faith. In other words, when you talk of the majority coming to power, when you talk of changes reflecting the wishes of the majority, you are talking of the African National Congress. That why it is, for me, so important to keep on talking to the ANC and even, if possible, within the ANC because because it is THE mother of change. That is why for me it must be the best possible mother.

JF: So you haven't even spoken to someone like Marius Schoon since you came out & ?

BB: No, of course I've spoken to individual members of the ANC. I haven't been in any official contact with the ANC. And even that is not entirely true. I mean, a few days ago I talked to people of the office in Lusaka. Yes, no, of course, and I think the ANC is quite well aware of what I am doing and I ^{felt} ~~think~~ it is very important to report to them what we have been doing last week in Paris at this human rights conference and the extent to which we were successful in getting the French Government to change their mind about their policy to South Africa. I think it is important for the ANC to know about this and to take advantage of this.

JF. How did the French change their mind ?

BB: Well, the French Government for the first time announced its willingness to consider economic sanctions, which is a major change. And upgrading the ANC office in Paris. No, at least from my side, there is no animosity involved and I hope ~~that~~ from the ANC's side -- to the extent that such a vast organisation can be given a single identity -- I don't think there's that ~~right~~ either.

JF: And since, you know, you said you's shared a flat with Marius Schoon, have you spoken at all to him ?

BB: I've been in correspondence with him when we were in prison the last few months before he was released ..

JF: How could you be in correspondence with him ?

BB. Well, we were smuggling letters back and forth and some of those letters were intercepted and used during my second trial (as evidence) when I was accused of terrorism all over again.



Breyton Bretonbach, Tane Three Side One:

B B... I've been in indirect contact with him since, that is through third persons, but I have'nt seen him directly, no. That's mainly because he's been in Africa and I've been in Europe, now I'm in Africa and he's in Europe -- or wherever he is at the moment,

JF. Ok, so what has been your role since you were in prison? You came out a year a a half earlier, maybe you didn't have enough time to consider what you'd get right into. What is your role, what are you doing ?

BB: Well, all of these things we've been talking about -- struggling through the contradictions, trying to make some sense out of it for myself and again and again trying to define the South African situation, trying to interpret the South Africa situation to the outside world, intervening whenever I find the possibility to do so and whenever I'm invited to do so in international congresses or conferences, particularly where it concerns human rights.

But also intervening with the French authorities on any matters concerning South Africa, trying to work out, for instance with the French authorities, or with individuals within the French establishment more effective ways of supporting the opposition, of supporting the liberations movements, of supporting Black students, of getting out Black musicians to come and be in some security or to come and show people what they are doing in France. At all levels, whenever I get the chance to speak about South Africa, either publicly or privately, to speak about South Africa, to write about South Africa.

I've done articles for a whole lot of French publications, some English publications, some Dutch publications. In other words, all the time repeating to people that I'm not mandated to speak on anybody's behalf, that I have a peculiar history, that all of that must be taken into account, but we are talking about a dramatic situation that is changing all the time, and that I keep on trying to interpret it and understand it and alert people abroad to the implications of what's happening down there. And of course, maintaining some marginal contact with people inside the country also, but much less so than before. I published several volumes of poems which I wrote in prison -- they've been published since inside South Africa.

I've done a few articles for publications inside South Africa. But I no longer have any functional contact with any group, any organisation in South Africa -- I'm talking about the Whites now, inside the country.

JF. And what I did'nt ask you, just in terms of a few loose ends here, was, you were'nt kept with other White political prisoners ?

BB. No, I was not kept with other White political prisoners. I was isolated for the first two years and I was one day taken down to 'local' where other Whites were kept. I thought finally I was going to be allowed to be with the other White prisoners



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE.

BB: ...I was there for a few hours and whisked back again to maximum security. I never worked out why that happened. And then I was sent down to Capetown. So I was always kept apart from the other ~~xx~~ criminals...from the white supposedly criminal prisoners but in fact in the same building that they were. So I spent my time there. I regret it in one way, that I didn't spend my time with the other white politicals, and in some ways I'm not sorry about it. I regret it obviously it would have been fascinating to get to know...and to be...and to show in that way my basic solidarity with them.

They were good chess players I understand. For instance there were obviously fascinating discussions going on amongst those people, but that I missed very much. But on the other hand I think it opened my eyes to a world of petty crime but which is also the ~~xx~~ bedrock of white society in that country, in some ways. After all the people coming and leaving prison for theft, rape, murder etc, are fascinating people.

If you want to call it that, in the old ^{traditional} Communist mould, I think that one should be as close as possible to the people, whom finally it's all about.

JF: So you didn't in any way not want to be with them?

BB: No, it's a rumour that went around that I didn't want to be with the political prisoners. Of ~~xx~~ course not. That would be ridiculous.

JF: So you were with them for that half day or whatever. Did you speak to them at that time?

193? BB: Of course yes. I was booked in and I was taken around, and I found my mission(?) there and I was given my new set of clothes. I had my hair cut by Kitzen(?) I think, and before lunch I was whisked out again. And never any explanation of why this happened. 194? Maybe because they realised that with Mumbaris...(?) I could ~~xx~~ speak French that they couldn't follow, and that may have been a difficulty...or maybe somebody screwed up, and I was never supposed to have gone there at all, or...I don't know why or how.

203? JF: Have you spoken to Mumbara(?) since you came out?

BB: Yes I've spoken to him.

JF: Is he related to the ANC still?

BB: I should imagine so, but I didn't ask him about that. But I'm sure he is.

JF: And when is Endpapers coming out?

BB: Hopefully in Spring. American spring. You know it takes a bit of time. It's coming out first in French, strangely enough. And in Dutch, because the English language publications are always much slower.



BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE.

JF: So which publisher can I look for to get it?

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BB: Farrar & Trass(?) in the USA. Faber and Faber in Britain.

JF: And which would be first?

BB: Probably Britain. I should imagine because it normally works that way.

JF: OK...so how would you ultimately describe yourself? I'm getting a bit confused...would you say you're a Communist still, or are you critical of the Communists?

BB: If one says a Communist in the highly propagandised world in which we live, the word terrorist takes on a specific colouring. Yes I would say my ideals are still very much still Communist. Certainly. I'm not a member of any Communist organisation, so that would perhaps disqualify me, but my ideals are still very much that. I would call myself, if I may say so, with tongue in cheek, a cultural terrorist. Which I think is not necessarily a bad thing to be, Well, I don't know what else to say about that.

JF: And would you go back? Can you go back? Were you put out on an exit...?

BB: No. I cannot...I was allowed to leave the country quite normally. I've since become a French citizen, so I suppose if I wanted to go back now I would have to apply for a visa. And I've no means of knowing how they'll react to that, whether they'll accept me or not.

JF: But will you apply to go back?

BB: No, not for the time being. No I think that would be a very stupid thing to do. I don't know. It's something I haven't resolved in my own mind.

JF: And do you think that when you left...how do you think they were seeing you? Were they angry that they'd been kind of forced by international.....

BB: NO. If I understand you correctly...what would be their attitude to me now...did they regret letting me out? Well to start with, I know that right up to the last minute there was tremendous pressure from some people, senior people in the security police to stop my release at all costs. In fact I was told that they were exerting very strong pressure on the Minister of Justice not to have me released. I think that my release was probably due, as I tried to explain to you earlier on, to the view held in government circles that it was a good move to make, but this was obviously not the opinion of everybody concerned.

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BREYTON BREYTONBACH, TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE.

BB:...I think there is a very strong feeling of animosity from people within the security police, and what's now the department of national security, against me. They told me so, in so many words. As far as they are concerned they'll never change. And I'll always be a bloody thorn in their flesh. And they should have done away with me when they had me. And this is something they sincerely believe, some of them.

And I don't think they'll ever change their minds about that. But I suppose it was a calculated risk. I don't know how they assess it now. Whether they have their bitter....I was told when I was told when they caught me in 75 that they had argued strongly among themselves about whether they should have arrested me in 73 and kept me in the country, and those who said they should have kept me were now quite happy to say, you see, we told you so. We let the bastard go and look what he's done. And I suppose the same thing has happened since then.

But I don't think I'm of any major concern to them. Damn it they've got far more important cats to be whipping than me.

JF: Would you...you spoke about Bram Fisher as someone you would have considered to be a hero of white resistance, or resistance against the government which happened to be white. Is...are there any names more contemporary among the whites that you would say this is a white I admire...?

BB:Yes...when I say admire, it's not necessarily a read I could possibly have followed myself. If I may quote Picasso, or some body talking about him, completely out of context, I suppose the only difference between Bram Fisher and myself, is that Bram Fisher is BF and I am I. I could never have done what he had done, not in a million years. And now similarly yes there are people now you know...I don't know...I admire Beyers Naude a lot. Although I'm not at all religious and I do not agree with what would be the mainspring of his particular line of opposition. I admire people like Ray Suttner, Hugh Lewin for instance, here, and others who have in some way sacrificed part of their lives in the struggle.

I don't at the moment think there's any white person whose thinking I identify with entirely. Of his theoretical conception of the struggle, but that's due to my ignorance, you know, not knowing enough about what people are doing and saying....

JF:OK...I guess I could go on and on....

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(end of recording.)