

- J.F. .... bearing in mind I wouldn't be using this for about a year or two .....
- ... so can you tell me where you were born and when?
- C.D. I was born in Benoni in 1944 .. and, in fact, my father didn't have a house in Benoni because of the fact that he was a Swazi, and we used to be tenants in somebody else's house, and my father was not on the permit of the tenant .....
- he used to be troubled by police every morning - they used to come, and if he was at home they would pick him up, and he was paying £1.10.0 in order for him to be released - so most of the time he did not stay with us.
- J.F. So he should have been supposedly what, - was he from Swaziland .....
- C.D. He was from Swaziland. In fact, he was supposed to have been staying in the hostels, instead of staying in the township.
- J.F. So he actually defied the Migrant Labour ...
- C.D. That's right .....
- J.F. .... and lived with the family.
- ..... but because of the big (?) 14 that he actually didn't stay with you? Where did he stay?
- C.D. He stayed with a friend in the back yard of the whites in town.
- J.F. So you were mainly with your mother, then?
- C.D. That's right ... so we used to be harrassed by police almost every day.
- J.F. What's the township of Benoni?
- C.D. That was at Twatwa.
- J.F. And when did you come to Kwa-Thema?
- C.D. We came here in 1956.
- J.F. Were you removed or did you just .....
- C.D. No. In fact, the Company that my father worked for bought a plant here in Springs and they started their operation here - so they wanted him to come with them, so that he can teach the new employees that they were going to employ -
- so he used them to try and get him a house, and with their influence, the issue of the Reference Book was not important, because they could twist the Administration Board or Urban Councillors - and that's how he got a house here.



- J.F. And what work was he doing?
- C.D. They were doing some electro-plating - plating of steel, silver and ....
- J.F. What kind of job do you call that? Is it skilled labour?
- C.D. No, it's not skilled labour.
- J.F. And your mother - did she work?
- C.D. Well, she used to work as a domestic employee.
- J.F. So when you were growing up, what was your parents' views of whites - did they speak about them as bad people, as oppressors .... or were they deferential?
- C.D. Definitely, they spoke of them as people who were oppressing them -
- ① anti-white  
firstly because my mother was earning very little, and my father, as well, was earning very little, and the job that he was doing at the time was very dangerous, because they worked with acids - chemicals, I would say, and they were feeling bad about that - and for the fact that they couldn't get a house then - that made things worse.
- J.F. And so, when you were growing up, did you feel like you hated whites?
- C.D. Well, I felt like they were a problem. → to page 21
- J.F. And what about the politics of <sup>did</sup> your parents - do they ever discuss politics - do they have any political background?
- C.D. What they were saying - they were supporting the Organisation that was existing then - that it was fighting for the liberation of the people, so they felt it was good, but they were not people who were very involved in politics,
- ②  
but they used to talk about things like being oppressed, and the organisation that was existing was the organisation that could liberate them
- J.F. Did the A.N.C. have much of a presence in the East Rand?
- C.D. That's right - in Benoni it had a very strong influence - they even had their own school, which was called "Africa."
- J.F. The A.N.C. School? Was <sup>it</sup> the anti-Bantu education one) ....
- C.D. Right. That's the one in the '50's.



J.F. Did you go to it?

C.D. No, I didn't - I schooled at Dutch Reform - a school called Dutch Reform.

J.F. Did you know anyone who went to that school?

C.D. Not at this point - I was very young, I must say. I can't remember some of the people who attended that school.

J.F. And did you ever get exposed to some of these people who were in Benoni, like Mary Moodley ... the well-known figures, or was it just the general presence at that time?

C.D. It was the general presence, but I was exposed to people like Noni - there was a guy called Noni - he was deported to Lesotho (?) 051 after the '60's when there was this repression or ... when the A.N.C. was banned.

J.F. .... did they all say "Look, politics will get you in trouble, so keep out."

C.D. No, they never mentioned that.

J.F. Were they Union Members?

C.D. Yes, there was my brother, in fact - my step-brother, I would say, was a Union Member at Amato Textiles, which had a strike, I think in 1957 or 6 .....

and that's the only factory at the time which did have a Union.

J.F. How did he speak about the Union?

C.D. He was also feeling that the presence of the Union has brought them together and they could fight for their wages, because Amato was one of the factories which was paying a very low wage at that time.

J.F. Did you stay in the Springs area your whole life - did you go on to school .....

C.D. Well, I left in 1960 and I went to school in Natal - for two years, and then I came back - in fact, I was fired at school, and I came back.

J.F. You were expelled?

C.D. I was expelled, yes.

J.F. For what?

C.D. Well, for revolting, I would say, against the authorities in school - in fact we were trying to challenge some of the things which we felt were .... some of the practices that we thought to be unfair, by the Superintendent of the school, as well as the Sister in the First Aid.



- J.F. And when you got expelled from school - was that High School - then you matriculated?
- C.D. No, I didn't matriculate - I only went up to Standard 9, which was J.C. at the time.
- J.F. And what did you do after you came back?
- C.D. Well, I got a job with one Company here which was called, at the time Senbra.
- J.F. What kind of work?
- C.D. Well, I was in the stores - in the Dispatch - we were dispatching goods - as a clerk, I would say.
- J.F. Can you tell me what happened next ... just take me up to the present.
- C.D. *(When I first started working)*  
I would say then, *4* at that time, the Unions were not very strong - they were not existing, and we were being shunted around by the bosses, as well as by, what they called Indunas, which were boss-boys, *to p. 10*  
and we were earning very little wages, and I remember, at one stage when I had a problem with the lady that worked in the canteen - and, in fact, that is after the Company had decided that we should get bread free -  
I mean, you got a loaf of bread in the morning - free, and tea. Now, I think this lady had some deal with the Bakery, and she used to get stale bread for the people, and I one day challenged her, and I told her that the Company had decided to give us bread free, but it doesn't mean that we should be given stale bread, and she said I'm cheeky and she 'phoned the General Manager whilst I was standing at the counter, and he came and asked me what was the problem -  
I explained to him that we were being given stale bread here, and that's not acceptable to us ....  
but the feeling of the General Manager was that why should I be the only one who objected to that, when the majority of the workers are not objecting to it -  
I said, "But I think it's my right to object if something is not according to what it's supposed to be."  
So he took me and made a recommendation to one of the authorities that I should be dismissed.  
I gave my case and they mentioned things like .....
- He mentioned this story about Biafra - that people in Biafra would be happy to get this bread, and we should accept it - I said "No, I cannot accept it - I would rather pay money and get fresh bread than to ....."



C.D. .... so that guy felt that they had no reason to dismiss me, so I was told to go back to my work -

and after some time, I resigned and I joined another factory - called Criton (?) 101 and the conditions there were bad .... people there were working with aluminium and zinc, and they were making some car parts,

and they used to be burned by this aluminium - you know, when one would take a spoon in order to get some - I mean for casting, and nobody took heed of that - I remember at one stage, one guy was burned to ashes - I mean he was burned and he went to hospital, and he died -

There was no compensation whatsoever - he wasn't paid for that - I mean his parents couldn't get anything -

so I resigned from that Company and worked for Rank Xerox. In fact in 1973 I worked for Denham Brass, and I joined a Union which was called Engineering and Allied - after the strikes in Durban - so there was this move of people trying to introduce Trade Unions -

there was TVACC in Durban, which started unions like MAWU and Transport and General, and there was Urban Training Project here, where Unions like Engineering came from - Paper and Sweet Food ....

Now, Engineering, at that time was starting to organise, but it wasn't very strong - we became Members of that, but there was no service from the Union whatsoever -

we only got our Membership Cards, and that was all .... In 1974, I resigned from that Company, and joined Rank Xerox.

J.F. What's it called?

C.D. Rank Xerox - that's an American company ... there was no talk of a union there, but, in fact, there was the Liaison and I became the Member of the Liaison Committee,

but it was frustrating, because even if we discussed with the Committee before meeting Management, we would table our demands or points for discussion to Management, but it would be up to Management to decide whether it was prepared to discuss what we've tabled, or it's not prepared

and they would then table what they think should be discussed - you'd end up talking about spoons in the canteen; talking about the green grass - that it should be cut, and that people should be given umbrellas during lunch-time - those kind of stuff -

Well, by then, I was starting to understand that, really, we need to be represented, and we need to have some kind of independent representation, rather than the one that is being offered by Management, because Liaison Committee was only offered by Management, so it had no teeth as a .....



C.D. .... well, although Rank Xerox was paying quite a substantial salary, but conditions were not as bad as they were in some other factories -

the only problem was the treatment by the Supervisors and the white Foremen was bad - so in 1977 I decided to resign, and I joined Kellogs -

the Trade Union - people were starting to organise Kellogs; Sweet Foods had started to organise some workers, and we had a very conservative Managing Director at the time, and -

but we kept on organising - I mean, I joined also, and we started to organise people ... we asked the Union to write a letter, saying to Management, we wanted to sit down and have discussions over a recognition of some kind -

but at the time, we were not registered, and the companies or employers were using that as a weapon - they would say they cannot talk to an unregistered union and .....

they were victimising people and dismissing people .....

In 1979, after the Wiehahn Commission - after Wiehahn made the recommendation that the Trade Unions should be recognised, and he made all these provisions about registration; provisional registration like

Migrant Workers could not be members of the Union - all those kind of thing, and FOSATU was formed, then, in 1979, April, and Sweet Food affiliated to FOSATU in about October, and then there was a course that was run by FOSATU in Durban - on Trade Unionism - I was elected to go on that course,

and by then, the Managing Director at Kellogs had changed - the guy that was there was a bit rational and enlightened, so he accepted that I should go on this course, but the Company wasn't going to pay for it, so the Union said O.K., they were going to pay for my loss of wage. ....

And when I came back we wrote a letter again - we had about 90% Membership at the time - we submitted a letter saying that we wanted a meeting with Management, so that we can discuss the possibility of the Company recognising Sweet Food -

They came out with the argument again, of registration, and we told them that we had already applied - we're still waiting for the Ministry to approve, or to reject, our application ...

in fact, what was happening at the time of registration was that some unions could veto your registration - could say that you should not be registered, because you are not representative of that area .....

we had white unions which were very conservative, and they were very much against black trade unions emerging -



C.D. What they wanted to see happen is that - if there's any black union emerging, it should be part and parcel of the existing white union, and then they used to create the structure, like

you'd have a parallel union - there would be a white union and a black union, and the General Secretary of the white union would also be the General Secretary of the black union, so the blacks would not have a voice in the running of the union,

so we didn't want to get into that kind of situation, so they would object when we applied for registration, but at the end we got registration just for Springs -

but before we got the registration, Management at Kellogs agreed to sign a recognition agreement with us, and we were the second union which had signed a recognition agreement in South Africa -

the first was this Company in Durban which signed an agreement with Textile before it was registered, and so we were the second,

and after that we got our registration, and I became the Chairman, because we only had one branch which was in Transvaal, and immediately after that, there was a clash between the leadership,

and there were some problems with the General Secretary of Sweet Foods - that was Kakani (?) 196 and the executive decided to dismiss him -

so when he was dismissed the President, the Vice-President and the Treasurer - they decided to walk out with him, and they started their own union which was called Food Beverage, and they took almost all the factories with them -

so we were left with Kellogs and Coca-Cola in Veneniging, and I was then elected Chairman of the branch, and it went on from there,

and, at that time the President of FOSATU was John Foster from P.E., and until 1982, when FOSATU had its second Congress, I was again elected as President of Sweet Foods -

we had four branches then - I mean three branches then - it was this one; the Southern Natal, and Northern Natal branch and, in 1982, I was elected as President of the federation, and ...

*Back in the early 80s*  
there was a problem at the time, because some people felt that trade unions should remove themselves, or (should not involve themselves in, what I would call Community Politics) or Community Programmes. Some people were feeling that we should restrict ourselves to work-place programmes -

There was that debate taking place .....

J.F. When was this?

C.D. 1982 - *it was when* early 1982 - there was this debate going on .....



C.D.

.... the Springs local - we wrote a paper on "Worker in the Community" - trying to clarify why we felt that we should be involved in the problems that take place in the township, because they are directly effecting us -

and I delivered that paper at Wits, and there was a debate within FOSATU itself, as to whether that was right or wrong, and the feeling was that, ~~of~~

"Look, we're not strong enough, and if we were to get ourselves involved in the Community Programmes, we could be smashed by the State,"

So what we needed to do was to consolidate our powers by trying to organise more and more, and when we were strong we could openly get involved in township problems .....

and to devise some structures as to how do we get involved as a Trade Union? Because we feel that since the majority of the people in any township would be workers - 75% would be workers, if people were to be employed .....

So we felt that, with the structure that we had got - the trade union structure that we're using, applying those within the township - we could still be in a position of directing the struggles within the townships -

and, all right, we started doing that.

In 1984, there was this problem with the students - saying that they need to - they want this, as I say, this was with the Student Representative Committee (?) 242

which the Department of Education did not want to grant to them - so there was this whole issue of them striking, or boycotting classes, and the attack from the Police,

and they started to appeal to the Community for support, and we discussed this within our own federation and within our unions, and we felt that there should be support for the students -

and in November we decided that there should be a stay-away - in fact, there was a Committee from the Students' Committee from Community Organisations, and representatives from trade unions, of which I was a representative from FOSATU, -

where we decided that there should be a stay-away for two days in support of the students' demands, and we demanded that the Government, or the Department of Education should grant that to the students .....

O.K. after the stay-away, people were picked up and people were detained - I was also among the group that was detained - and we were there for a month and we were released, without any charges being clearly defined to us ..



C.D.

3) ..... people started to see that there was a need for the working class to come together and fight as a people, because you could not say that our struggle in the factory was different from the struggle in the Community because ..... → to page 14

even if you were to go to Management and talk about increases, but because we did not have a control within the township, what the Councillors would do - would just increase the rent - which means the increase that you've got from the Company would still go down the drain because of that kind of thing,

so we tried some concerted effort in order to get involved, and to support any struggles that are being waged, to that effect, and

this is what is happening up to now, and, well, we are aware that the Government has decided to clamp down on any political organisation or community organisation or student organisation that is starting to challenge any of the Government structures, and

what we see happen is that the Government has not decided - or even if it has, but in a very low profile - to also tackle the trade unions .....

I was also threatened - I was told by the police that my house was going to be set on fire, and some of our guys were arrested -

although some of them have now been released, and guys from other unions were also arrested after the declaration of the State of Emergency ....

So that's about all I can say - I don't know whether I covered the ground that you were expecting.

J.F.

Those were exactly what all my questions were all about, so if I can just go back and ask .....

Before you got into the union, you had your brother who was in the union, but had you known, at all, about the history of South African Trade Unionism - as you were growing up, or in your 20's - before you got involved.

Did you know about SACTU - did you know about TUCSA - what did you know ....

C.D.

Well, I didn't know anything about trade unions until such time - until that time when my brother was involved in the Textile strike. It was only then that I started to hear that there was something called a trade union.

But it didn't make any sense with me, because I did not know how it works, and why it should be there - all I was told was that it was getting people together to fight for wages .....

it's only when I started with the trade unions that I started to learn about TUCSA, learn about SACTU; learn about trade unions - international trade unions and whatever.



- J.F. And was there any negative feeling in the community about trade unions - were there any people who said "Oh, trade unions - that'll lose you your job." - or was there positive .....
- C.D. ... at the beginning we had a problem, because people were afraid to join unions -
- one thing they were saying ... they did join unions before and the people ran away with their money - that was one reason -
- some were saying trade unions were illegal, so if you joined a trade union you may be arrested -
- some were saying that they were afraid that if they joined trade unions, then their managers would dismiss them -
- so it took a lot of task - to convince people - even after 1979, after the Wiehahn Commission's findings, people were still doubtful whether they should join a union or not, so it was quite a problem.
- J.F. .... the non-racialism. For you, when you were growing up and you knew a bit about politics, and as you got to know a lot more about unions - was it a black thing - was it black workers together - did it have anything to do with whites, in your mind?
- C.D. ← 4  
from p. 4 What we were thinking at that time - what I was thinking - what I heard at that time was that the unions are going to fight against the whites -
- I didn't feel that whites should belong to our union, because they represented the oppressor so ..... I didn't have anything to do with the white man .....
- J.F. Had you never heard of any of the whites, like Solly Sachs or Ray Alexander, or any of those? in the unions
- C.D. Well, I only read about those, but to me they looked like they were sell-outs - in fact, they were in this organisation in order to get information for the Government - this is how I understood things at that time.
- END OF SIDE ONE.
- J.F. How .... did you move to a non-racial view, and how did that come about, because it seems so logical to have those views?
- C.D. The change came about this way: - when one started to look at the envisaged society .... you could not have a blacks-only society in South Africa, and .....



- C.D. .... the society that you would be looking for - if you were progressive - would be a non-racial society, so, by being involved in Community Programmes, and being involved in the broader struggle, as we understand the broader struggle - that removed this kind of belief that blacks only can be the only people to fight or to wage the struggle of liberation and, that is how one started to realise that you needed to have an open kind of constitution, otherwise you would have a war that will take long, because if it was no more a class struggle, and it was a colour struggle, then you could have problems, but if you waged the struggle on a class struggle basis, then it makes things easier, and, at the same time, you tend to win support from other countries, and you tend to have relations - relationships - with other trade unions abroad .....
- So that is how this whole thing came to change my previous beliefs.
- J.F. But how did you get acquainted with concepts like class and class-struggle, from back in the days when you thought - were against the whites? ..... Did you read .....
- C.D. That's right, I started reading, and looking at some struggles outside - how people wage it and why are we suffering?
- And I started to understand - it is not Apartheid that makes us suffer, but Apartheid as a form, covering the whole concept of Capitalism.
- J.F. That's not the kind of reading you pick up in Springs. Where did you get that kind of book and that kind of input?
- C.D. Well, some of the books that I read - it was in fact a book that I got overseas, because I've been overseas quite a number of occasions.
- J.F. When did you first go overseas?
- C.D. I first went there in 1982 - I went to Germany.
- J.F. For Trade Union Conference?
- C.D. Trade Union Conference, yes.
- J.F. But, still, if you're talking about much earlier than 1982 - where did you get the concepts of class - from books that you got in the Country?
- C.D. What I'm saying is, <sup>before</sup> after 1982 ..... 1978, 1979, 1980, we still had the Black Conscienceness Ideology in our minds and we ... well I believed that whites were sell-outs, because they were part and parcel of the oppressor.



- J.F. And what about the whites who started FOSATU and the whites who were, in some ways, trying to help - did you think they were .....
- C.D. We were very suspicious of them, as well - we didn't want ... in fact, although we accepted them in the federation ...
- but I did not believe that I can expose anything that I thought was secret to any of them.
- J.F. Then it was the reading that you did after 1982 that made you .... was it any people speaking, or anyone you met, or was it just reading?
- C.D. It was reading and discussions with other people - how did they view the struggle, and how did they understand it? And then that helped.
- J.F. And when you said that you had that kind of B.C. point of view, how did you find others felt - maybe not people that you were with but older black people in the townships, or much younger youth in the townships -
- Did you find that everyone shared the B.C. view or were there .....
- C.D. I would say the majority of the people at the time shared the same view .....
- you'll remember, that is immediately after the banning of SASO, which was a black consciousness movement, and
- after 1960 - after the banning of A.N.C. and SACTU, there was a lull right up to 1973, when there were these strikes in Durban,
- then from there, you get the up-risings in 1976 and, again, the B.C. movement started to come up, and that was the only movement that existed then - the B.C.M. and SASO, and from there you get AZAPO started ....
- and that is all the B.C. movements that were prevailing at the time ....
- so most of the younger guys, like ourselves, - they shared the view of B.C. - it's only now that it's starting to - not fade out, but .... it's diminishing, -
- people are moving more and more on to the progressive line.
- J.F. And when you learned about the progressive line, did you see it as one that could cause trouble - that might get the union into more trouble, or get people into more trouble than a B.C. line - I'm thinking of the lessons of the '50's - what happened to SACTU and obviously the A.N.C. - and once you came to see the progressive line, did you ever think to yourself: "this may cause more problems than B.C." ?



- C.D. Yes, well, it was obvious, because immediately this thing spread into a broader spectrum - the chances of the State moving in - it's possible -
- because it's now spread out, it's a line that has been taken on by the majority of the people, and it is not only challenging the system - the Apartheid System - but it's challenging Capitalism as well ....
- so the dangers are very high in a progressive line.
- J.F. And did you ever think "If we stayed with B.C. line, the union would be safer, and maybe that's a better idea."
- C.D. No, what I saw was that it was a clever move for us to move into the progressive line, because it's progressive, but with the B.C. it would have taken us time before we could move to where we are at the moment.
- J.F. And did you find that everyone moved together at the same time, or were there any people who said "No, we feel that B.C. is the way to stay" - or were there other people who already, long ago, moved or ... how was it with other people?
- C.D. In fact, some of the people did not want to move - we still have that problem even now. Some people believe that the B.C. line is the correct line, and ...
- that is the reason why - this bigger federation could not take off the ground - because of that. Some of the guys are still suspicious of the whites within the organisation -
- they feel that the whites will mislead the organisation - the whites may sell-out at the end of the day,
- so there's this discussion that's taking place.
- J.F. But, other workers - did they seem to support non-racialism?
- C.D. Well, they - the workers that we represent - they support non-racialism, but .....
- you cannot say that is the case, because people might say it because the majority, or, my organisation subscribes to this, then I'm also party to it,
- but, sometimes, if you can sit down with an ordinary member and discuss these type of ideas, you would find that there is still some element of B.C. in his kind of thinking,
- and one cannot blame a worker for this, because it derives from the fact that, in the plant where he works - or where she works, she is faced with the problem of whites being supervisors or foremen, and the ill-treatment that one receives, would be from whites .....



- C.D. .... so that element still prevails in some other peoples' minds - although they support the idea of progressive, <sup>politics,</sup> but the element of B.C. still prevails in some peoples' minds.
- J.F. How do you answer workers - if a worker would say to you "What is this non-racial line you're talking about? - I see my foreman is a racist, my wife works for a white madam, and she's racist." How do you answer if someone says something like that?
- C.D. It's a bit difficult to answer that, but what we try to say to people is that, even though your boss is a conservative kind of Afrikaaner or whatever - there are whites who are progressive and who are enlightened and who are sympathetic to our struggle, so, to completely close the doors and say you don't want whites, you'd be closing doors even to people who could be committed to supporting our struggle.
- J.F. I'm interested in how you moved into the Community Issue areas - when you started going on courses and learning about trade unionism, did you have an idea in your mind that the bread and butter issues - the factory floor issues - that is what trade unionism is all about ... or did you always think No, you must relate to the community?
- C.D. As I told you before - that - the broader struggle - ... I would say each and every black is aware of the oppression that takes place, so when a child grows up, he knows that blacks are oppressed - the only thing that he lacks is : how does one relate to this, or respond to this kind of problem, because it is a problem - that, we are being discriminated against; that we don't have houses; that we live in bad hostels - single men hostels; that we don't have enough transport; that we don't have electricity at home - so that kind of thing is built-in with anybody ..... as I said before that, the only problem now is ; how do you respond, or how do you get into trying to solve that problem - so that is always prevailing in any black's mind - as I said before, when I was <sup>growing up</sup> still living in Benoni, we couldn't live with our father because of the Pass problem - we were raided by the cops, and that told you that the system is wrong - something is wrong somewhere ....
- .... so this is how ... we started looking at structures as to: how do you move into that kind of a direction? ... whilst protected and supported by your colleagues, which are your members of your union.



J.F. .... to put it more frankly - did you ever look at the past and think "O.K., fine, I understand that, I believe that, but look what happened to SACTU"? - do you ever think that way?

C.D. Yes, there was a debate on that- that if we moved too fast, the same thing that happened to SACTU would happen to us. That is why we were cautious in moving into the community issues.

J.F. You've been talking about you, in the unions - the people who are unionised, which is, as you know, not the majority of South African workers. What were the community saying - what were the workers who aren't in the unions who you encountered in Kwa-Thema - what were they saying to you about this issue?

C.D. Some of the people were saying to us that we are just opening ourselves up to victimisation by the State - you can't challenge the whites - they are very strong - but, when they were being organised, and some of them started to join unions, they, then, understood that, by winning some of the rights in the factory, it means they had power, and they were now strong enough to make demands that .....

are required in their - I would say, in their life, so they started joining the unions within this area.

We have what we call Shop Stewards - local Shop Steward Councils, where we would invite almost all workers from different factories, and we would discuss this problem,

and people would understand, and they would also discuss that with other people outside - and that spread out, and the majority of the people around here now are trade union members,

so it's easy to discuss issues of that nature with the community around here -

and what has happened now, is that, there is an organisation called East Rand Peoples' Organisation - he's the Treasurer of that.

Now, in this organisation you find women ... in fact, what they've done here - they've started a womens organisation; there is a student organisation; there is an unemployment organisation .. they're trade unions, ....

and then these organisations will come together and have an agenda, and they have elected their Office Bearers,

and they will discuss common issues in the township ...

3  
cont'd  
back from p. 16

J.F. Is that ERAPO?

to p. 16 again



C.D. ERAPO, yes.

J.F. When was it founded?

C.D. Here, it was formed this year (1985).

J.F. And ... is there actually an Unemployed Body?

C.D. There is an Unemployed Body within it.

J.F. What's it called?

C.D. It's Unemployment Committee .... Unemployed Committee.

J.F. Before ERAPO was formed, were there any other civics, or any other .....

C.D. No, in Kwa-Tema there was no civics whatsoever - it was the first civic to be formed,

J.F. And what gave rise to it being formed, if before it wasn't - why has it been formed now, do you think - what were the conditions that made .....

C.D. It's after we have seen that workers have now come together ... they've now been united, so we wanted to extend this unity to some of the people who are in the township, but who are not exactly workers in the factory,

but who could be workers in a shop in the township.

Now, the only way to do that was to encourage people to form organisations related to the type of job that they're doing, or type of business that they were doing .....

In fact, I did not mention that the taxi owners are also represented, business people are also represented in ERAPO.

J.F. But not in a separate organisation, but they are members?

C.D. They are members of ERAPO.

J.F. And what was the impact, in this area, of UDF when it was formed in 1983?

C.D. Well, in this area, people here played a low profile ...

J.F. Why?

C.D. Because they wanted to consolidate their strength, before moving into UDF without any structure, without any Committee,

so they did not move immediately - it's only now, after they formed ERAPO, and they found that they are strong, and they can make their voices heard within the structures of UDF through ERAPO.

J.F. And what about the unions - what did the unions feel about the formation of UDF - what did your area - the union people think of it?



C.D.

Well, people were suspicious of the UDF, and the people were thinking that, if we were to get into UDF, or maybe what UDF was planning to do was to try and hi-jack the struggle of the workers, and

it should be controlled by them, and people were thinking about what happened with SACTU when it linked up, because it did not join A.N.C. but it linked up, and the leadership in A.N.C. were also the leadership in SACTU,

and people were thinking on those lines - that we should not align ourselves with UDF, but debate took place, and it was clear at the end of the day that there was a need that we should co-operate with UDF, but we cannot affiliate with UDF at this point, because of political reasons .....

like - in your union you'd have members of AZAPO, you'd have members of Inkatha, you'd have members of that organisation, which is not really supporting UDF,

so if you were to affiliate to UDF as a union, you could create divisions within your union, so it was agreed that people could join UDF as individuals, but not that the whole federation or union should affiliate to UDF. → p.27

J.F. Is there much Inkatha in the East Rand?

C.D. No, not here. In fact, as I said to you, we've got about four branches, so in Natal the majority of our members are members of Inkatha.

J.F. Is there much AZAPO around here?

C.D. Well, in Springs, AZAPO has ..... no, no, it doesn't have any existence - it doesn't exist, in fact - but there are a few guys here and there who are still members of AZAPO, but it's not very strong here.

J.F. Do you have children?

C.D. Yes, I do.

J.F. How many are they?

C.D. Three.

J.F. From what ages?

C.D. Fourteen - eight - three.

J.F. And the fourteen year old - has he or she been involved in any activities?

C.D. Yes, she's the Secretary of COSAS - the fourteen-year old one - that's the one who was arrested recently - was detained four weeks ago - three weeks ago. →

J.F. Is she still?

C.D. No, she's out.

J.F. Was she ever detained before?



- C.D. You mean?
- J.F. Before this time, was she detained any other time?
- C.D. Yes, when I was detained, and she was taken in, but she only stayed in for a night, I think - then she was released the following morning.
- J.F. Because in all of the activity that's going on - political activity and confrontations - do you think that the students are in any way having an influence on their parents - I mean, for your own personal situation. Does your daughter speak to you about the unions, the community .....
- C.D. I would say they do have influence to the parents because of ... the report that you'd get from your child, the ill-treatment that they're getting, and the attacks by the Police - would make the parent feel that "I need to protect my child - I need to support her on this."
- J.F. The what they get from the police?
- C.D. The treatment or the attack that they get from the police - they would make you feel that "I need to support my child."
- J.F. And because of what, are they getting this treatment from the police - what are they .....
- C.D. It's because the Department of Education is worried that if it was to grant this Students' Representative Council, then, that would be setting up a ground for leadership within the students themselves, because they'll be independent, and
- they will have a right to challenge whatever decision that is made by the authorities, so .... the Department would try by all means to suppress that,
- so the way to do it is by sending out the Police to arrest, or to detain, harrass and even beatings.
- J.F. The young people - your daughter and the young people - do they have views that are in any way different) or stronger than yours on the community issue .....
- when you were very carefully weighing the need to get involved, but the need to protect the union - did the students have a different view, or the young people?
- C.D. Yes, they did have a different view .... I would say they are radical, and they haven't reached a stage where they could be able to check whether there is a danger in moving that fast - they haven't developed that kind of understanding -
- they believe that, if there is something that needs to be done, it's got to be done, whether by hook or crook,
- so if you've got them in an organisation like this ERAPO thing, people would be able to explain to them the dangers that ... are possible, if you take that action .....



C.D. .... like, for instance, they wouldn't think twice and say tomorrow there should be a stay-away - people should not go to work - not knowing the repercussions that - what could happen if people do not go to work without preparations ... see what I mean - they easily take those kind of decisions.

J.F. When did you get involved in ERAPO??

C.D. This year.

J.F. From its inception?

Now, just in line with the question I was asking about the students and the parents - and how their differences .... work together - can you tell me about the lead-up to the stay-away. How did you feel about - this was November, 1984 - how did you feel about it - how did the kids feel - had there been violence in the township before and how the union felt. Can you just talk a bit about the factors that led to that stay-away. Were you quite keen to have a stay-away from the beginning - were you very supportive, or did you .....

C.D. Well, on the first day of the talks, when we were in the meeting, lots of trade unions were objecting to the stay-away - the argument being that people could be dismissed, and the union would have problems in trying to get those people reinstated.... and some people were complaining about loss of wages and .....

but when discussion went on, people realised that there was a need for a stay-away in order to get the Department of Education to accept the constitution of these students.

But even then, you still had people trying to go to work through some secret ways, and some of them were stopped by students, and some of them were stopped by workers, from going to work -

so the feeling, thereafter, is that after people were not dismissed, and everybody was happy that there had been a stay-away - at least that made some employers to move,

and make some statements condemning some of the things that the Government does, whereas before, they never said a word, but after the stay-away you could see them coming together and making statements demanding that the Government should talk to people - something of that nature, and people felt that they did a good thing by staying away for two days.



- J.F. And during those talks leading up to the stay-away - was there any view expressed by the white members of FOSATU or the leaders - some of these officials?
- C.D. Yes, as I said before, some of the people were against that - even some of the whites in FOSATU were against the stay-away.
- J.F. How did you feel about it personally?
- C.D. You mean the stay-away? Well, I can't comment on that.
- J.F. I'm just trying to put together a picture of the deliberations that led to it, you see.
- C.D. ...What I'll say is that - if you were to have two groups arguing, I would be on the objective side, rather than on the group that was saying "No."
- J.F. Rather than the group that was saying "No, we mustn't stay away."
- C.D. Yes.
- J.F. All this didn't happen in a vacuum - starting in early 1984 and even sooner, there got to be a lot of violence in the townships ... is that something that's influenced you ....
- C.D. Yes. In fact that is the thing that influenced a lot of people to go on the stay-away, because there was a lot of violence -
- kids were being detained, and kids were being assaulted by the cops, and houses were raided, and ... lots of things were happening and when people went to work the cops would come in and start molesting children - I mean that gave rise to this kind of decision at the end of the day.
- J.F. And your daughter and the young people - were they very strongly supporting the stay-away idea?
- C.D. Yes.
- J.F. And then what happened with your detention - were you at all figuring that because of the stay-away, it might happen or did it come as any surprise to you?
- C.D. Well, we heard it's anticipated that something could happen ..... but we did not know what would happen, and how was it going to happen.
- J.F. And can you tell me a bit about when it did happen - how that transpired. Had you ever been detained before?
- C.D. No, it was the first time for me to be detained.

END OF TAPE.



J.F. So can you tell me a bit about how it did happen - were there any indications from the police that they were going to detain people - especially unionists?

C.D. No, they never indicated - it all came as a surprise, because they just came into the factory and they took me away, and when I was there I heard that some other people were detained as well - some students and some trade unionists were detained as well.

J.F. And how did the Management at the factory respond? *kelloggs* *when you were detained during the November 1984 stay-away?*

C.D. Well, through a push from the Shop Stewards Management had to write some telexes to the Minister of Law and Order and, and informing Head Office in Michigan that I was detained, and

① there was some move from Management, but I understand they were reluctant in moving initially, but they got a fright when workers were saying that they were also going to go on strike if I was not released.

J.F. That's interesting that you're a bit cynical about it, because in the papers overseas there was this thing of - the Management was anti-Government - that the Management was against the detentions.

C.D. Yes, it was only after they were pushed by the workers in fact, but if the workers did not push them they wouldn't have made any statement of that nature.

J.F. And how long were you detained - a month?

C.D. Yes, just a month.

J.F. And did they try to intimidate you or try to change you or .....

C.D. Yes, in fact, the interrogation was directed at saying that I've got to change, because I was being used by the A.N.C. and that kind of stuff.

J.F. Did they say anything about the white officials - did they ....

C.D. Yes, they said a lot about the white officials - that they were in the unions to mis-direct us and they were Communist and they were using that idea of Communism through us, so we've got to be careful about them - that kind of stuff.

J.F. And how does that sit with workers - with union people like yourself, when people start calling people Communists?

C.D. Well, I know that - everybody knows that <sup>with</sup> the Government - anything that is against it is Communist, so immediately they start to say that we know that that is the right stuff. →

J.F. And how did the detention effect you - did you come out feeling like, well, this really shows that as soon as the unions get involved in politics, they're going to get crushed - or did it make you in any way stronger or .....



J.F. .... weaker?

C.D. Well, all I thought was - there has been some pinch (pressure) that was felt by the Government or the employers, so that made us feel that we did a good thing.

J.F. There has been some what?

C.D. I mean, some pressure that has been felt by the Government and the employers.

J.F. And this involvement in Community issues - how does that relate to the non-racialism - do you think it's getting stronger or weaker?

C.D. Well, it's not something that is generally discussed, but when it is discussed, everybody feels that the non-racial position is the right position, because even in ERAPO that is the principle that is being adopted - the non-racialism - non-racialism stance, so it means ... what I would say is that people are accepting that kind of position.

J.F. And you didn't come out of detention feeling anti-white in any way?

C.D. No, I only came out of detention feeling anti-police.

J.F. And the people in the townships - how do they feel - are they at all feeling anti-white because of what's going on?

C.D. Even if ..... as I said before the situation is changing - even though there are some people feeling anti-white, but if you look at what is happening in the township right now, it's that black and white policemen are the ones that are assaulting children, and sometimes it's worse with the black cops.

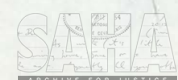
J.F. .... all the experiences you've related that are any different because of you working with overseas companies like Xerox and Kellogs - are they better or worse?

C.D. Nobody's better with this system .....

when Management becomes better is when you've got a strong union inside, but if you don't have a union, Management has never been better because all they're interested in is profit - so profit comes first and your life comes second. -> to p. 24

J.F. You said <sup>something</sup> earlier about applying trade union structures within the townships - that can be effective - what did you mean by that?

C.D. What I mean by that is that, in a trade union, when you are to elect Shop Stewards, you elect by departments, so that that Shop Steward is accountable to the people that work with him - with the people who know what is happening in that department .....



-> to p. 23



C.D. .... so if you take that structure as a structure and use it in the township, you would say that in each area or section, people around there should elect one person who would be their ... somewhat like a co-ordinator, and if it gets into the bigger meeting, then each and every section will be represented by one person who ..... he would be a spokesman - something like a spokesman, but he would be co-ordinating issues in that area, and he would be knowing what takes place in that area and he would represent the matter as is - rather than having a big meeting with one person knowing for in the whole township.

J.F. So do you think that has happened - do you think that ERAPO has these structures - democratic structures?

C.D. In fact, as I said, ERAPO has only been started this year. We have introduced those structures, but I cannot say that they are now working - but they are there and, gradually people would get used to them, and they would work.

The only thing that has disturbed this kind of arrangement is the State of Emergency, because since then everything came to a standstill.

J.F. Do you know Jessie Duarte in Johannesburg?

C.D. No, I've never met her.

J.F. ... she was talking about - she heard you speak - she was in El-dorado Park ..... she was saying that you said, when there was this discussion about the Community base of the unions and their relation to the Community, and that you used an analogy of the union must be like a tree - talking about roots. Do you remember that?

C.D. I can't remember that - I've said a lot of things to a lot of people - I can't remember some of the things.

J.F. It sounded like something I'd like to ask you to explain - it was something like the union must be like a tree and that it must have roots into the community and keep growing, and things like that.

C.D. Oh, that's the very structure I'm talking about ...

maybe the roots that I was referring to is the very co-ordinating committees within different sections ..... if I did use that example.

J.F. .... what about the future - in the unions, do people talk about how they envision South Africa's struggle evolving in the future. When people see the confrontations going on, do they ever speak concretely - do you ever have ideas of how things will evolve. Do you see South Africa ... everyone agrees there'll be change. Do you think it's going to come through the unions threatening the bosses, or do you think it'll come through the communities - it'll be through confrontations - through guerilla action - how do you think change will come?



C.D. Well, up to now, nobody's sure how it is going to come, because unions are being strong, and the struggle's being waged from outside, and the bosses are getting scared and,

there's countries applying sanctions. Now it's not easy for one to say that this is the way change would come in South Africa, because you might think it would be through guerilla warfare, only to find that the Government decides to talk because of the pressures,

and I'm not sure - I've got no idea how it would come - what I'm sure of is that the pressure that is being exerted by the unions is not going to be lessened, so if it works, that could also bring change,

and the pressure that is being brought by people from outside - the sanctions and all those demands that are being made outside - I don't think that is going to be lessened, and that all contributes to the change that is being anticipated here.

J.F. And that change that's being anticipated - is it a non-racial future that you see?

C.D. This is what, as we see it, and as we anticipate it.

J.F. And what will the role of whites be then - will whites have a role in a future South Africa?

C.D. Well, they will ..... after the <sup>CHANGE</sup> ~~start~~, whites would definitely have some role to play within the society, but we don't know what would happen then.

I don't know what would happen thereafter - after people have developed and they've decided to control things on their own - or by themselves.

J.F. How did you feel, after your detention, in fact, because of your detention, when, suddenly there was stuff in the international Press saying that Liberal Capitalists, Big Business is against the Government - they're upset about the tensions, and they've placed themselves in an anti-Apartheid position. Do you see them as ever being a force for change? - why do you think they were upset with your detention .....?

C.D. You see, what happened then ..... what has been happening in South Africa is that South Africa has been having friends throughout history, and everybody has been seeing anybody who's against South Africa as being a terrorist,

but since the trade unions started, there has been some change because of people going overseas and speaking to some of the communities, and people speaking to some of the trade unions saying "Look, the people that are existing in South Africa do need change because of that."



- C.D. I remember that before I was detained, I went to Boston, and I addressed the meeting of the E.C.C. - that's the Economic Convention Conference, which was in Boston, and immediately after that, I was detained, and the people that I met there started to raise the thing up, and lots of other people in America started to join in and the whole thing went just like that (snap of fingers!) and that, I would say, embarrassed the big employers - I mean the Multi-nationals like American companies, which were claiming that they'd got the Sullivan code which was working in South Africa, which was against Apartheid, but they were not seen as doing anything for change, so
- (b)
- that situation where trade unionists were detained, embarrassed them, so they were forced to come out with a statement condemning what has happened - and they couldn't move back; they had to move forward, because the oppression still prevails.
- J.F. What was this Economic Convention Conference - what group is that?
- C.D. It's a group calling itself that - in fact, it's based in Boston.
- J.F. But do you think your detention was related to the fact .... what did you say overseas?
- C.D. I spoke a lot about the lines and what's happening in South Africa about people - how people were oppressed, and how they were exploited, and that, even if you wanted to fight exploitation, you will still be blocked by oppression,
- because if you were to fight for your rights, the cops would soon move in and .....
- J.F. So how would that have effected your detention - that they didn't like you making overseas people aware of the problems here?
- C.D. No, no - what I'm saying is that, after I spoke to those people there, they understood our problems - they understood the problems of the trade unions,
- and when I was arrested, I think people realised that it's one of the laws that I mentioned that got me arrested,
- so they blew the thing up by saying it was an unfair detention.
- J.F. So you think it helped that you had some friends overseas .....
- C.D. Yes.



- J.F. And why do you think that the police detained you?
- C.D. It was because they thought - they were saying that I initiated the stay-away, and they charged me under Section 54, which is Economic Sabotage - this is what they were saying.
- J.F. Did you get prosecuted?
- C.D. No, that was the actual charge, but it was dropped eventually.
- J.F. So you were arrested under it, or you were detained and then charged under it?
- C.D. I was detained and then charged under it.
- J.F. Do you care at all - is it part of your things you think about - to try to change the white community, or do you feel that you're dealing with black workers and that's it? Do you ever think about, if you're thinking of a non-racial future - what about those whites ...?
- C.D. Yes, well, it's a pity that the white community is not addressing itself to the actual problems, and they definitely need some education - they need to be changed, otherwise they would collapse with the system, and that's going to be bad ....
- because they will still want to resist after, maybe a change, and they would find themselves in shit.
- J.F. But do you think that you can do anything about changing those whites?
- C.D. I can't do a thing, because they've told themselves that they're privileged, and they're protecting that privilege, and whatever you say to them is that you are trying to take away what has been their right, or their benefit, or their privilege.
- J.F. After the change in South Africa, do you think whites will retain their privileges?
- C.D. They would want to retain it, and it won't be easy for them to retain it, because, I would say there would be distribution of all.
- J.F. .... did you see this article in The Sowetan yesterday, about the Unity talks?
- C.D. Yes.
- J.F. .... and they were saying that this whole thing of white involvement is getting to be a big issue - what do you think about that?



- C.D. That's only speculation from people outside the talks.
- J.F. Sure, but, since you're inside ..... I just want to know if you see this issue of white involvement as getting to be one .... do your union people ever say "What's the story with these whites?" - maybe not because they're white, but because they think they're more conservative if they don't support a line. Is there ever any talk in your union of people criticizing the white union officials?
- C.D. Yes, well, there are a lot of criticisms levelled on to the white leadership.
- J.F. What are those criticisms - why are they critical?
- C.D. Well, some people feel that they don't address themselves to the actual problems - to the present situation.
- J.F. They don't what?
- C.D. They don't want to address themselves to the present situation that is now .... like the community problems - they're not directly wanting to get themselves involved in that - some of them feel that you've got to maintain your trade union identity, so you cannot get yourself involved in such things - so there's that kind of a problem ... some of the whites - some of them feel like that.
- J.F. What do you say if somebody comes to you and complains it ..... what do you say to a worker?
- C.D. What I say to workers is "Look, you - this organisation as a whole, is worker-controlled, and if you are dissatisfied about any person, it is your right to remove them and put somebody else, whom you think would do as you wish. So it's - there's no use to complain when you've got democratic structures, which gives you the right to dismiss and employ ...
- so anybody who is put there is elected or employed by the workers, so to me, it seems like, you employ somebody who satisfies you."
- J.F. But is that a racial thing, or is it just that the person wouldn't satisfy them ... are they going to be complaining about those whites because they're whites, or because they don't like their line.
- C.D. Sometimes it's because they don't like the line - in most cases because they don't like a line - that is the actual reason behind it.
- J.F. The last thing I wanted you to sum-up with is .... why is Kwa-Tema so hot - you know the East Rand, you know about working class issues ..... you can't compare Kwa-Tema with any place in Soweto - what's the story?



- C.D. People are organised in Kwa-Tema.
- J.F. They're organised? .... Yet, in Soweto there's the civic association, and these organisations - AZAPO ..... what's organised in Kwa-Tema?
- C.D. You see, it depends on how people are organised ... if he's a shop owner or a doctor, he could call five, six people around his area - his henchmen - and say "Today we're starting a civic association" - and, obviously those guys are going to elect him as the Chairman, and then they will elect somebody else as a Vice-Chairman, and somebody else as a Secretary - the ten of them form the committee, and they will start putting this in the Press -
- that they've got a committee of this nature and they've got so-and-so as the Chairman, and so-and-so as the Treasurer ... then it's the end of it -
- they've never gone out to organise people and make people members and explain to people the objective of the organisation -
- so you cannot expect any action from those people, because there are only ten - they can't pull workers into action, or pull people into action.
- J.F. Whereas what ... so what are you saying about what is going on in Kwa-Tema? I see that example as lack of organisation ... what's the organisation?
- C.D. People are organised here - properly.
- J.F. But ERAPO only came this year.
- C.D. Yes, but unions were here since 1979.
- J.F. So is it the unions that's the difference in Kwa-Tema?
- C.D. Yes, it's the unions, because, being in a trade union, that activates your consciousness. You know that you've got a right to speak sometimes; you've got a right to make a demand - learning from the trade union movement, because of the gains that you have acquired through your Shop Steward at the factory, so you start to know that "I also have a right to make a demand, and that demand is sometimes met - sometimes there is compromise."
- J.F. And do you think that, because of that organisation, that there is any friction between the workers - organised people - people who know about organisation, and the unemployed - the youth - those who want to throw a petrol bomb, and those kind of things .... that's what you hear so often - whites who don't know anything, will say "Unemployed youth throwing stones at the police - where will it lead to?" .....



- J.F. ...."we need organisation." Do you think that's a problem in Kwa-Tema - the organised people that you're talking about - do they have any distance; any rift; any tension with the youth who are out in the streets?
- C.D. No, they don't have - there's no rift between the different organisations inside the township.
- J.F. But is it the organised workers - the parents - the adults who are in the streets - attacking hippos?
- C.D. Well, I'm not sure of that.
- J.F. I'm just interested ... I'd be glad to hear that there is a cohesion, because so much of the criticism - especially internationally - foreigner writing stuff - or else whites in South Africa - is to say "O.K., fine, but the parents are angry at the children - they want to go to work - parents don't want to just throw stones at hippos, and where is it leading?"
- C.D. Yes, as I said to you before - if your child was assaulted, and you see that that particular individual is assaulting your child, you will retaliate.
- J.F. And do you ever get distressed ..... I just know what I read about the level of violence, and some of the people that I've talked to who live in Kwa-Tema ... do you, yourself ever get upset or worried about where it's all leading to - do you see it clearly going forward ..... If you read a report that there's stonings in the streets and attacks, and a child is shot and a policeman's burned - do you think "I know that this is helping us move forward?"
- C.D. That's a difficult question ..... if one did not envisage that, then he would not be involved in any of our organisations -
- you get involved in organisations because you've got some objective, and, in any action that you take, there'll be retaliation from the State -
- so the clashes that you see happening - it's because the State did not want to accede to some of the demands of the people -
- so I don't understand how you could say that this is retrogressive, when you know the reason why there was this action.
- J.F. Do you see the unions and the communities getting closer together, or further apart?
- C.D. No, they're getting closer together, as I said before - people here, they are one.

END OF INTERVIEW.