

SHEENA DUNCAN

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SD ....Mrs Young, she's the new Transvaal Chairman went. We were the only white women in that huge crowd of black people, at night, in a township where there's been disturbances and trouble.

There is not anti-white feeling. There's an awful lot of anti-police feeling, and anti-SADF feeling. It's a very strange thing. I mean, I, if I was black, would be very anti-white, and have a lot of racial feelings about white people. And it actually doesn't exist really

JF I think you're right. But I think this thing that was in the paper today and yesterday, about the 2 white women attacked, that is inevitably going to be happening. It's amazing that it doesn't happen more.

SD ~~But it's amazing that it doesn't happen more.~~  
But I don't know how much of that can be described as being anti-white. Because when you think of all the black people who've been attacked you know: Community Councillors, and shop-keepers, and the owner of the liquor store. What is astonishing is that this is only the 2nd white death in the whole long ....since March last year, when all this really began. It's quite extraordinary.

JF Just for the record, what's the year you were born?

SD 1932

JF Then what kind of a home did you grow up in? What were the values and what were the politics?

SD On one side, totally apolitical, in the sense that when I was a young child, politics didn't loom large on the horizon at all. I had a father, who in the proper sense, and in the sense that I am political, was never a party political man. But who believed very strongly in concepts, and taught us concepts such as justice, and fair dealing, and democracy. ~~and Dad never was involved in party politics in this country at all.~~ But he never was involved in party politics in this country at all.

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SD ...But he ~~ka~~ is the person, from whom I suppose, when one is nurtured on ideas, those things were the things that I grew up with. And it wasn't until after the war, when I was in my last years at school, that my mother began to be very actively involved in United Party politics, which was the then opposition.

She had 5 children, and I think she had been bogged down all those years with all those kids, and the war effort, and sewing for wounded soldiers, and that kind of thing. So that she must have been 35, and I think that's probably when she started to get seriously interested in what was going on.

I can remember her the night that General Smuts died. We were packing. I was leaving home, having matriculated, to go to Scotland to train as a teacher. And I can remember my mother packing, tears streaming down her face, and saying: this is the end. There is no hope anymore for SA, and apartheid will be entrenched.

But I don't think that she was a very political person much before 1948.

JF So what spurred her in '48? The Nats coming in?

SD I think partly. Partly the influence of my father. Partly I suppose, just that thing about being brought up just to believe in all those abstract things about the rule of law and justice, and that policeman <sup>were to</sup> ~~would~~ be trusted. I can remember as a little girl being taught that if I ever got lost or was worried, the thing to do was to find a policeman. To me now, I never have taught my children that, because in this country, it just simply has not been, for the last 30 years, something that you would do.

The last thing you would do is to find a policeman, if you're in need of help. And for black children, I don't think they would understand at all the way I was brought up, because the police are the people that they fear. And it would seem very strange to them.

And I think that if you grow up in that kind of environment, which my mother must have done as well, however wrong her parents may have been in their judgements of how the police and General

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SD ....Smuts etc, handle the 1922 strike, for example. They might have been wrong in their political judgement about that, or the way they judged it then might not be the way it is seen any longer, but nevertheless they just believed in the rule of law, the protection of the individual by the courts, all those kind of things. And I suppose if you grow up with those kind of things, and then you enter into a time when those are actively destroyed, you perhaps have to take some sort of action about it.

Although I don't think that my family, my mother's family, early on, ever related the destruction of those values, in white dealings with black people. Early on. Clearly after Ma started to get involved with black people, she would have understood that, but I don't think that when she was a young woman, people really thought about those kind of abstract values, in relation to the State's dealings with the black majority in this country.

So our family developed late. You can put it like that!

JF And so after '48.....?

SD Then she became a City Councillor in the United Party in Johannesburg. You'd really have to ask her. But the way I see it, is the real turning point, was when my mother resigned from the City Council. It was before the Progressive Party was formed. But it was a matter of principle, that I have forgotten, but I'm sure she still remembers very well.

And I can remember her telling me that all the allies she thought she had on the Council, with her, <sup>who</sup> had said that they would resign with her. They were all men. They failed to do so. She resigned, and absolutely nobody else resigned as well. And that then she resigned her seat, because she believed that if you'd been elected as a representative, standing for a certain political party's manifesto, that if you resigned from the party, you had to resign your seat. And she resigned her seat, and shortly after that the Progressive Party was formed, and she was one of the founder members.

Then the next by-election she fought, I'm not sure if she

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SD ...was an Independent or part of the fledgling Progressive Party, again for a City Council seat. She lost by 99 votes. And that was the week when the whole Congo thing blew, and white refugees were pouring out. And there were all the horror stories about what was happening in the Congo. And I'm pretty sure that those 99 votes were influenced by it.

But then after that, it was a blessing in disguise, because the Black Sash was formed in 1955. And the freedom that the Black Sash has always enjoyed from the restraints of connection with a political party, is very great. Because one is not always looking over one's shoulder for support, or the number of votes that you can get. Because you're actually not seeking that.

And it was from that time onwards, ...I'm unclear about when my mother's active political party work stopped, and Black Sash entirely took over, ...but it was at about that time, '55, '56 that she became entirely focussed on the stand on morality justice as principle.

So I suppose all my formative years were lived through an atmosphere, where from the time I was in my mid-teens, there was a great deal of straight political discussion around me. And political activity that my mother was engaging in.

JF Was there any Liberal Party involvement?

SD No. No, I'm sure my mother was never a member of the Liberal Party. But I've never heard her criticise the Liberal Party. I'm just not sure. You'd actually have to ask her. Because a lot of her close friends are people who were Liberal Party people.

Lots of Sash members were members of the Liberal Party. And I can remember when I came back, having grown up here, married in '55, went with Neil to live in what was then Rhodesia, and we didn't come back until '63. And I can remember at that time, talking to one of the senior BS people who was a member of our national executive, but was also a member of the Liberal Party, and asking her if she would propose me as a member of the LP,

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SD ..or vouch for me or whatever. And she said: you would be very foolish to join the LP at this stage. I think that must have been '63-'64, when the LP was expecting to either be banned, or decimated, or put out of action.

And in those days, and I suppose now, except that it's not invoked any more, there were all kinds of things...if you were a member of a banned organisation, when it was banned, you could not then join any other organisation that had the same aims and objectives, And I can remember this person saying to me: don't do it at this moment, because it might just mean that <sup>you couldn't</sup> go ahead with the work. I think it must have been when the LP saw its own demise.

JF The ideals on which the Black Sash was founded, the constitutionality, and the anti-immoral legislation...are those ideals one would even begin to talk of now? Are they anachronistic now?

SD OK, I must make a correction there, because those were not the ideals on which the Black Sash was founded. When the BS began in '55, the issue was the introduction of the Senate Bill, which was one of the many ways in which the Government sought to remove the coloured voters.

And looking back on it, because of what has happened since, one realises that the 10,000 women who joined the BS in 1955 when it began, were actually much more concerned about the Constitutional issue, and not even in terms of any philosophy about constitutions, but because the other protected clause in the constitution was the equal rights of the English and Afrikaans languages.

In those days the Boer War was still being fought, and the Afrikaaner people ....incidentally, I believe that if I had been born 20 years earlier, I would have felt it necessary to identify myself with the Afrikaaner struggle for liberation from British imperialism, because they were a very downtrodden and oppressed people.

So in 1955, there was tremendous antagonism between English-

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SD ....Speaking and Afrikaans speaking people. Or between English speaking, and Afrikaaner Nationalists. And I think the vast majority of those women who came together in the BS, were not that concerned about the coloured vote, they were concerned about the rape of the constitution, as they called it, because the same means that were used to remove the coloured vote, could just have removed English as one of the official languages in the country. And I think that's what they were worried about.

It wasn't until after that issue was over, in the late '57-'58, that you started to get the BS people, members, sort of codifying, and putting into words what the movement stood for. And that was when it became justice, <sup>and</sup> morality in government. And then you had this huge drain of members just disappearing, because that wasn't what they were on about.

It was only the core of the membership that was left, and that's why BS has remained a very tiny organisation. Because the kind of things that we still believe in, justice and morality and in government have been very unpopular and unfashionable in the white community ever since then.

JF I guess there was a certain contradiction, because there was parliamentary opposition about segregation, but at the same time there was the Suppression of Communism Act. And there were other things the Government was doing, that didn't cause the outcry, because there was not an opposition to that.

SD Actually I'm sure, the Suppression of Communism Act, I'm sure that was one of the first things the BS protested against. I'm so hazy about that sort of history...but the Suppression of Communism Act allowed for the banning of organisations. And from the very beginning the BS has been very firm about those kind of things. No hesitation whatsoever.

They may be couched in very funny words, the things the BS said at that time, but I think the organisation has been absolutely straight about any infringements of the rule of law, from the beginning. Although, at the same time, I think that BS members

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SD ...didn't want to align themselves with Congress of Democrats people. I don't think they liked Communism either, for the same reason, that Communism, as it showed in Communist Governments, did not show any respect for the rule of law, individual liberty, or any of those sort of values.

JF Did you ever have any contact with any Torch Commando or Springbok....

SD I didn't, because I was a) first at school, and b) in Rhodesia. But my mother would have had a lot of contact with them, because it was because of the failure of the Torch Commando, that the BS was begun.

JF Do you remember then, being younger, before you went to Rhodesia, any of the debates about letting blacks in; the whole non-racialism

SD No. I missed out on the whole of that. And being in Rhodesia,,,

JF Did that affect you?

SD Very much so. I can remember, we drove up in a tiny little motor car. We were young then, and my husband's firm had sent him up there, and I can remember the feeling of release and freedom, just crossing that border. Not knowing anything at all about Rhodesian politics.

In those years from '56-'60, one was very hopeful about Rhodesia. One took for granted, the whole idea of a non-racial society, and that kind of thing. The tragdey happened when the governing party kicked Garfield Todd out. I can still remember that night. And I was at that meeting in Salisbury, where he walked out.

And again, I was sitting beside someone who was saying, if they kick him out I'm going to do this that and the other thing. And I remeber standing up and walking out behind Garfield Todd and the people who went with him. And the guy who'd been so strongly in favour, sat in his seat! And ended up in the Whitehead government.



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SD And that was the <sup>beginning of the</sup> end for Rhodesia. And I think that influenced me very strongly. The whole history of Zimbabwe, would have been quite different, if Garfield Todd had remained Prime Minister of S. Rhodesia.

JF And when you came back in '63, did you get involved in politics immediately?

SD In the BS immediately. Because I didn't want to come back at all. Neil's firm brought him back, because there was an economic recession there, after the Federation broke up. And I wanted to go away and live somewhere else. And he said his future lay here, in the firm that he was with, which it certainly did.

And I said to him, that if we go back to SA, you have got to accept that I cannot go back there without a total commitment to fighting apartheid. And he said OK, and he's never gone back on that. I've never had family hassles about what I'm doing.

But it was really that feeling that to come back here as a white person, you couldn't possibly choose to come back and live here, unless you became committed to fighting the system. Because in those days, a whole lot of our contemporaries left. It was very like what's happening now amongst the people who have been married for a couple of years, and they've got young families.

A number of people who are deciding now to leave SA...it's much more difficult now for them to do so, because Britain has tightened up its citizenship laws. The whole economic crisis in the West, means it's not nearly so easy to get work permits or permission to go and work in Australia, or Canada, or the States, or Britain.

But at that time, when we came back, there were a whole lot of our friends who had gone. Because they said; we cannot go on living in the apartheid society, or alternatively they said: the revolution is just around the corner, this isn't a safe place for our children.

So there was a real feeling, when we came back here, that it was a simply daft thing to do. I don't regret it now. Not one little bit. And I have absolutely no desire to live anywhere else now.



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SD ..But at that time, with a 3 month old baby, and a 3 year old child, one just didn't feel like living one's life in the midst of a constant crisis. So it was imperative to get involved, and I did.

JF And involvement, meant right into the BS?

SD Well simply because I've never been a party political person. I haven't got any ambitions for political leadership. And the whole thing about political party work, is always your subordination to the caucus, and be careful what you say, because there's another election looming.

That has never appealed to me. And in '63, there was nothing in SA. It was after the emergency, the banning of the ANC and the PAC. The black community was totally crushed, and the only ~~rights~~ <sup>white</sup> organisation that was doing anything at all, was NUSAS. And I was too old to be a student.

I think '63 was the year that Christian Institute started, I'm not sure. But it certainly didn't have a high profile then. The BS was the only organisation in the white community outside party politics, that was doing anything at all.

JF So, you went right into working in an advice office?

SD Yes. But I didn't do very much in those days. Because, with a 3 month old baby. I used to work in the advice office, once a week in the mornings. But those were the days when the advice office was very new, and we all used to take all the letters we had to write, and when a client came into the office, we all competed as to who was going to deal with the case!

Because it was very new, and not well known. It was very experimental. But there was a lot of other sort of work that the BS did in those days. It was the dead years of the BS, the 1960's. Then Press didn't approve of us, nobody approved at all. And one thinks of the time one had to spend in those days, trying to find ways in which you could interest one newspaper in a story. Compared to now, where you just sometimes feel the damn press is on top of you all the time!

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SD It's a total difference. And what made that difference in BS, was really the advice offices, because we became experts in a field in which nobody else was the slightest bit interested.

That's what really established our credibility, the advice offices, because nobody else did it, and if people wanted to know what something meant, in the end they had to ask the BS, because nobody else understood it.

JF Can you talk about the movement of the BS over the years? Because there was the dead period, and there was the revitalisation through the campaign of the advice offices. Through the fact that there was something active and concrete to do, as opposed to just criticising or doing those Sash protests.

SD I don't think the advice offices, at the beginning, were ever regarded as a campaign. They were very much a sort of help focus in those days. The first one started in Capetown, because hundreds of black women were being arrested for refusing to apply for passes.

And it started in Capetown just as a bail fund, to get those women out of jail, while they awaited trial, so that they could be with their children. And it was that involvement that lead those women to start looking at what the Pass Laws actually meant. And in human terms.

After that the advice offices grew all over the country, and at the beginning they were very much orientated towards help for the individual. BS women were very much emotionally involved, and still are, about just the destruction of family, and this person sitting in front of you, whose wife and children aren't allowed to be with him. Or this woman whose husband was arrested yesterday. Or this woman whose child was detained by the Security Police.

That concern for an individual person has remained all the way through. But what has developed, is the BS understanding of the structures and the philosophies, and the forces at work in the society, that have maintained that system.

We've moved away from our naive belief, that if you could convey to people, such as English-speaking businessmen, the human

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SD ...suffering involved in migrant labour, if you could convey that to them, that they would do something, to get rid of it. That was a very naive belief.

We've grown away from that, because we know that you can convey that <sup>suffering</sup> ~~subject~~ to them until you're blue in the face, and they won't actually act. Our whole attitude has toughened considerably, in that respect, because we have just discovered that people on the whole are ~~not~~ moved by human suffering.

And that you therefore have to find political pressures that will start hurting them enough to make them move. Therefore, if profits are threatened, either by internal unrest, or by strike action, or growing worker movement or the threat of disinvestment, that is when you get white people in this country to act.

So we're a whole lot tougher than we were in the 1950s and 1960s, because we also had to go through that learning experience about what moves groups of people.

JF So what does move them?

SD What moves them is what hurts them, not what hurts other people.

JF And in concrete terms, what does that mean to the Sash?

SD Well, we stopped going on deputations to Harry Openheimer, and people like that, because it was a total waste of time. It meant actually trying to analyse what are the potential powerful forces for radical change in this country. And that means the black community in SA, the electorates in the western....

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JF And the 3rd one...?

SD And the 3rd one, the lowest in priority is the white business people inside SA. Those 3 groups of people, as a very tiny organisation

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SD ..now, less than 2,500 members in the whole country, are the 3 groups that most of our work is now directed towards.

When it comes to the black community inside SA, it's to seek ways of strengthening them in their struggle, which is also our struggle, for freedom in this country. And that means...the BS has never actually tried to influence people, or dictate to people, what they should be saying or doing,. But we have discovered that there is a tremendous hunger for information resources.

Information about how the laws and regulations of apartheid, how the society works. Because people, particularly people in the UDF, who are committed very much to non-violent strategies. And if you are committed to that kind of strategy, either for moral reasons, or because you think it's more effective than violence, if you're going to be committed to that kind of strategy, you actually have to have a very clear understanding of how things work.

Because you can't design strategies to break down those structures; strategies of non-cooperation, are entirely dependant on understanding where the structures are at their weakest; what cannot be contained by the armed power of the state, and so on.

The need of black people for organisation: if you are an old lady living in a resettlement area, you're not actually much concerned about the provisions of Sect 10 of the Urban Areas Act. What you are concerned about is your pension. And you yourself, because you have lived for 30 years, or longer, all your life, in a position of subjection, don't see yourself as a person who can possibly win your<sup>7</sup> right to a pension, because you don't even know that it's a legal right that the courts will uphold, if you're denied it. And you also don't know that there are thousands of other people who have exactly the same problem.

If you had the information that your pension is a legal right, and how the structures of administration work, why is it that people in your area are not getting a pension, you're going to get together with a whole lot of other people. And if you can address that problem successfully, the next important thing on your agenda, you're actually going to have learned a whole process

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SD of working toward change.

We also think it's that whole aspect of community organisation and of understanding of the laws that govern you, is terribly important for the future, Because there's always a grave risk that in.... people who've lived through a terrible oppression, and very many of the people who will be the future leaders in this country, have never lived in a situation where detention without trial was unheard of. They have been born knowing....simply not understanding it.

It showed up terribly clearly one day in our office. A young woman who herself had been arrested in '76 or '77. She was a student at a High school in Soweto. And she was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, for distributing pamphlets, or some political offence. And when she came out of prison, she came to train in our office, to open an advice office in Soweto, for the Witwaterstrand Council of Churches. She's now married to the President of AZAPO; very black consciousness, very efficient, very nice person.

But one day in the office, news came in that someone whom all of us, and she knew very well, .....and it was very interesting, because her anger was directed at the people who had detained her friend. But her reaction to that was: they must just wait till we have power, and then see what will happen to them. We are going to hold them, and John Foster's going to do the same thing.

Whereas our anger was also equally against the people and the system that had detained him, but totally lacked that element of revenge. Because our anger is at the absolute violation of everything that guarantees orderly society, and justice, and the well-being of ordinary people. You have to have that basic security.

And she couldn't understand what we were trying to tell her about society, because she had never known it, never lived with it. Her whole experience, because she's young, has been that dog eats dog, or the survival of the fittest. And that's extremely dangerous. And that's why we believe it's terribly important that ordinary people can learn about their rights as citizens, and how to insist on those rights, how to beat the bureaucracy, is what it amounts to, basically. That in this country, like anywhere

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SD ...else, we're in grave danger of a new government, and a new bureaucracy, ~~we~~ ..a society in which the victims now, will remain the victims.

And so a lot of the work we do here, is directed towards that sort of end. It sounds all very grand...it's very pathetically minimal. But that's a great part of our work.

When it comes to overseas constituencies, we just feel that the truth is terribly important. I don't think that we really know the strategies that western governments should employ. We are very sure that in fact western governments have supported SA all the way through. I don't believe that the apartheid society would have lasted as long as it has, if it hadn't been for the tacit support of the western democracies, because of the profits that have been coming out of SA into the west, and for various other reasons....the whole McCarthy era and the anti-communism bit. And right at the moment we seem to be going back into that kind of thing, because of the Reagan administration in the States.

But, in the western countries, if you get groups of anti-apartheid people, whatever their motivations and however well they mean, it is extremely damaging when they tell a lot of lies, or exaggerate what happens here. The evil is so great that you don't have to exaggerate.

And we actually work on the basis that you need sound, solid factual information going into the centres where decisions are made, and ideas are thrown around. And we actually think it's the western countries' responsibility to decide what strategies they will employ, not ours to tell them what they must do, because one gets very tired of people saying, what should we do, in a helpless kind of way.

And that question has been used as an excuse for years and years for not doing anything. ...What must we do? S Africans can't tell us what we must do, and therefore we'll have another protest demonstration!

When it comes to business people inside SA, again it's a question of factual information. But they are not going to move. The only time they ever do move is when black workers get up against them, or when there's unrest in the townships which threatens foreign investment, or when the

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SD ..pressure for economic sanctions from overseas becomes very great, Then you start seeing them rushing around as they are at the moment saying influx control must go, and this that and the other must happen. But they are a very important pressure group, and particularly now, because P.W. Botha is not an Afrikaaner Nationalist. His priority is the preservation of the capitalist system, which makes him much more vulnerable to pressure from businessmen, unlike his predecessors, where the Afrikaaner Nationalist ideology, and 'we'll tighten our belts, backs to the wall' kind of thing meant it didn't matter how much businessmen told you that the country was going to wrack and ruin, and profits were going down; you didn't care.

But I think P W Botha's administration and the men in his inner circle do mind very much about their own personal profits, and their own prosperity. And that makes them vulnerable.

JF And how does the Sash think of capitalising on that vulnerability? Is there some way you can relate to that?

SD Well very much so, because of the whole influx control thing. And all the arguments now, why business here is saying you must do away with influx control, is because they have now become convinced that SA's economic position is not going to improve; Our economic growth can't increase; unless you follow the pattern, ....

They're always quoting Japan as an example of a huge landless proletariat that was rapidly urbanised. They quote the American experience, when thousands of poverty stricken refugees from Europe arrived in America, and created the cities on which American wealth was built.

And that has brought them to the point of saying: influx control must go. And it's very important to us that they should be at that point. Because that kind of freedom is the only thing that's going to heal, begin to heal some of the disruption of family and community. So we have to push and shove them all the way.

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JF Do you see that happening? Do you see influx control going?

SD Not at the moment at all. The Government's talking a lot, ~~but~~ it's not going to do it. But, it's very interesting to see for example where the Urban Foundation is now. When they began, they weren't talking about influx control; they were talking about privileges for the urban black and black managers and key personnel.

And the Urban Foundation moved from that, talking ~~a~~ about phasing out influx control, to saying that influx control has got to go completely and absolutely. And that's quite a major step.

Because the urban foundation does represent the key companies in this country. ~~The~~ greatest economic wealth is represented by that foundation.

JF In 1979, P W Botha had the Carlton Conference, and it seemed that government and business were getting closer together. Do you think that that alliance is breaking down?

SD No, not at all. I don't think it's breaking down at all. In fact right now, I think we are seeing signs of an alliance between big business, P W Botha and his men, elements in the PFP which are the big business elements, and Chief Buthelezi.

One's starting to see that alliance moving quite rapidly now towards discussion of a 4th chamber for blacks, or a sparate forum, ...you know the whole kind of scene, hoping to contain the move toward true democracy which actually would mean quite a lot of radical changes. And hoping to contain it; moving from the hope in '78 that by creating an urban middle class, you could contain unrest and revolution and instability in urban areas; to seeing that that on its own is not going to work, And that you have to also have some political process that will involve middle class black people.

Seeing Chief Buthelezi as your preferred leader; very much the Muzorewa option. And I'm not saying that Chief Buthelezi



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SD is the slightest bit like Bishop Muzorewa, because I think he's got very much greater a following, very much more power, very much more charisma than Muzorewa ever had.

But we're seeing the same thing. It was the same groups in SA: big business and Government that poured money into Muzorewa's campaign at the pre-independence elections. And got the shock of their lives when they discovered that in fact he didn't have ~~quite~~ grass roots support. But it's that same coalition that seems to be now promoting Chief Buthelezi.

It's astonishing the way SABC TV..he's on television every other day at the moment. He's quoted; ~~saying~~ Chief Buthelezi says this that and the other, the whole time. And it's very hard at the moment to see him as being in any sense an opposition to Government.

I think that alliance is forming. And that means the BS will have to have some new strategies.

You go on from one step...OK influx control goes because that coalition says it has to go. And it will go in the end, I suppose. And then you have to start fighting the whole battle which is beginning to develop sort of parallel; that what is happening in black townships now is the squeezing out of the poor because housing is so expensive; rents have gone up and up. They've shot up in the last few years, because of this whole thing: new local authorities that have to be supported. They have no other source of financing except from the people they govern.

So that you get a whole new scene... a changed picture, that the rich and the oppressors are no longer only whites oppressing blacks. It's now rich whites and blacks, oppressing blacks.

And that's very important. So that one's whole strategy changes the whole time.

JF Are you meaning to convey the sense that the BS has had a great impact? How would you assess that?

SD No, absolutely not. But that's a very hard question to answer. We're very small. What made you think I was meaning to convey that?

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JF I'm just saying that there has been some impact. Because you were saying that influx control will go, and then we'll have to work on the next issue.

SD I don't think it's possible for us to measure how much influence we have. But I don't actually think it's been negligible. Because I'm quite amazed when I hear that the Urban Foundation at a conference in Johannesburg recently, to which we weren't even invited, on urbanisation.. And all of a sudden I see one of the speakers, reported in the press, quoting something ...a private, it wasn't secret or confidential, but it wasn't a document for publication, that I had actually assisted them with in a Think Tank. And I suddenly find this being quoted.

There was one particular little idiom I had used, that was impossible to mistake! But how can you measure that? It's very bad for an organisation to start claiming credit for this that or the other.

But I honestly do believe that influx control would not be an issue in this country, if it hadn't been for the work of the BS over more than 20 years, hammering away at what it does. Not in the churches, not anywhere.

You know the whole thing about what that means, what migrant labour means, what family life means: you actually find that nearly everything that's written now is based on what we said 20 years ago, or 15 years ago. But you can't really measure it.

JF What about the other issue ...the issue of the Sash affecting the Government, or affecting the political climate. What about the Sash itself moving? Do you think part of your concern is the process of further politicisation of those white Sash ladies?

SD Well that's always a process that has to go on in any organisation, especially a very small organisation, - it's an interaction of thinking. You know the BS is a very democratic organisation, it really is. In the best sense of that word,

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SD without any formal rules about how you go about things.

But we tend to be an organisation in which there's a constant and very active debate about things. I don't think we have to spend a lot of time, and the leadership doesn't spend a lot of time having to persuade the members that this is right, or that is right, because our members tend to be people who are constantly engaged in their own branches, or their own regions in the whole discussion. We all tend to end up in the same place at the same time.

I can remember when the BS at a National Conference, passed the resolution that we were in favour of one man one vote, one person one vote, and I can remember my mother, and some of the older members, it was my first year as National President, saying, Sheena, if you do this, you will break the BS from top to bottom.

And in fact, I think we had one old lady in the E Transvaal who resigned, but the whole organisation was 100% behind that.

The 'end conscription' campaign, it was the BS that actually launched the whole thing. Because our members are terribly involved on a day to day basis with what apartheid means, whether it's in the advice offices, or in resettlement camps, or in crisis situations in townships, we have got a very high % of our membership who is present in the community when things happen.

So you tend to get people being very much more aware of what things mean and what happens, than the average member of let's say, the PFP. And that's very important.

So there's not a hassle in bringing the BS to take ~~XXXXXXXX~~ a next reluctant step.

JF When was that first year that you were National President?

SD 1975 I think.

JF And do you think there's any justified criticism about not moving fast enough: the whole 1984 discussion about affiliation with UDF; do you think there's a certain time when you realise how fast it can move, and that there would be a point where you'd

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JF break things if you did push it further?

SD I think the whole point about affiliation with the UDF actually had nothing to do with moving fast or not. Because there were a tiny handfull of people who ~~strangely~~ enough came out of the old liberal party. It was very interesting, the way that in the BS the dexbate on whether or not we should affiliate, ..the vociferous people who fought it bitterly, and organised lobbies, a tiny minority, I'm talking about 4, 5 or 6 people, were liberal party members almost exclusively, and I find that strange in many ways.

But the reason why the BS didn't affiliate, was because we have never affiliated to any organisation, and 50% of our members, roughly, we never took any vote, but it seemed to be about 50% for and 50% against, believed that it is necessary to maintain that independant stance.

In the same way that we've never affiliated to the PFP or the Liberal Party, or anybody else. That if you affiliate to a political party, then you lose something of your independence. If you're a civil rights group, admitting that you're tiny, and you can't in any way expect to or want to influence an organisation like the UDF in what it said or did. You couldn't expect to have any influence.

~~2,000~~ 2,000 women against millions of people, that you therefore could not take responsibility for things that they might say,...haven't yet but might say...and you would then lose your freedom to criticise. It's like the caucus, being tied by a caucus.

It's the same thing in the end. What is that women's civil rights organisation, in the States...?

But where it is necessary for civil rights groups, like Amnesty, or wherever you are, to maintain that independence, to say what you like; and that's really why we couldn't get the 2/3 necessary to affiliate. And I think it was probably right. At the time I myself wanted to affiliate to the UDF. But I think it was probably a right decision.

Faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

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SD influence of the white minority who supported black resistance, right the way through, starting with Emily Hophauser and her support of the Boers. She's very important actually, you mustn't forget her in your book.

That is very much the tradition in which people in the BS would stand, really. And <sup>honour</sup> Ona Shani..you mustn't forget her either. But she is more fashionable now, so you hear her name more often. But Emily Hophauser we only hear her name because some SADF submarine is called after her. Which would probably give her an absolute fit. I mean if she was alive now, the fact that the SADF honour her by calling a submarine or a destroyer The Emily Hophauser, would probably actually horrify her.

But she became an Afrikaaner hero, because she was an English-speaking white woman who fought.

JF Actually in the Moral Preparedness syllabus <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ the Transvaal, there are 2 people that you have to write essays on: Gatse Buthelezi, and Emily Hophauser. There is that whole great white hope now. If you're not going to find it within your own ranks, who is acceptable outside?

So if anyone would ever say to you : is this a valid exercise, this looking at whites, what would you say?

SD Yes, I think that it's not <sup>just</sup> a valid exercise, but it's so important that you can't actually write the history of SA without taking into account the importance of the tiny white minority that has always stood out for justice in this country.

So that therefore it has to be a valid exercise. It would be nonsense to regard it as anything else.

JF At the same time, what about the other side of that. I want to ask a number of questions about how you see the white role in the struggle in terms of ...there's always that criticism that came with black consciousness of whites overestimating their role....

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SD I think that was quite right. I think that the debt we owe to black consciousness is also something that's for the future historians to analyse and estimate. But I think.... you know I'm very involved with the church in various aspects, so I tend to think in quite religious terms, but that kind of teaching that Steve Biko, and the leaders of his time used to talk about, about white~~s~~ ~~and~~ liberation, ... that whites were burdened by the guilt of what they'd done, and in fact that the black consciousness philosophy involved that whole liberation of white people from that paternalistic burden.

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SD Personally, that was terribly important to me. That whole freedom to behave as a person, instead of a white woman, if you know what I mean. That you could go ahead and forget about your whiteness. Because, white is a kind of label, that doesn't really count.

JF Was that from black consciousness?

SD Yes. Steve; the early black conscious...you want to actually read: that white is a colour of the skin, that has nothing to do with the colour of your soul. Put it like that.

And that feeling that, OK, we don't hate you, we don't dislike you, but we have got to do this by ourselves, and your task if you are committed to our liberation, your task is to work in your own community.

And it was a very important freeing of white people from that whole burden of guilt. And that whole paternalistic feeling, ~~that~~ you have to push and shove black people along, which I think had been the case. Before black consciousness came that white people.. that kind of feeling, that kind of learning that white people got from black consciousness. I don't mean all white people, but white people who were involved got from black consciousness about things like management of time; that whole thing about African time, which is a big joke, which you must know, that everybody's always late. And then you start to think about why do you put such stress on punctuality, and why are black people always late.

And it leads you to a whole freedom from...because you actually learn the value of black peoples' attitude toward time. It brings a whole new dimension into your life, a sort of merging of your own urgent wasp punctuality bit, with the whole rhythm of history and time....tomorrow is another day; which is terribly important, it's very enriching.

So that I think the black consciousness movements were the most important thing that happened. I don't know if you've asked UDF people about it. But there wouldn't be a UDF if there hadn't been that movement. It's all built on that freeing of people, particularly black people, to just



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SD understanding that the future is in their own hands; according to the amount of work they'll put into it, is what will come out at the other end.

And the whole UDF is built on that. All their affiliated organisations are made up of dedicated people, who are working day and night, in their own communities, on various issues or aspects of life that are to them most important.

When you look at black consciousness nowadays, I don't think the press has been quite fair to them. And it's partly their own fault, because they have from time to time evicted all white journalists from National Forum conferences and so on. And I think they have slid a little bit away from Steve Biko's understanding, and Ben Quapa, all those people, their understanding of the world.

I think some of the AZAPO people, -but it's not because they're AZAPO, you find people like that in all political organisations, - have kind of lost something of that whole-hearted, open-armed concern for human beings, sometimes, and some of their statements sound like that. But I've got a lot of admiration for them. And when it came to the Kennedy visit, I was 100% on their side in their protests and demonstrations against Kennedy.

Because I think that whole thing was a very nasty demonstration of an American politician coming here to use the victims of apartheid to further his own political ends at home. Whatever I thought - when I heard he was coming, one didn't know how he was going to behave, but that whole American glossy public relations exercise - it was exposed as such while he was here.

And I think AZAPO was quite right. They've been much criticised for their attitude to that, and their demonstrations, but if I was black, I would have been amongst them!

JF Let me go through a number of other questions about the white involvement. How do you envision the struggle involving any future changes in SA? If you acknowledge the principle

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JF of black leadership, what does that mean for the future governmental system? What will the roles of whites be? Do you ever think about what it will be like 10 years, 20 years ...

SD Yes, I do. I think the BS will probably continue to be a civil liberties organisation. It's nothing to do with blackness and whiteness. It's just a question of power and government.

And I think the way things are going in this country, the chances.....if we had ~~was~~ majority rule now, we would probably have I think, a government that would measure up very closely to the ideals of Western democracy, today, Christian democracy, whatever you like to call it.

But I think we're not going to get that now, and therefore I think that we're going to fight a terrible, long drawn out civil war, and that we will come out of it with a majority government which will be unable to, or unwilling to, or will have no experience of what it means, and that therefore civil rights groups are going to be much needed.

But that's nothing to do with black or white, because civil rights groups will probably all be black, in the future, because we'll be too old!

JF But what about the role of whites in the future? Do you have a sense of what that'll mean in concrete terms?

SD No. ....I think probably very much the same as it is in other African countries, where you tend to get the one or two white cabinet ministers, as in Zimbabwe. I don't see more than that here, in government. But I think the role of whites, and I'm not now talking in terms of BS, but I think the role of white businessmen here is unlikely to change very much. And I think that's going to be the biggest problem for the future, - harnessing the power of monopoly capital. And it happens to be white in this country, and for the foreseeable future probably will be white. And I think that that is probably the thing that one

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SD ...you can have your political exercise, and have your majority government. And that just leads you a step forward in some ways, but with that whole battle which we all face. It doesn't matter whether you're in Holland, or America, or wherever you live, you're faced with the power of big business, which is very very frightening.

Because it's much less direct. Nobody votes a Company Director into a position of Chairman or anything. You have far less control over the way they behave.

And in this country I think it's particularly striking, because we're small, and our population is small, and we don't balance the power of the multi-nationals here with a huge layer of self-employed business people.

In the States you have a tremendous mass of people who are running their own businesses, employing 4 people, or 5 people, or whatever. We don't have that whole huge level here. There's nothing between us and the big three. So that increasingly, every day, they've taken over something else, or they're investing in Massachusetts, or they're investing in Britain. And they're getting so enormous that none of us understand the ramifications, or their manipulations. Because they don't have to be public property.

There's no Parliament, there's no public presence at Board meetings of Anglo-American, or Barlow-Rand, or Samlam, or whichever the other one is. And that to me is very frightening, because that is not just a S. African problem. That's a world problem: the power of big business.

JF  
SD But is that something that worries you, or does it worry the Sash? Are there enough white people who are thinking of those implications?

SD A lot of people in the BS. It's one of our ongoing, and has been now for quite a number of years, - the whole economic debate, that whole....you see there's no disagreement in the BS about monopoly capitalism. At every conference, every meeting, people are agreed on that. And the evils,

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SD and the exploitation, and what we've seen. - And we actually can see the way in which apartheid has been propped up, by the action of big business.

Where the disagreement comes; it's not really even disagreement, it's the debate, but it's nota conflict - that some people see Socialism as an answer. I think the majority of BS people tend to be Social Democrats, in that you actually believe that people are freest if they can ~~have~~ own their own house, and their own bit of ground, which is inviolate from entry by the State, or anybody else without a search warrant.

And that the maximum freedom is not to be found in an extremely rigid socialist system, where you get direction. I think that the majority of BS people see an analogy in Tanzania, between the moving of people into collective villages off their land, to the betterment schemes in this country. It's all gone on before.

But we have got people who believe that you can't conquer the power of monopoly capitalism. They talk about production being owned, and means of production being owned by the people. And <sup>the</sup> most of us would feel that that just doesn't work, because what it actually means is the State owns everything and becomes all-powerful, and non-responsive.

So that kind of discussion goes on all the time. But I don't think there's any disagreement about monopoly capitalism. If you can separate capitalism from free enterprise; how do you find a way of putting the restraints on accumulation of wealth in a free enterprise system. At some point, how do you find ways of cutting it off, before it gets to the stage where you've created a whole new monster of control.

It's <sup>a</sup> vary lively debate and concern in the BS.

JF And you see that as an area for the future? You figure that if you're looking really long term, influx control will be a past battle?

SD There are a lot more things than influx control. I mean there's the whole citizenship, political participation.

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SD Along way to go. But I think side by side with all this - I don't think it's in the distant future, I think it's a problem for now → I don't think you can say: we'll deal with apartheid, and we'll get majority rule, before we worry about that. I think we are worrying about that already. And that is why you'll find the BS responding whenever <sup>e</sup>merging unions want seminars, or help or discussion . Or turning to them for advise. Actually this week we've had discussions with CUSA. Because we've been overloading their legal clinic and they kindly came to see us, to teach us actually, the basics of handling... In fact it's been an interesting week from that point of view.

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Because we had a meeting with Piritai Camay, and Attorney who works in their legal aid clinic, who gave us a lot of very useful teaching, as to how in the advice office, we can handle some of those pay complaints, and workers complaints, without overloading them.

And on Saturday we had an advice office workshop which was taught by Sibongele Nkubela, who is Ishmael Nkubela's wife; how she handles, in her advice office in Soweto, labour complaints, and that kind of thing.

So there's 2 way relationship in that understanding. Not to say that the BS sees the solutions, in the easy jargon of some of the TUs.

JF What about the outreach? I think we'd started to talk about it. Jodac for example has been criticised for preaching to the converted. Do you concern yourself with trying to reach other whites? You talk about how you deal with Blacks. Do you ever deal with conservative whites? or Liberal whites?

SD Yes. All the work we do to get things into the Press, or into the business community...a large amount of the stuff that we write, and produce, is directed at whites. And I would say, yes, conservative whites. But I don't know what you mean by conservative. If you mean are we trying to reach the \_\_\_\_\_ or even Government, No. Because we cannot

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SD ...our influence on Government is entirely negative. If we want to reach Government, we would lobby Urban Foundation, Chamber of Industries, Chamber of Commerce.

So, it depends what you mean by Conservative. We wouldn't waste any effort reaching right wing people, because there is no way we, BS people could communicate with them. Our experience is different. But we do spend a great deal of our time trying to influence white power centres, because that is what blacks tell us is our role.

And in a sense, everything is that. The whole TU movement....black workers are trying to pressurise white power structures. Whether you're white or black, the power is in the hands of whites: an economic sector and a political sector. And whether you're white or black, your whole work has to be directed towards weakening, attacking, influencing, moving, those centres of power.

? 188 JF And do you think you're attracting more white women from the PFP or ~~other~~ ?

SD I don't know where they come from, but we are attracting more white women, in that we are getting regular steady inflow of new members. We don't recruit at all. We don't go out and say: join the BS. So that anybody who says they want to join us, is not doing it because she's been persuaded at a public meeting to do so. She's doing it because she's looking for some way in which she can contribute.

JF So you don't do recruiting? Why?

SD When I say we don't do recruiting, ...we might, if we have a meeting on a particular issue, if somebody stands up in the audience and says: what can we do to help, we might say, well come and join us and see.

But we don't go out recruiting, and signing on members. I don't know why ...well I do really know why. I think you have a strong feeling in our situation that a mass membership is impossible. There's no way the BS could get the kind of mass membership that's going to change things in SA. Because that is a black responsibility, that's in black hands.

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SD And therefore, why weaken yourself by going out recruiting a whole lot of people who might not quite understand what your commitment is. And then you find yourself for ever looking over your shoulder, and worrying about whether the workers are with you.

Remaining small like this. And people, women joining because they are really committed and they come to the point where they say: we've got to do something, you don't have to waste any time teaching, persuading; we do alot of informing of our members which is different. But you don't have to waste time persuading them that they need to come along.

It's lovely to work in the BS. You never have leadership disputes. You don't have any of the sort of complications that happen in political parties, about building up support, or lobbying for support. I think we might be fairly unique in that, that our whole leadership arrangements, tend to be much more people who say: well I will do it, provided I have 2 co-chairs who will share the responsibility. We really don't have lobbies.

I think they did. You'd have to ask somebody like my mother, or some of the early members, because I think they did at the beginning; they had complications, personality clashes, and that kind of thing. But we're very fortunate.

JF So you don't think you're much different from most Sash ladies? You don't think you're more....

SD No, I'm sure I'm not, because if I was, then I would have many more complications in my life.

JF Do you vote, at all?

SD Yes. But I have voted for the last time. I will not vote under the new Constitution. That's another whole debate in the BS, about whether you should vote or not. But the value of the Parliamentary question, has been such that we couldn't do without it. And I always felt that this constituency in which we live: Peter Soal is our MP, and I have the greatest

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SD admiration for his integrity. He's not a very Party political person. He tends to be on the Progressive wing of the PFP. And he's certainly worked very hard with the BS. He's a person who's always ready...he comes to resettlement areas with us and really does his homework. And so I haven't had too much moral dilemma about casting my vote for him.

And it's a question of being purely pragmatic. It would be lovely to say: I'll have nothing to do with a pure white parliament, but if there's no opposition in that parliament, whatever their failures are, however much I criticise them, for the way they handle things, particularly defence, I don't know where we would be, without those Parliamentary questions. They are the only source of information: how many people have been hanged in SA last year? The only way you can find it out is to raise a question. How many people ~~will~~ have been arrested for Pass Law offences?.....

Actually I shouldn't have said I will never vote under this new constitution, because that's the way I feel. But I might have to, because there isn't any other way of finding the answers.

And I just think that principle sometimes, on ~~some~~ things, is ~~not~~ non-negotiable. But whether or not you vote for a person in Parliament....strategically it makes no difference whether I vote or not. And the value of having that opposition there is very great.

JF Let me ask you these general questions I wanted to ask, on topical issues, for just quickie answers. ....Disinvestment....

SD There's no quick answer to that, don't be stupid!

JF No but I'm saying this in terms of when they give you 30 secs on the radio, this is what I'M doing now! I won't be able to use more than that, otherwise I'll just have to cut it. Maybe I can just let you choose what you think is important to say. Do you think it's important what's going on in the States? Do you think it's true that these surveys show that blacks don't like what's



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JF going on in the States, because they're worried about their jobs? Do you think what's going on in the States can make a difference?

SD I think what's going on in the States is terribly important. I think the pressure for disinvestment is terribly important. I have no idea at all whether it's true that black people are for or against disinvestment, because I think that the question is asked: are you in favour of any moves that will lose you your job? And the answer is obviously: No.

I think that people in the West, have got to think a whole lot more concretely, and strategically now about economic sanctions, because the pressure has been so important in this country, that now it's come to the point where it's a real legislative possibility. And therefore people have to start analysing: will this particular economic sanction cause more unemployment, or more suffering, or what about this one which won't affect black people in any way.

And I think that there's no one answer, because I think that there's a whole lot of investment in this country that's done nothing at all to create jobs for people. I think all the mergers and mechanisations.....I think it's very hypocritical of businessmen, both foreign businessmen investing here, and our own businessmen, to rush round the world saying they're concerned about black unemployment, because they couldn't care less. When Ford closes down in Port Elizabeth, they're not worried about black unemployment, when they merge with Sigma and form ? Amcar.

So there's no short answer, but I like the Luvar Bill, <sup>?302</sup> because I think that keeps the pressure going for 2 years, the threat going, because that is what is moving, beginning to move businessmen and Government in this country.

JF If someone from overseas says that they've heard about this UDF-AZAPO thing, and it seems to be 2 big black mass organisations fighting each other, would you say that there is another way of

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JF understanding it? How would you explain what seems to be going on? What do you think is most important to understand about that? What's most not understood?

SD The first aspect of that which is now in the headlines is the reported violent attacks by one group or the other on the houses, homes, families of the other group. And I am quite convinced, the evidence is slowly being ammased, that this whole violent conflict has been initiated by policemen or police paying people to wear an AZAPO or UDF T-shirt, and throw a petrol bomb.

The danger of it of course is, if that's show it begins, that grassroots members of those organisations, learn that their leaders have been attacked, and they're not going to sit down and do a whole political analysis about whose interest is it to create that kind of division, and they will then go and attack somebody else.

So that whole violent level is unclear, but I am absolutely convinced that it was not instigated by either group against the other.

When it comes to the political conflict between the two, and the verbal rhetoric, I do not understand why people go on and on about it, because it's an essential part of democracy that you have different political parties propagating different political and economic philosophies, and I cannot understand why people go on and on about black people not being united.

Why should they be united. If you want democracy in this country, you ought to welcome the fact that there are different political groupings in the black community, that are certainly not tribally based. There is no tribal, ethnic difference between AZAPO and UDF. The division is a totally ideological, political philosophy, and that, I think, is very very healthy.

JF Now I've got this great question. I'm thinking of getting a few people I speak to just put together their views on the question noone wants to answer: what's going to happen in SA?

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JF I'll phrase it a little bit better than that. Do you have any ideas or predictions about how the Government is moving, or going to move to contain the increase in the rebellious population? What kind of ideas do you think are emerging in Government, on how to preserve power? And what kind of predictions would you have for the future as to how resistance will continue? Just so that people can understand what's going on, and what you think will be going on in the future?

SD Now I'm not surprised nobody will answer that!

I think Government does not intend to move anywhere that they are not pushed into moving. I think every contradictory thing they say at the moment is a response to pressure put upon them.

I'm very clear that in containing unrest, they intend to use the full repressive powers of the State. And those are very great and we haven't begun to use them all yet. We're only at the beginning of the call-up of the Selous Scouts - the old men, up to the age of 55. And we've got a long way to go before we can say that the whole white male population is mobilised, but it's on its way. And I have no doubt that they intend to go on with that.

I do not think that they have any intention whatsoever, ....they're not sitting there saying how can we move towards democracy. What they are saying is: what do we have to do next, in order to preserve the capitalist system in this country.

End of side one.

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SD And that is why their responses are so contradictory, and they make all kinds of statements and promises for the ears of Bonn and Washington and London, that are simply designed for public relations. They don't mean anything at all, in terms of concrete action.

The legislative moves that they have taken, as far as the African majority goes, are totally meaningless. The removal of social discrimination for people who can afford to go to international hotels, and posh restaurants, and spend their

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SD Holidays on Seapoint Beach. But it's not ...I have no evidence of a real intent of reform in its true sense. You cannot reform an evil system. You have to repent first, and change. And there's no evidence of that. What was the 3rd part of the?

JF Predictions on the future of black resistance. Just some understanding of what's going on.

SD Now I think that what is perhaps different now, to '76 or '63, is that there is not going to be any stopping, of black resistance this time.

And in that sense, UDF is very significant. The Government could ban the UDF tomorrow, but because the UDF is not an organisation that has a . It's an affiliation of organisations, small organisations in many cases, all over this country, in both , small town, rural and metropolitan areas. Those organisations were already there. UDF brought them together. Since UDF formed, more organisations have started up in different places.

If you ban UDF, how are you going to ban 600 community groups, of various kinds all over the country. And I think that is terribly important to understand.

And I think it's actually been ~~very~~ interesting, with the arrest of the UDF national leadership, and charging them with treason, has meant they have effectively been out of action for months now. I mean, one lot, I think it was August, and the next lot, November. And now we're in May the following year.

And there were little hiccups, and the National officers found it difficult in sometimes the liaison, and the work that's got to be done, But there has been no hesitation in the ongoing work of the local groups, inspite of everything that's stacked up against them.

And I think that is different to what has happened ever before. I think the economic recession, unemployed people have added to it. The whole explosion of young people leaving school with Matric, or JC, and having no hope in the whole world of ever getting a job, even if we have a boom, because of our

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SD structural unemployment. Much the same situation as you have in the West, where you just haven't learned how to handle your technological development. And we're in that the same. We've imported your technology.

And I don't think that this time it's going to be stopped. I think there may be remissions, if you like, when nothing apparently happens. But I don't think what's going on now can really be stopped.

The danger is of course that the longer the repression lasts, and the worse it becomes, the more like their oppressors the oppressed become. And that leaves civil rights groups exactly where they started from. And that's the big danger. But at the moment, I'm I suppose, optimistic, because I just can't believe that all that energy, and all that non-cooperation, civil disobedience, resistance, is going to be contained.