

J.F. So can you tell me when and where you were born?

W.K. (.Benoni.....) in the Transvaal - that's on the East Rand, you know - you mean when, the year, the date of birth are you talking about - 1918 - 6th. April, by the way, which was a holiday, you know, national holiday, and that's when van Riebeck came to the Cape, 6th. April, 1952 - and also it's when Solomon Mahlangu was executed, you know, so in both those respects I try to hush down my birthday amongst my comrades, you know (Laugh) - first of all because they all grieving for Mahlangu, and I don't want to celebrate, and certainly don't want to celebrate the arrival of van Riebeck in the Cape and all that (.....) for us in the movement, you know, since he represents the boers, you know, as - you know, what we call boers - so it's Benoni - that's where I was born -

My father - you want to know about that as well..... (Tape off) Oh, yes, so that, if you want to do, you know, my father came from, I think the Bylorussia, or from Russia - my mother was born in London - and you know, they met in - in South Africa, got married there -

Now the interesting thing about, you know, the - my father was escaping from what they called the pogroms, you know, in the Soviet Union - not in the Soviet Union - in the Tsar's Russia - you know the pogroms there - and one would think therefore that he would know what persecution is all about, but although he joined the Labour Party and was a very great friend of Walter Ma dley, who was a minister in the 1924 Malan Labour coalition against Smuts, and Ma dley was the labour - one of the labour leaders, but the labour leaders really stood for white labour in South Africa - my father was -

Ma dley stood for Benoni, and my father was his sort of - one of his lieutenants - you know, politically he did a lot of work for him - but my father therefore you'd think that being a labour person would be very progressive, and having been persecuted he'd be progressive, but such is the influence of the South African situation that one of the most vivid impressions I have of my father as - when I was a little boy - was him taking hold of an African servant of his and kicking him, literally kicking him all round the yard, a big yard, you know - now this is supposed to be one of the (Laugh) progressive types -

And it was I think the first impact - the impact of that had quite an - left quite an impression on me, because I felt so sorry for the African, who was so kind to me - he used to feed me with mealie pap and all that type of thing, you know, when I was a little boy, and so friendly - he used to take me by the hand - his wife used to carry me on her back, you know, like they carry their own children, and I used to feel so nice and comfortable, you know - her name was Lizzie, I remember that -

And you know, so I had quite a good, as a child, a good relationship with the servants as they were - and you know, they say that if you want to find out why a person, a white person, or any person for that matter, but particularly whites, join what is regarded as the progressive movement, national liberation movement, you just scratch the surface and underneath it you'll find either something was said, some incident that took place, or even a background, you know, of some sort, you see - and I can remember even in those days somehow I think my mother, through her - through her father, who died at a young age, had been told by him, and

W.K. she passed it on to us that you know, it's not fair that people should be different, you know, and earn - one earn millions of pounds and one earn nothing, in spite of the fact that we ourselves being whites were privileged, and you know, that sort of thing in those early formative years either leaves some sort of impact on you or not -

With my brother I think it did not, as I'll tell you later on - but certainly with me, and I've got a twin sister - with us it did, because that twin sister of mine eventually became Moses Kotane's secretary when he was the general secretary of the Communist Party - she's quoted in that book that you read, just very briefly - her name is Celia Rosier, and she was secretary who (?) spoke about how careful Moses Kotane was about timekeeping, you know, as opposed to most Africans, who have no idea of how to keep time, and of course there's a very good reason for that, but -

Because you'll notice that very few Africans have watches - maybe today they have, but generally speaking they don't have, even in our own circles, so you know, if I haven't got a watch I feel undressed - an African goes about without watches, you know - so that the precise timing is - is life - is not sort of motivated by the watch on your wrist, you know -

He is his (?) by work - he knows he has to be at work - he knows that he's supposed to be there at a certain time, but he's not constantly looking at his watch and hurrying as I did to be at ten thirty to meet you - no - if he doesn't meet you at ten thirty it's all right - the - life goes on, you know - and he knows that he has got a very hard day's work to put in, so he's not going to kill himself beforehand - you know, this sort of thing, you see -

Now anyhow I was talking about my (Laugh) - so that's sort of the early background, you know, where there were three of us.

J.F. I'm interested when - because I've been trying to read about the early white politics and (.....) - so your father - what work did he do?

W.K. Oh, he was a - well, you know, in those days they had hansom cabs, you know, and things like that, so he had like a taxi service of buggy, you know, horse-drawn taxis and so on, and he also was a cattle dealer - that's what he was doing, you know, in those days, and that was quite a big sort of business, you know - cattle, horses - he had this taxi rank, you know, which today are filled with - with motor cars -

In those days it was that sort of type of thing - and we were quite - well, I suppose you'd call us middle class - you know, we lived in a - in what is called a bungalow - here in England we call single storey house - in Benoni near the Kleinfontein Mine, so that even that became something, you know - the mine symbolised something to all of us, you know - we could see the Africans pushing those kuku (?) pans that come up, you know, where they dump the - the mine - the coal and so on, you know, that build up into a mine dump -

And even they were very friendly towards us - the whites would chase us off the mine dumps, because we used to go and slide down (Laugh) you see, and - and the Africans would say : No, come along, you know and you see, so I had a very nice warm feeling towards Africans, and you know how warm they are towards children in any case, because Africans regard children as value, you know - as

W.K. as - as the best - probably the best thing they have in life, so they value their children - they make a big fuss of them - and so they did - and there - there (?) - you see, there's no colour bar as far as I'm concerned, and right throughout my life, from that early time right through - although of course I became biased because of the influences of my family and friends and so on, but from what I could see of things Africans, particularly Africans have not got racialism on the whole, as whites do -

You see, there'll be some exceptions amongst whites who do not have colour prejudice - amongst the Africans you'll find some exceptions who do - but that is the way you could weight it up, you know, that there (are) few racialists amongst the blacks, then many amongst the whites, you see -

And this is what I've always felt, that the African people have no racialism - they've got - in any case they've got too much to worry about - they have to worry about where they going to get the next piece of food for their children - that's their worry -

And I remember how some of my very best comrades, you know, in the A.N.C. and so on in our liberation movement, you know, would tell me - I'd say to them : But why don't you buy some fruit sometimes - and John Motluela, this particular person said to me - and you know, that sort of thing left it's - left an impression on me - he said : Comrade Wolfie, what are you talking about, you know - if I buy fruit - if I had to buy fruit, as I'd like to buy, and it's cheap in South Africa as you know, what am I - where am I going to get all the necessary things, you know - the meat, the - the milk or whatever, you know, you see - can't afford that -

And you know, when he told me this it again - and I was a grown up person in the movement - it never occurred to me, you know, that these are the sort of things that we whites take for granted - they have to think twice before they can buy some grapes, which is in such profusion in South Africa, as you know.

Anyhow so as I say, as far as I'm concerned on the whole - and I would even say it's so amongst the Indian and the Coloured people as well, but to a lesser extent - that the colour prejudice is the whites who have it - there's not the same proportion, certainly not - nowhere near it - of people who - who hate the whites amongst the blacks, except for the way they are treated, but basically they are not racialists.

J.F. Let me ask you about your father, just briefly about this Labour Party thing - did he consider himself to be left or was he.....

W.K. I think he considered himself to be a progressive, because he supported the white workers when they went on strike in 1922 - there was a big white workers - mineworkers strike, and their slogan was White Workers of the World Unite (Laugh) you see - they didn't want to accept the Africans help during that strike - the Africans were willing to help the white workers who came out on strike against the government, you know, for better conditions and so on - the whites were so prejudiced that one of the reasons why they'd come out is that they wanted to prevent the government from giving more amenities to the black workers, but in spite of that the blacks were sympathetic towards the white workers, but they wouldn't accept their help - now my father and Ma dley -

W.K. Ma dley was - became the minister of labour in the Malan government - he dangled me on his knee - I remember how he used to play with me when I was a little child, you know - he used to visit our house - he was the member of parliament for Benoni itself, you see - and yes, my father regarded himself in that sense as a progressive, but as I say, he was progressive towards the white workers, he wasn't progressive towards the blacks -

I illustrated how this - this picture of - that I have of my father, you know, kicking this man around because he'd done something - some minor thing, you know, probably, and you know, the prejudice, you see, even from the so-called white progressives in this - in inverted commas, you know, is so great that they could not sort of see, you know, that - that - that you can't be called a progressive because you support the white workers and yet treat the black workers as badly as the boer government used to, and as Smuts used to.

J.F. So he would have considered himself progressive as opposed to what, the conservative....

W.K. As opposed to - to those who would vote for Smuts or Malan or so on, you know - to that whole lot there - so in that sense, if you think of it in terms of white politics, he was progressive - in - you think in terms of the whole population I think (Laugh) he was very reactionary.

J.F. Do you remember him talking about the 1922 miners strike?

W.K. Oh, yes, we had a big hole in - and I remember that, you know - there was shots fired, you know, between the workers and the - the soldiers, you know, and the police - and in our building there was a big hole in one of the corners there and I asked, you know - we were evacuated to a - to a farm out - just out of Benoni, you know - and when we came back there was this hole in the wall and apparently that's what happened, you know, that - I don't know - I can't remember the story but it was because my father and I suppose some of the people like Ma dley and others were - either had a meeting there or they - the - for the government forces believed there was something - and there was a bit of a battle in Howard Avenue, you know, which was near the police station there -

And ja, he - so that was there because of the troubles, and that also left an impression on me - my grandmother had a - a restaurant, a kosher restaurant, you know, in the main street of Benoni, and all the white workers used to come there, you see, to eat at a place, although they weren't - they weren't Jewish, you know - they were - they just came there because you see, there was that sympathy towards - towards the - the white workers - and I believe - so I'm told, that in - I suppose in a like charitable way she used to give some food to some of the black workers, you know, who - who were just unemployed and so on - they used to come into the yard -

And now that was regarded as something almost revolutionary, for a white person to give food to - to blacks, you see - so all that had - left some sort of impact on me when I heard about it, you know - and I'm talking about it in a vague way because it's so long ago, but I remember that - the fact that I'm telling you that shows that it did leave an impact, you see - made me feel

W.K. well, that's good - why not - why shouldn't she give it, you see.

J.F. And when you were growing up you spoke about the early, early childhood experiences of blacks - servants being good to you....

W.K. Yes.

J.F. When you were in school and as a teenager did you have any contact with blacks?

W.K. Nnnot really, no - as a matter of fact, like all whites I suppose I became prejudiced against blacks, you know, the same as any other whites - you know, when I got a bit older - but you may be interested to hear that, you know, after the - I think after - I think the aftermath of the 1929 crash - my father lost - b ankrupt, you know - he was bankrupted - he lost his whole business, and so did many other whites - they were called poor whites - and it had a very great impact on - on many whites in this sense, that for the first time you found many whites, not only workers - I'm sure there were many middle class whites had gone bankrupt who were now feeling the pinch the same as the blacks always do permanently -

And I remember Danie du Plessis who was once, you know, in Johann-
esburg - he was the secretary of the Communist Party but also a trade unionist, an Afrikaaner who told me that in those days he used to pick up dried orange peels and eat it, you know, from lying around, just to sustain him - things were as bad as that, you know -

Well, when that happened we were in Cape Town - my mom - our family, you know, we were sort of - my grandmother was the mat-
riarch, you know, of the family - everything centred round her, you see - and then when all this happened we were living in a suburb called (.....) in Cape Town, which was quite a posh area, you know -

Well, when my father lost all his money he was in Johannesburg - we'd come down - apparently the squeeze was already on, you know - and he was trying to resuscitate and or to find a way of rescuing his business, his money, you know - and we were down there with the old granny, and then stayed in Oranjezicht (?) ourselves, you know, as a family unit, just with my mother and the three children -

And then when this happened we went - you know, my mother's a very proud woman - you know, didn't want charity even from the family, and you know what Jewish people are like - I don't know if you do, but they - they sort of get together, you know, and help each other - well, all that she would accept was the - there was a shop in Woodstock, which is a very, very - it's something like District Six, where only Coloured people live - and there was a little - just a little provisional shop - so she accepted that money from the family, you know, to - to take over that shop - she had to put down the deposit and so on -

But we lived at the back of the shop in slums, you know - they were very, very - very slummy - two - two rooms - very low ceil-
ings, no electric lights, no bathroom - we had to buy a big tub - you know these big washing tubs and put water into a paraffin tin and you know, with a - what do you call that - a primus stove - we used to light - light the water - put the water on, light it up and then have a bath in turn, all of us, you see - and we used to have these like gas lamps, you know, to - to - for our lights instead of electric lights - the - the loo was outside, and

W.K. there was a stable at the back on the other side of the wall - the back wall - and that introduced rats by the million - mice, you know, all over the show - and - and there we were living amongst Coloured people for quite a few years, and the impact that it had on me, you know, once we - you know, now Coloured people will always go on living in that poverty and so on - but the impact it had on me and my twin sister, different to my older brother, was that when we were eventually out of that and the, you know - and people started recovering - the economy must have grown, you know, and whites were now uplifted again to the position which they had (held) before - those who were poor whites -

The impact it had on me from all the misery that I saw, and there was prostitution, there was dagga smoking - Gimpy (?) Street, which was only about a block away from where we lived, is so notorious that there's even a record about Gimpy Street - famous record amongst the Coloureds, you know, telling you about Gimpy Street and the notoriety of Gimpy Street -

And I - you see that finger there - you see that - that was fighting (Laugh) what we call a skolly (?) - you know what a skolly is called in those days, and we didn't even have money enough to - to go to the doctors, you know, to straighten it, so this is what I've got from those days - and you know, became really tough, and oh God, we mixed with all sorts of people, you know, in that slum area, both white and - and - whites who used to come to the shop and next door to a fish and chip shop (?) some of whom had terrorised, without us knowing, but they were friends of ours - they used to come in and buy cigarettes and - and provisions, you know, in our shop -

They were called masked bandits, and there were headlines constantly in the newspapers (Laugh) about these masked bandits who used to - who used to rob the buses, you see, and they could never be found - when they were found these were the ones who were doing it - our very friends, you see - so you see that - that there was this sort of thing.

J.F. How old were you.....

W.K. Well, it was in teenage, ja....

J.F. And did the Coloured people in that area accept you?

W.K. You know, it was funny - you know, they had - there was no - there was no Immorality Act in those days, and the whites themselves used to - to..... no, well, the Coloured - they - they - yes, they accepted us in the sense that they'd let us come into their houses, you know, but they could never understand how it was - and they would say it to us, you know, to - especially to my twin and I - we were very close, you know - how is it that you come here - where (are) you from - and when we said Oranjezicht they couldn't understand, you see - but why are you staying here with us, you know - and yet when they were told, and I suppose we told it in a very sketchy way because we didn't understand ourselves really, you know, fully why we were living there - you know, as kids what do you know, you know -

And these prostitutes, you know, because I mean how else could they live - the Coloured women, you know, and the sailors from the British ships used to come off from the docks, you know, and come round Woodstock because Woodstock was notorious like District

W.K. Six for prostitution and all that sort of thing, and the - there was one particular woman who you know, she - I can remember her with her lips all painted red and so on - Coloured woman - and I mean she was a prostitute, there was no question about it - she even had a beat -

You know, as a kid I realised as a teenager that - and the beat went past in the main road past our shop, and she used to walk up and down there and we'd see cars coming along and she'd go into the car, and although I couldn't quite understand what it all meant I knew that there was something wrong, and - now they - this particular one used to say to my sister : But you know - she'd say - what did she call her, Missy - you know, this is not a good place for you, you know - she'd say - you see, look at us - look at the way we live - now why does your mother bring you here - it's not good for you, you know - and she'd aim at - mainly at my sister, you see, and -

And of course I was around so she'd say the same thing to me, and all this, you know - but they accepted us, you know, in Gimpy Street there where slums - people are lying about dust and filth and mice and rats and everything, you know, in the - in the flats - like flats they were -

I used to go in there and I had friends there amongst the Coloured boys, you know - we used to kick a ball around - tennis ball and - and I mixed quite freely with them, you know - I think I still felt a little bit superior, and mainly because the previous background, you know, gave me the advantage of having had a better education, the better sort of background of - even of music or whatever it is, you know - some you know, that type of thing - and so in little ways I felt superior, but I was very friendly -

They accepted us easily.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

W.K. There were a lot of whites living further up in Woodstock, and when I say Woodstock you must understand that when you talk about Woodstock you talking about a slum Coloured area mainly, very much like District Six - now there were a lot of whites, bus conductors and drivers and so on, some of whom amongst them were unemployed and very low paid, and in spite of the fact they they themselves were living in little hovels, you know, nothing much to talk about, but superior to those that the Coloured people lived in, and with whom I had a rapport, but they themselves would never accept the Coloured people who lived - some of them lived around where they were - they were in another area of Woodstock - and these whites would never accept that the Coloured who lived sometimes right next door (to) them - the better off Coloured lived next to the very poor whites, you see, and - but they were never accepting them socially, very seldom - now and again you'd see it.

J.F. And in all of your background that you've talked about did you - you had a sense of politics in terms of your father was Labour

- J.F. Party - was he Labour Party throughout his life?
- W.K. Ja.
- J.F. Did you have any sense of black politics - had you ever heard of the A.N.C. - did you.....
- W.K. No, no.....
- J.F. Never heard of it....
- W.K. No - not until my twin sister married the local treasurer of the Communist Party in Cape Town, and I suppose through him she - a white fellow....
- J.F. What's his name?
- W.K. His name was Rosier - he's dead now...
- J.F. How do you spell it?
- W.K. R o s i e r.
- J.F. And his first name?
- W.K. His fir - Hymie, his name was - now she then must have joined the Communist Party - you know, that whole (?) Communist Party - and she then - but she was a marvellous typist and marvellous secretary, you know, she - I've never heard - never seen anyone who could type like she did or take shorthand, you know, like - then she must have - she became political and she became Moses Kotane's secretary, because Moses Kotane had moved down from Johannesburg to Cape Town and was - and the - the headquarters of the Communist Party was there then, you see - so she was his secretary -

And I remember the first time I - she - she - she said : Oh, you must come along and you must join, you know, and - and I said : What! Never, you know - this is before the war, you know, the second world war - and she said : Well, all right then - and I had to meet her one day - she says : Well, look, you better come up to the office - and I went up to the office there, saw her, and then it was - it was - I think it must have been just after five o'clock or so - then I saw this man, Moses Kotane, you know, and - first time I met him -

And then Celia was saying, well, let's go, you see, and I - I thought well, where we going to - we were going to her flat, as a matter of fact - but where are we going to with him though - that's the point, you know - and we walked down and she said : Come along, come along, you know, to me - quietly, you know, because she saw I was hesitant, and I thought, Christ, do I have to walk through the streets of Cape Town with Kotane - you know, with this black man - you know, I just felt very uneasy - this was, you know, after that sort of thing, and -

And we even walked right down to St. George's Street (Laugh) which is the main - right in the centre of Cape Town - and I remember how uneasy I felt and how I was hoping that nobody would see me walking with this man, you know, and - and my sister - I think I even felt more embarrassed about my sister walking with him than me walking with him, you see, but she felt easy, you know -

W.K. and then we got into a bus and went up to her flat, and thereafter many times she would have Kotan@ and H.A. Naidoo and others, you know, coming to her flat for meals, and then I got used to it, you see, and I accepted it, you know - I thought, oh, this is nice -

And then I remember my mother walking into the flat unexpectedly one day when this was all going on and she stood (Laugh) - she stood at the open door and saw these black people (Laugh) sitting there eating - you would have thought that she'd turned to stone, you know - she just stood looking as if unbelievably, you know, and I quickly sized up the situation, you know, so I got up and I walked into the passage - I said, come (.....) walked down and she said to me : What's this - what - who - you know - she couldn't find words, and I said : No, this is something that - that's Celia's boss, you know, that man there, that black man, and friends, you know, Naidoo - and there were others there - and you'll have to get used to it, you know - and she said : Me get used - what, you know - she - she just couldn't find the words -

Anyhow we said yes, you know, that you'll have to get used to it - you either have to choose between having a daughter, because she's working for - with that man, and he's her boss - or you just dissociate yourself from the family and from your daughter - and she got used to them and she used to love them, you know - she'd cook for them and everything when she came to the flat -

So it shows you how, with certain pressures which are brought to bear - in this case it's an unusual one, a family - she had to choose between having a daughter particularly and a son who were friendly with these people, and a son in law of course, and - or being estranged from the whole family - and my twin didn't even want to take the trouble to get up and go and explain it - it was me who did the explaining, although at that time she was more committed, you see - my sister was -

But she got used to it, and this is what - this is another lesson I learned, you see, that here is this middle class born in England type of person who got used to it, you know - there was no - nothing.....

J.F. Was there anything that Moses Kotan@ said to her to make her feel more at ease, or was there ever.....

W.K. Oh, yes - oh, yes - you see, he - oh, yes - you see, when she came in he got up and Naidoo got - he stood up, you know, and spoke pleasantly to her, and how pleased they were to meet her - you know, when she was induced to come in - and they carried on the conversation - there was no pandering, you know - it was that - they introduced - she was introduced to them - and in a normal way Kotan@ and Naidoo, you know, would get her - ask for her opinion about a little thing, you know - it could have been a domestic thing - I remember that, you see -

Got her involved and she, you know - and I think without meaning to do so, you know - it wasn't a contrived thing - they just carried on normally, and there was a woman for whom they had respect, you know - she's an elderly woman - older than them anyhow at the time - and why not, you know, you see, so they -

- W.K. that's what I say - they were quite normal - they were quite normal.
- J.F. Let me just fill in - just some brief answers - you stayed in Cape Town and you didn't go back to Jo'burg?
- W.K. I - no, I did - I moved about between Jo'burg and Cape Town all my life practically...
- J.F. But your family - your father stayed up there?
- W.K. Ja - ye.
- J.F. The family never moved back?
- W.K. No, we never moved back.
- J.F. Was he alive still when this was happening - when your sister married a.....
- W.K. Oh, yes, he died during the war - he.....
- J.F. So he was still.....
- W.K. He was still there, but he had started recouping (?) - he - he - he started brickworks, you know.
- J.F. But how would he have felt about the black/white involvement - would he have responded like your mother?
- W.K. Never - never - I doubt it - I doubt it.....
- J.F. So she just didn't mention to him....
- W.K. No, no.
- J.F. Did he know who your sister had married and that she was working for a black man?
- W.K. Oh, yes - yes.
- J.F. But he just didn't want to know?
- W.K. He didn't want to know, yes.
- J.F. And whenabouts did she marry this fellow from the CP?
- W.K. In Cape Town.
- J.F. But when - how old was she, or what year....
- W.K. Oh, God, now you're asking me - before the war - maybe in '38, I don't know.
- J.F. And then when did she go work for Kotane?
- W.K. Must have been - must have been '37 or '36 or some - '37 or '38 I think - I think so, yes.
- J.F. And what position - was this when he was.....
- W.K. The general secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa.
- J.F. And her husband had been what?

W.K. He was the treasurer of the local.....

J.F. And H.A. Naidoo was what?

W.K. H.A. Naidoo was on the central committee of the Communist Party - he was an Indian Congress - South African Indian Congress executive, and he was a leading trade unionist in Natal before he came to Cape Town.

J.F. To work with the CP in Cape Town?

W.K. No - no, no, no - he worked on New Age (?) at the time - on the newspaper - he was a reporter.

J.F. And now to get back to you - you told about when you first went to the office with your sister - what did you do after school - did you - you went to a white school in Cape Town even though you lived in a.....

W.K. I went into the country - you know, after all that, you know, when we were in the slums there ag, school we couldn't - we were starving, you know - we didn't - so school became something that - that, you know, if we went to school we went to school, and if we didn't well, we didn't, you know - became a hell of a business - a big trauma, you know -

But I was determined that I wanted to finish matric, so here - so up to then I think I'd done JC, you know, up to a point - can't remember exactly - anyhow I eventually went back to do matric, but I went into a boarding school in the country in a place called (.....) to do - to finish matric, and that's what I did, you see - then I used to play rugby with all these blokes who used to say (?) I'm playing rugby with them on the Saturday - on the Monday they'd come and Heil Hitler, you know - this was before the war broke out, you know, in those days, in the early '30's.

J.F. Really?

W.K. Mmmm.

J.F. What were they - they were Afrikaans?

W.K. Afrikaaners - you see, I went into the country, into the BoC land - it's between Caledon and Worcester.

J.F. So were they kind of also.....

W.K. And this was - this was the only - this was the only (.....) school - the (.....) school in South Africa - Sir de Villiers Graaf (.....) School, it was called - that de Villiers Graaf, you know, he was a mayor of Cape Town at one time (.....)

J.F. So was - it was a private school?

W.K. Private school.

J.F. And were you one of the only Jewish kids there?

W.K. Few of us were there - no, there were a few.

J.F. Was there prejudice from these guys or?

- W.K. Absolutely - you see, we'd play in the very same team, and I was a very good rugby player, you know - I even played for the town team as a schoolboy, you know, and - and therefore amongst the Afrikaaners where rugby is a religion I was quite a hero, but when it came to - to - to coming back to school and you know, the prejudice amongst the Afrikaaners against the Jews was terrible -
- They used to be beating up - at that time they used to beat up old men coming out of the synagogues and everything - the very Nationalist Party - terrific amount of anti semitism - so it was with their sons and - you know, so there was a lot of that going on in the schools all over, you know, because this was '35, I suppose - 1935, '36 - '35, something like that.
- J.F. Were your family quite religious or were....
- W.K. No - no - no, it wasn't (Laugh) - no orthodoxy - except that the old granny, you know, although she wasn't orthodox she used to mumble her prayers, you know - no, no, nothing like that.
- J.F. And then when you finished matric what did you do?
- W.K. Well, when I finished matric I went - I went up to Johannesburg for a little while - and then I joined the army, you know, after - in 1940 I joined the army and served in the - you know, had to get permission, you know, to go overseas because we were all volunteers, you see.
- J.F. Permission from?
- W.K. From my mother, you know, to say that this child under the age of, I suppose 21 or whatever it was, you know, some legality - you had to get permission, so she had to sign, you know, that ja, he could go serve overseas if necessary - so I was in the army and soon joined the Springbok Legion, which was a very progressive organisation, you know, of ex-soldiers, but we - we - you know, we had a lot of key positions in the army, the Springbok Legion, and we had quite a lot -
- Now this is where - where quite a - had quite an impact on my political thinking and everything - we had a policy - you see, there were non whites who joined the army, and even when there was - there was talk about the Japanese coming over and attacking South Africa, Smuts said yes, he'll arm everybody, you know, Coloureds and everything, but you know, in fact they never even intended doing so, because when we went up to - to the western desert after what they call the Abyssinian Campaign in which I served - Ethiopia, you know - they came up, they gave them spears - now we in the western desert - and I remember at the particular stage in the western desert we were now training - I'm jumping a bit but we were training to - to go on the - to the Italian Campaign, you know, to attack Italy, you know, with the - when the Germans were cleared out of the western desert, and we were training for that -
- Now there were these Coloured - now there were Coloured and Indian and a few Africans in our company who were training - they were given all the menial jobs, and they had spears to go on guard duty - now it's true it was away from the front now - we were training nearer to Cairo but in the desert at a place called Catatba (?) and I of course was now a key man in the Springbok Legion - you know, we had policies and we used to get newsletters coming to us, and we would organise more people to join the

W.K.

.... Springbok Legion and so on, you see - and I noticed that there was an Afrikaans sergeant who used to take these Coloured - the blacks - he would take the black soldiers away during the day and go and lecture to them, and he used to grumble like hell about it - so I said : All right, you go and sleep - let me - I - I don't mind lecturing to them - you let me lecture - he says : All right, will you - so I said : Sure - and we used to go behind, you know, these big mounds, you know, in the desert, you see, and I used to go without permission (Laugh) you see, and go and lecture to them in - in place of this chap - I think his name was Sergeant Bezuidenhout -

Now we had a policy - one was that we wanted - internationally we wanted a second front to be formed - we were trying to stop the allies, as we thought at the time, they were trying to do was to get together with the Germans in Finland to fight against the Russians, you see - and we said no, we didn't come here to fight the Russians, we came here to fight against the Germans - and of course the reason why a lot of us - one of the very good reasons why a lot of us joined -

For instance myself, was not only that I was against racialism of any sort, but of course being of not orthodox but being Jewish I would be a victim of Hitler (Laugh) and I wasn't going to allow that to happen if I could help it - and he had already said in Mein Kampf that the blacks would be treated that way as well, you see -

So we told the blacks why it was necessary to fight against Hitler - not to fight against Russians and so on, and that they themselves should get equal pay with the whites and they should have arms - you know, how could you be fighting a war with spears - it's ridiculous when you think of it today, but this was the policy of the Legion, and I was saying this to them - now there was a fella by the name - an officer by the name of Tato, a British man, real Tory type, who'd landed in Durban when the war - outbreak of the war, and he joined the South African forces, and he hated me because he knew my views, you see -

And so I went on talking to them, you know, abo - every day for - it must have gone on for about a month already, just for an hour or so, telling them about the Springbok Legion policy and - and posting a man here and a man there who could see on the other side of this like hill that was hiding us -

And then (Laugh) one day when I was in the middle of saying : You mustn't fight against the Russians, and you must demand - tell them that you not going to fight this war with spears - you want guns and you demand it, and you want equal pay, you see, for so on - I saw the man who I'd posted there with his eyes wide open and he was petrified - then I realised something was happening, so I looked (Laugh) over my shoulder and there was this (Laugh) Lieutenant Tuttle and in his very crude way I think he said : Oh, this is where the life has found you, telling people to mutiny, eh - he said : You stay where you are - and he called some soldiers, you know, fully armed, you know, with fixed bayonets and so on, and I was marched off under close guard, you know - close arrest they call it - and charged with what amounted, you know - they had some clause in the - in the army book, you know, disciplinary book - I was charged for what amounted to mutiny -

And when I appeared there I said : Yes, I did say all those things that Lieutenant - but I said even more than he heard - I said : I said this, this, this and the other, and there's no secret

W.K. about the Springbok Legion policy, and this is what I was talking about, and I do think they should have arms and I do think that they should get equal pay, you see, and so on - and you know, in the normal army you can get shot for mutiny, but in our army, volunteers, you could get ten years or five years or whatever - anyhow I got off -

Another officer came along, an information officer, and he gave - I can't - and he gave evidence to the effect that he also believed that - that what I was saying is correct and so on - so that deflated the whole court, you know, which was a captain, my captain and one or two assessors, you know, and I was found not guilty -

But the point is that we were doing this type of work in the army, and we mounted a big campaign against this sort of discrimination in the army, which was unheard of - for white South Africans as well to be involved in that type of thing - eventually most of the blacks, as far as I remember, were seconded to the British Eighth Army as a result because they would not allow these people to be properly armed, and not just do all the menial jobs, you see.

J.F. So would you say it was the Springbok Legion that politicised you - you didn't have politics till you got to the army?

W.K. No, I had the politics of my sister and having met Kotan and so on - and then I later on joined the infantry in Italy, and what I saw there I think probably politicised me even - yes, the Legion played a big part the - even more than anything else, because when we advanced on - on - on towns and cities, you know, you would find the first part crashed - and you know that you couldn't help noticing that the places - in many places, in cities and so on, the places that were destroyed by air and so on were not the big nice houses - you know, the areas there in Italy - it was always sort of the poor hovels -

And then you'd find - as we came into a town which was wracked, you know, on the front part by artillery, and then we had to go in and secure the place, the infantry - you'd find these poor people coming out of the hills, you know, carrying their little sacks and looking, you know, around, and they were poor, poor people, you know, and I thought, Jesus, man, but this is I mean - look there - there these big fancy houses, you know, and they not touched, bombed, and yet the - and yet all these poor people, you know, they - they - here they are - they've got no houses to live in -

I mean I don't want to go into detail about the most - the - the - the character that I'll never forget in all my life was a - was a little boy whose whole family had been killed and working class types, you see, and who was a stray - what do you call them again - the little boy - the kids who - who went picking up food wherever they could get it, stacked in these broken houses, you know and so on, and this is -

And this happened to many, many of the poorer kids, you know - there's no doubt about it, there was - I'm absolutely certain that there was a policy of doing that type of thing - that had a terrific impact on me, because I equated these poor people with the Coloured people that I knew lived in hovels, you know, and the Africans who lived in tin shanties that I knew and seen, and I

W.K. thought, Ah, no, wait, there's something here, you know, that's all wrong - and this had a very, very big impact on me - why is it that these poorer people are the ones who suffer in war and also in South Africa there, you see, and it had this very, very great impact morally, ethically, I supp - and - and in every way - you know, I started thinking no, I must learn much more about why all these things happen, you know, and really listen to what my sister was trying to tell me, you know - why don't you get to know about these things, you know, and not just be prejudiced, you know - and I think that knocked, you know -

And this case that I had in the army and, you know the slums and so on that we lived in, and it all gelled, you know, at that particular time, you see.

J.F. Why wouldn't it have gelled before - was the war.....

W.K. I don't know....

J.F. Something that they'd built up a propoganda to be something that scared you at all or....

W.K. I think so - I think so - yes, I think so to some extent, you know, but I wasn't really that interested at - before the war, you know, but once I got into the Springbok Legion and felt ah, you know, I'm really doing some good here, because after all why should we go and fight and so on and then come back and be treated like we were told the first world war soldiers were treated - the big heroes when the war was on and then they came back to nothing, and we have to see that we don't come back to nothing, you know - and so - and then that in theory together with - with what I actually saw with my own eyes, you know, I thought no, this - this can't be right - there's something wrong, you know, when I saw these people coming out of the hills ragged, obviously poor people, and the richer ones were striving and living and eating almost as well as the - as they used to - not as well but, you know, they were living in good houses that hadn't been touched -

I'm not saying all over - I don't want to exaggerate that, but by and large it can be said that that's true in my eyes and I.....

J.F. And this happened to you in southern.....

W.K. In Italy - in Italy.

J.F. Whereabouts in Italy?

W.K. Well, it was - we started - we started at Cassino - we were a support group for the Cassino fight - you know, battle - through Rome right through Italy until the end of the war - I was first with the ammunition and then - then volunteered for the infantry.

J.F. I'm interested that you kind of (.....) an experience to include blacks - there would have been.....

W.K. I saw the similarity, you see, between - and you know, some of the Afrikaaners, you know, put it into words, you know, because we had Afrikaaners in the South African Army, and they - I saw the way they even treated these poor people in southern Italy - you know, the working class types - they said (..... Afrikaans) - do you understand Afrikaans - you see.....

Hulle is net soos ons Kaffirs.

J.F. So your saying even the Afrikaaners would make that connection (?)

W.K. Yes - well, they made the connection not sympathetically - they were - they were very much against - and you see, and I could see the way they treated those poor whites, you know, because you know, in the southern part near Toronto there, they were - they were eating dogs and cats and everything, you know, the Italians - the - you know, the poorer Italians -

And when our people got to know - not only Afrikaaners, you know - even the other whites, you know - you know, they said (.....
 Hulle is net
 sous ons Kaffirs.....(Afrikaans) you see, and so when you say how did I
 come - I mean that already showed me how they thought of these
 people who were not black, you see, and that also gave me some-
 thing to think about -

I thought now look, these are not black and yet they saying they are like kaffirs, so what is it - why - what, you see - and then I started thinking, then I started reading....

J.F. You started reading?

W.K. I started reading as much as I could - you know, as much as I could get.

J.F. During the war or after?

W.K. Even during the war....

J.F. What could you have....

W.K. No, well, we were getting - we were getting - first of all the Legion were getting - I think I even had - you know, they were getting newsletters to us, but I think I had some books sent to me or we could get it - I don't want - I know I had some books that I managed to get hold of, you know - I can't remember which ones, you know - they weren't - they weren't - some were Marxist but some were on the subject of race, you know - hell, I wish I could remember what they were now, you know - so there was a mixture anyhow -

Oh, very few but I started - wherever I could I'd try to get hold of it - you know, wherever we went I'd be looking round for English things and discussing, you see, with people who were in advance of me politically, and finding out what this was all about, you see.

J.F. Who were they - were there any well known people that you had associated with of the Springbok Legion - when you say people.....

W.K. Oh, well, during the time that I came down from the first - from the first campaign in Ethiopia to go up again later on to the Middle East I met Jack Hodgson and Cecil Williams and Jock Isakovit - all the leaders of the Springbok Legion - that's where I must have taken the literature as well with me up, that's right.

J.F. And Fred Carneson - did you.....

W.K. Fred Carneson - Fred I didn't know during - I - I hadn't met him yet - I'd heard about him, because he came from Natal, you see, and so when he came back or wherever he was he would go to Cape Town or to Natal, whereas I was in Johannesburg at the time, you see.

- J.F. So you came back from the war and....
- W.K. In Ethiopia - you mean after the war - after the war my father died when I was up in - in Florence as a matter of fact, and he left - by this time we had two brickworks, property in Cyrildene, another property in Bertrams, I think it is called, so my father was well to do, you know - he died, and I got this letter saying he was - already I knew he was sick, you know, very sick - and then he died and I came back to - to - to luxury, you see - I came back to be the co-owner of brickworks, of property, of stands, you know, of the brickworks, 20 acres here and a few - and about ten acres here of the two brickworks which were our property....
- J.F. Co-owner with who?
- W.K. With my brother.
- J.F. Oh, your brother - was he older?
- W.K. Ja - and for 18 months I just really went wild, you know, with (Laugh) women and everything, you see (Laugh) because you know in the infantry you were living all the time that Christ, if you don't enjoy life now tomorrow you dead, you know, so hell, now I've escaped dear (?) death, you see, so I just went wild -
- But when I came back to - to the - to the brickworks I started organising all the Africans, told them where they must go to register as - in the union, you know - the union - to such an extent that I had all the other owners of other brickworks, because you know, Africans spread the word, coming to my brother and saying : We going to bloody kill that bastard brother of yours, you know, you see -
- And then we had a paper called (Inkululeko.....) and The Guardian going, you know, both - well, it was like liberation struggle papers, you see, left, of course, and I - we were selling from our brickworks because they all went to the compounds - locations afterwards - about 20 dozen of each, you know, each - we'd organise - I organised so many -
- And everything was going O.K. until one day I came back from the bank and on the rise I looked down into our brickworks and I saw some well known Special Branch people - I was active now in politics, you know - Oh, I became active in politics all - all round in, you know, in.....
- J.F. Right after you came back from the war?
- W.K. Oh, yes, straight away I was involved in politics up to my neck, you know.
- J.F. But how did you get involved - who did you - you knew your sister in Cape Town.....
- W.K. Oh, no, no, no, the Springbok Legion people had recruited me into all sorts of things, you know.
- J.F. So you had a network to key into.....
- W.K. Oh, yes - and the Springbok Legion was still alive - they only dissolved afterwards, you know, after a while - and well, I

W.K. also joined the CP....

J.F. Right after you got out of the war?

W.K. Mmmm.

J.F. In Jo'burg?

W.K. Mmmm - and - anyhow so I saw these Special Branch people in our brickworks and I - and that put - that upset me a bit, not because I was afraid, but when I got back to - I went away to - to Izzy Heyman - you know Izzy Heyman - he had a shop up in Primrose Hill, and from there we 'phoned and our foreman, an ex-soldier, a white Afrikaaner, not political but at least better than that crowd - he said the (.....) are here - the - the detectives are here looking for you -

So I told him as soon as they go 'phone up the shop and I'll come down, you see, and I went down, then he said that they'd said to all the - to all these like, you know, the top people in the brickworks, foreman and so on, that I'm a secret communist - communist - and I'm a - everything that's bad, you know, and - and of course my brother got to hear about it - no, he wasn't - you see, the impact even of the slums that it had on us is that my sister and I thought hell, but how can we - these people go on living all their lives in the slums, you know, and we have now escaped it, you see, and we realise why - because we are whites -

My brother, on the other hand, thought oh, well, we've got out of it - it's up to them to get out of it themselves - you see the difference -

Anyhow so they - so - so my brother of course, having this philosophy as opposed to mine, was worried, but he - you know, he joined the Progressive Party after a while, you know - he was that type of chap, but big differences, and there were a lot of this going on until one day I came early in the morning and was told by Maplunk, who was the - a black foreman that - you know, they used to come and raid on a Sunday for illicit liquor - and that he was looking through his window with his wife and Bova, another African, at all the Africans running away on this Sunday morning with the police hitting them and so on, and digging in the ground with big iron staves - they dug in the ground - and then they find the illicit liquor in tins underneath, you see - paraffin tins and so on - and they beat them up -

When I realised that they had - that they supposed to come with the consent of the owner - I found this out afterwards - I said : I don't want you here any more - and that caused a hell of a furore, you know, and my brother didn't like it, you know, because he approved of these raids and so on, I didn't -

And so Maplunk said he was looking out of the window and he saw a loader (?) - I forget his name - who looked round like this - he was wearing a jacket, and put his hand under his jacket here and clapped some handcuffs onto one of those who'd been hit on the floor, and he was a loader on our - on one of our lorries -

And I said : Oh, you sure of it - so they all three said : Yes, we saw him - well, then I knew what he was, you see - he'd been planted into our brickworks to watch me - so I got all his money together that - that load had gone out early in the morning, because they did piece work, you see - and I had it all ready

W.K. his holiday pay, his everything, and I asked him where he was and he denied it, and I called his three witnesses in and I said : Tell him what you saw - and when Bova who's a tough character, you see, said : Yes, I saw you and don't you come here and say that you did, you know - you tough chap (?) - so he said : Ach, well then - and he went off -

Afterwards I got reports from some people I knew near the police station there - local police station - that in fact they - he'd come driving in and they had a big laugh about how he'd been discovered by me - not by me but, you know, it was - they mentioned me, the white boss, you see, and we dismissed him.

Then this was too much, you know - I couldn't put my brother to that, you know, sort of pressure - I'd also been called into the local police station by a captain of the police, Marshal Square, who came all the way out there to interview me because of a letter I'd written about how the police were hammering people, you know, at demonstrations and so on, and we had a hell of a row, but I took my brother along as a witness in case something happened to me, you see -

And then I said to my brother : Now look, I'm taking this car, 250 quid, I'm off to Cape Town, you can have all my (Laugh) bloody - you know, you can have my half share of the business, of the property, of everything, you see - and off I went - and I tell you, when I drove down to Cape Town, you know - you know those long stretches (Laugh) I was so happy and relieved I even made the car dance (Laugh) - I really (?) did, you know (Laugh) oh -

You see, so I left him with all - he's a millionaire today, and - and then I joined Jack Tarshish's firm and Ray Simons and I worked together - but what I'm trying to tell you is that - you see, there was this - this difference between my brother and myself on the racial issues, and you know, the Africans in the brickworks there, when they saw that I, the boss, was telling them to go and join the union to get higher pay, you know, and to get rid of all this nonsense that's going on, you know, and then the (.....) which they could read - after all some of them could read, you see - they - you know, they were saying to Maplunk : But what - who's this - who's this boss, you know - what sort of boss is (Laugh)

You know, what sort of man is he - he seems to be on our side - and they were a bit reluctant to go to the trade unions, but some of them went - some of the braver spirits went - then they came back and said : No, that - that union we speak to black people as well as some whites there, and they are the ones who organising us and he's a friend of those, you see - and so it spread, you know - and well, you know, then I was involved in - in politics up to my neck down in Cape Town again, you know, in everything -

But I was getting banning orders, you know, from organisations, from - you know, from meetings, from everything - I was arrested once with Brian Bunting and Sam Kahn, you know - got three months and then it was we won on appeal, for a gathering and so on, you know, and always being harassed by the police, getting millions of - of these orders, like for instance I - when they - when the two people came to give me - to give me the order about not having social intercourse with any other people he said : But Mr. Kodesh, you should be pleased to hear you can have sexual intercourse, eh (Laugh) - and I just kept a straight face, you know - wasn't

- W.K. going to give that bastard the satisfaction of laughing at his crude joke, you know, but it was quite a good joke - I thought to myself that's not a bad one for this bloody thick-eared chap, you know, and - now all right, about getting back to - to - to - you see, I was always involved both in Johannesburg and in Cape Town always, mainly amongst Indian community and Congress - you see, I was already banned from joining the Congress of Democrats, you know, when it was formed, but I was in all sorts of organisation from the beginning until I was banned from them, and I was confined to the white area of - of Johannesburg -
- But in that period that I was confined to the white area of Johannesburg and when the - and - Christ, now I'm jumping all over the show, you see, because I'd now also started working for the newspaper - you know (.....) newspaper.....
- J.F. Let me just..... details without elaborating - when did you leave Jo'burg for Cape Town when you gave the business to your brother....
- W.K. I think it must have been '48, mmm.
- J.F. And then you went to Cape Town and you did what with Ray Simons?
- W.K. We worked in - in - in a - you know Ethel De ... who's up here - who works here - well, her brother and her family owned a big firm, a wholesale firm - we went and worked there, mainly because he allowed us to take time off from our work to go and do our political work, you see.
- J.F. So what organisations were you in in Cape Town?
- W.K. Oh, God, I was with - I was with - I was the honorary secretary - at one time Fred and I resuscitated the Non European Railway Workers Union by going to the docks, sitting down, you see - everyone stood around us and we told them that we want to resuscitate the union and so on, and we did - we even had a conference, you know, in Cape Town - Fred got banned immediately after they saw he was becoming active again - I wasn't, so we managed to get a conference -
- So it was Non European Railway Workers, Peace Committee, CP - what - oh, there were - there were - you know, all the organisations that were available I belonged to, but I got banned from all of them, you see.....
- J.F. This was in the '40's still?
- W.K. No, in - then I got banned in the early '50's.
- J.F. And then - O.K., to get into the theme of the non racialism - were you working with black people at the time?
- W.K. Yes, there were some black people working there - oh, but I was working - I was working in Elsie's River in the shantytown, Elsie's River, and we had a cell of the A.N.C. and the CP - this is before 1950 - and I was working, and I was also chairman of one of the committees of the newspaper at that time, and very heavily involved in - in taking classes to which Albie - he may have told you - Albie and another woman I used to know in South Africa - they used to come there for the classes every week, but I used to go there about two or three times a week, and we organised

W.K. demonstrations in the African areas, in the tin shanty areas, you know, for better conditions for you know, all sorts of things that cropped up - like we were - we were going for more sanitary amenities, you know, for collection of - of dustbins and so on, and you know, in Scotzkloof (?) the Coloured area in, you know - where there's been a lot of fighting recently - the type of thing that I did there, where I used to sell the newspaper - I used to sell the newspaper every week in Scotzkloof....

J.F. Which?

W.K. It was The Guardian at the time - so much so, and they got so used to me there, you know, that two gangs were fighting when I came into (.....) Street one Friday evening - it was still light - and (Laugh) and I remember one chap carrying a heavy rock, and they saw me and they said "Last die Guardian deur" you know - and they stopped fighting, and as soon as I got to the other side (Laugh) they were into one another again -

But we had a very high - they had a very high regard for me and therefore to the organisation to which I belonged, because there were a lot of rodents around, you know - there were leaking roofs - this is Coloured area, eh - and there were babies sort of lying around where all these - where all the dust and - they were crude little dustans, you know, that the people themselves had - and babies were lying around putting their hands in it and, you know how babies are, messing around, so we - what I did and - and I suppose there were one or two others that I got involved as well with it -

We got their - their leaking roofs - I went down to the council, for instance, the health department, wrote letters to the newspapers, you see, and so on saying that these houses should be repaired - we had Sam Kahn who was on the council at the time - spoke to him - he helped, you see - so that together we all - we got proper dustbins for them, we got their houses repaired, we got the rodents to come and - what do you call it - like disinfect, you know, their homes and so on, so we - I was like a big hero sort of thing amongst them, and they couldn't understand it but they were great friends of mine -

Even the gangs - I knew all the gansters - I knew even some of them who - who would tell me how they'd burgled houses in (Laugh) Sea Point, you see and so on, you know, and - and there was a very, very good spirit amongst them - the only distortion that arose was that they thought that every white person who was well disposed towards them were all Jewish because I (Laugh) - they regarded me as being Jewish, you see -

But nevertheless the point is that there was a very good, and this - and so we built up, you know, tenants associations and so on in that area, and in Elsie's River - we had big processions going down to the municipal areas, and everyone knew that I and Albie and others were all involved in this type of work, you see.

J.F. Do you think that the concern for leaky roofs and the rats and all that came from your own experience of having lived....

W.K. Oh, yes, of course, yes - in those conditions, yes - but even so I would have noticed it, you know.

J.F. And then - I'd asked you before when you ever heard of the A.N.C. I guess you heard of the A.N.C. through the Springbok Legion.....

W.K. Oh, yes, yes.

J.F. And....

W.K. Oh, I'd known of their existence because I'd always been speaking to my twin, you know - we were very close, you see, and, you know, so I knew of the existence of these things, except that I didn't take a deep interest in it because I was still prejudiced - my prejudice, as I say, jelled in that war period, you know - it all came together - I could actually see it coming together, you know, you see.

J.F. And what did you feel that you were struggling for - did you see a goal - did you see....

W.K. Yes....

J.F. change coming - how did you see the future of that struggle?

W.K. Well, I saw the future as a very, very hard struggle as - as something where I had to learn and read more about how you can solve that question, you see, so that I started reading as much literature as I could, and of course in the course of doing so got to - to read Marxism as well as other - you know, all literature to do with racism, you see -

And I saw that there was no way in which you could ever have - well, you know, I don't want to be, you know, to sort of use the ordinary - but you know that there could never be sort of peace in our country in particular with such prejudices going on, and I knew that some way or other this had to be resolved, you know - that you can't go on doing this to the great majority of people and - and back of my mind I had - I had that picture of what these Afrikaaners said about the Italians, you see, and that made me even think well, it doesn't only belong to the black here -

In my case it belongs to the blacks because I'm living in the country and they are - they happen to be mainly the workers, you know - but there, look what that boer said about them (Hulle is net so's ons Kaffir) you see, so then it occurred to me, but no, there's a connection here, you see, and could I live - in other words could I live in that atmosphere -

Well you know, I told you that for about 18 months after the war I just lived it up because I had all the opportunity and all the money to do so, but I soon gave that up when I saw what was coming and I saw how the - the authorities were converging on me - I knew every time I went out that I had a shadow - I even knew who he was, you see....

J.F. You mean you gave up - you decided that....

W.K. That now I was going to - to - to get involved in the movement, you know, and if possible full time, you see, to - to overcome this - this - this racialism, which was like poison - after all Hitler had been a racist against the Jews - he said he was going to do the same thing to the blacks - here were the South African whites doing the same thing as Hitler said he would do, but he hadn't yet reached it - they were already doing it -

And you know, it all came together and I thought no, this is - this is wrong, man, it's all you know, we - and I have to do my bit towards getting rid of it, and made up my mind - I'd read

W.K. I'd - I'd spoken, I'd gone to meetings, and it all fitted in with what was going on in my mind and I knew no, that's where I belong - never mind about luxury and business and, you know, and being rich - where even these - like these old Jewish men used to come and say : You know, I've got a nice daughter (Laugh) or something - you know - you know, they do that, you see, specially if you got money and you got a business, you know, and -

And that's when I decided, you see, so I went into it in, you know, full out - I mean look what happened after the - after Sharpeville, you know - I went underground, you know, grew a beard and, you know, but you know, that's the whole business - and then there's so much I can tell you about hiding Mandela, you know.....

J.F. That's what I want to hear about....

W.K. You see, all sorts of things, you know - about Mandela....

J.F. When did you first meet him?

W.K. I think I first met him in 19 - somewhere round 1952 or '53 - I think I met Mandela when - in Cape Town when the defiance campaign was being planned - he'd come down, and I was walking down Plein Street - this was interesting - I was walking down Plein Street, you know, which is one of the main streets in Cape Town, and I looked across the road and I could see people unusually looking back, you know, men and women, and I thought well, I don't know why the women are looking back at somebody who'd passed them (?) but I can understand why the men are, because there must be some fancy girl, you know, walking - then I looked, looked, looked, and I could sort of see where they were focusing onto, and there I saw this tall man, you know, good looking black man, and - and - and that's who they were looking at, you know -

You see, he's well - he's about six foot one or two, you know, and he was - and he's very handsome, you know, and athletic looking - and then I came up to the new - to - what was it then, The Guardian or New Age - I can't remember that - but to the newspaper office, and there he was, you see - he'd gone up there to speak I suppose to Brian or someone, I don't know - and - and I thought hell, but this is an imposing looking fellow, you know - and I had seen him - this is the very chap who I'd seen everyone looking at in the street just several minutes before, you see -

That was my first (.....) but then afterwards when I got back to - to Johannesburg and when all these things had been imposed on me, you know, all the - so we were working sort of - I was working sort of you could almost say semi underground, because in spite of the fact that I'd had been put blacklisted, been stopped from belonging to all organisations and not having social contacts, not going to gatherings, not going to factories, you know, all that nonsense, we were still working hard, you see - then came -

And I met him then, you know, and seen him, you know, all over the show - and then came the defi - the - no - so let's pass over the - the - you know, the time - the 1960 thing - you know, when I was disguised and so on - I didn't see him in that period, because he was taken in as well -

But what I want to tell you is that Moses Kotane and Dadoo and Harmel and Turok were all together, you know, leadership in hiding, and Braam Fischer wasn't - wasn't - he wasn't arrested, you know - and so - so - so you know, your getting together - so we had

W.K. a mixture there of leadership, and when I went - and I was the liaison between those in hiding and those who hadn't been arrested - now those who hadn't been arrested were - and the contacts I had all disguised and - and keeping the whole thing together, you know, the whole of the A.N.C. and so on together was done through people like myself, and through other whites who weren't possibly arrested, but mainly through the Indian and Africans in Johannesburg who weren't arrested but who had to be very careful, and I was the contact between the - the leadership in hiding and those who hadn't been arrested, so you can imagine -

I lived - slept on golf courses, in people's gardens, you know, a nomadic life, you know, for five and a half months - that period ended....

J.F. What period was this?

W.K. That was during the emergency, 1960 emergency after Sharpeville - on the day of Sharpeville I went into - into - on the outskirts of Sharpeville at night with somebody else to meet an Indian who had a shop there and to get firsthand information from him, you know, and then pass it on to - to our movement, you know -

But now you want to hear about - you want to hear about Mandela and so on - you see, now during that - this - this is where the relevancy of it comes in - during that period, having lived as hard as I did, and on - you know, in fields, all over, man, you know - now and again I'd go and live with friends as well, stay with friends overnight, because I didn't go back to the hiding place every day, you see - I'd have to carry out my duties and then come back and stay there possibly overnight, you know, and then get instructions and have talks, you know, with Moses Kotane and so on - I took Dadoo on his first lap out of the country, you know, when he left, and.....

J.F. You helped him get to the border?

W.K. No, I helped him on his first stage to meet the person who was going to take him to the border - and all disguised and all being sought after because my ex landlady, who was a Jewish woman, showed me the names of two detectives who were looking for me, and said : If you ever see him and you don't report we'll put you into jail, you see - and she was - she says : I'd never do that to one of ours, Mr. Kodesh - she says to me, and I thought yes, you so-and-so (Laugh) but you'd give somebody else away who were non Jewish - you know, that sort of attitude -

Anyhow - so - so then I decided that I was going to get a flat, you see, that - and I'd never put my name on it because your name appears on the outside in, you know - I'd take it under another name - you have to swear in front of a Justice of the Peace that this is your name and so on - I took it under another name, you see, and they put the other name up outside, and I treated that flat after the emergency the same as I did when I had to be watching all over that - I passed some Special Branch people who know me much better than you do, and they didn't see me in my disguise, you know, so that sort of life you leading, and - and -

And after - you know, for the period after '60 I always came from work, from the newspaper - I was now working there - and saw that nobody was hanging around, and took all the precautions that I'd learned during that emergency, and I thought one day it's going to be helpful, you see, but in the meantime the A.N.C. had

- W.K. been banned and so on and Mandela, Kotane, Marks, Sisulu and so on were meeting, you see, and we had to find places for them to meet, so I was one of those who used to find places, or (all) I would say to some white friends of mine, you know, who I knew and who were sympathetic - I want you to be out of your house, and don't ask questions, you know - just be out from such and such a time on such and such a night and out, and then you can come back at midnight (Laugh) you see, and they did it, you see...
- J.F. They didn't ask questions?
- W.K. Never, not from me - of course they knew me, you know - I'd already - you know, you become well known, you know, because the radio mentions you and the newspaper, so you become known, you know - and they also knew me from previous - from the years previously....
- J.F. Did that mean that they wouldn't actually put themselves on the line but they did want to somehow help the struggle?
- W.K. Yes, ja, that's right - and they knew that if I was doing it it was also for - not for little lily white whites, you know - that it was blacks and Indians and everything - so time came when after the con - you know, the national convent - they - we were asking for a national convention when Verwoerd - was it Verwoerd - yes - said that he was going to declare a republic - well, anyhow the South African government - and you know that there was a lot of communication between the non white - non white people, the - you know, and others, that we should have a national convention where all people in South Africa could get together and blacks and whites together and sort of knock up a type of - of country that we - that would be suitable for all -
- Well, you know that the Nats refused that, and just at that particular time Nelson - I think one of his banning notices had lapsed, so he was able to go to that conference in Pietermaritzburg and address them, and it created a hell of an impression, you know, where he....
- J.F. The (,.....) conference?
- W.K. Yes, you know, the All-in conference (?) in - in Pietermaritzburg, against the declaration of a republic by the Nationalists in South Africa, and at that - at that conference he - he even said that if necessary, you know, he would give up everything and go underground and so on and that's what he did, and of course they were after him, so much so, you know, that the whole of the South African police were looking for him -
- And he had already been circulating all over South Africa disguised, and organising, specially the M plan - that Mandela plan where you have in every street and in every block in every area, you know, you have contacts and little groups who meet together and keep the movement going -
- Now I had arranged a particular meeting for the leadership of the A.N.C. at a house in Berea in - in Johannesburg - and I told these people, as I said : Just go out and, you know, leave the key - give me the key and you come back at midnight - now Mandela, as I say, had already been moving around and he was underground and they were looking for him, so - and it was on a slant, you see, and we - I took them round the back way - well, I had to go and tell everyone what time, where the place was, that they had to

W.K. come there, and I would be in the back there waiting for them and I'd usher them - I'd indicate where they had to go, you see - and so they all came - and there was a long walk like from the outside, steps leading up like this, and they'd sort of some round and into the yard, you know, into parking - not a yard but a parking place that - at the back there - up the steps, and there were lights - there were about three - four flats that way, another four this way - or five, you know - and they had to walk to the end flat, and I think it was just as Sisulu - Mandela had already come - he was deposited (?) there by somebody in a van and then this man went off from the townships, and it was I think Sisulu was about the last one to go in, and then I was standing on the level in the ground on the slant on the level, and I was looking like this and I saw the door open at the second last flat, and a grey haired old white - grey haired couple looked like this, and then I heard the man saying : Quickly, go and phone, you see -

So I dashed round to the front, over a little wall, knocked at the windows and I told them : Look, you were spotted - these - this old couple must have been sitting in the kitchen and when they saw the shadows going past, you know, you see - you know how old people are - I'm certain that's what - either their curtain was open, they could see, or whatever, you know - that was a precaution that perhaps we hadn't thought about, you see -

And I said : You have to disperse - now all of them themselves were banned, the Nokwes and the Kotan s and the Sisulus and so on, but what do we do with Mandela, because that chap is only going to come back for him, round about eleven, half past eleven that night - this was about - it was just dark so it must have been about eight, eight thirty, you see -

So then they - they - you know, everyone was worried about him, and they themselves had to worry about not being seen together because they had the bannings on them - so - so I said to them : It's O.K., I've got this place that I was telling you about - you know, that I'd found - I'd found a place, you know, that I'd taken under this name, perfect - you had your car here, you know - you had a place - sign for your car - and then there were some steps going up and you just had to cross over one - just a passage leading outside into the street but there were doors enclosing it and then into this flat, you see -

So I told them that : Look, I've taken the precaution not to give my name - I haven't given the address to anyone - my name is not there - no, I've always - for the last 18 months I've treated it - I think it's safe - so they said : O.K., you take Mandela there, you see.....

J.F. Who said that?

W.K. Take Nelson to - to this place.

J.F. Who said it to you.....

W.K. The people - the people who were there before they dispersed, because what do we do with Mandela - where's he going to go, because that chap's supposed to - so I said : You comewith me - and that's what happened, you see - and I took him to this place and he looked round and he said : Oh, this is fine, you know - then we had a - do you want to know about the detail of it - then the story was that his name was David - he was a student - just in case

W.K. anyone should ever ask questions - he was a student who wanted to do higher education, he was going to go overseas but the papers hadn't come through yet and I - he was a friend of mine, you know, and I'd met him and now he's staying at my place until such time as he goes over - in case, you see - but, you see, he was dressed - he was dressed sometimes as a milkman, you know, and other times as a chauffeur, and he'd grown a beard, you see -

I was working for the newspaper with Joe Qabi and others, you know, Ruth First and so on - we were all together working on - so what I'd do - we knew that they would be watching the - the newspaper - they were always watching the newspaper - so I had to make as if I was going to work, you see - but then it was arranged that I wouldn't always be doing the normal things that I would be doing and no-one asked any questions, you see -

Then I'd double back, you see, and we'd have - and I'd take him to meetings all over the place, but the point - the point about the first night was rather interesting - I only had one bed and a stretcher, so I thought well, this big chap, you know, let him go on the bed, me on the stretcher - he said : No, no, no, no - he's on the stretcher - and I couldn't argue with him about it, you see -

And we had a chat and we made this arrangement, you see, and then at about five o'clock in the morning I - the next morning, half past five, I see him - you know, there's the movement, you know, in the stretcher, see him getting up, putting on longjohns, vest, tracksuit, so I thought Christ, does he think he's going to go running like he used to do in the townships before - so I said : No, no, no, you can't go running round - and he said : I'm not going to go running - I said : Well, what are you putting on your tracksuit and all this for - he says : No, you just watch - and for two bloody hours he was running on the spot, and doing frog-jumps and God alone - all the exercises (Laugh) - he said : You going to do the same thing (Laugh) from tomorrow, you see (Laugh) -

I was pleased that he did because when I was - I was the first one to be arrested under the 90 days thing, you know, in South Africa - me and Loza in the Cape - we were the first - and that's what I used to do in jail, you know, run on the spot - it was very good, but you see - and -

And from that place we organised meetings, we organised him to meet Winnie, but it was like a military exercise, you know, the whole time - we had numer - people were coming and telling me all the time of how I brought.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

W.K. how I brought him to meetings and so on, you know - now we couldn't obviously bring anyone - anyone - Eli Weinberg came up there and so did others, you know, to see him, but at each time it was like a military exercise, as I say - but we had meetings outside, you know, outside of my flat, and the people who allowed him to come there were white people in the movement who had

W.K. homes in some of the luxury areas of - of Johannesburg - and people even outside of the movement - there was an editor - I'm not going to mention his name - an editor of - of - of not - like a magazine - an old man - oh, he must be dead now, but he - he - he also allowed us to bring Winnie to meet Nelson there, you know -

And we were all being watched, so you can imagine the - the strain and the - and the organisation which went into meeting people - somebody was telling me the other day, not very long ago, how I brought him to a factory in Overton (?) - he says : Don't you remember - so I said : Well, just remind me - he said : Yes, you came in and you looked to see who was there and looked around the factory and everything, and then you went out and then you brought Nelson Mandela (Laugh) there, you see, and so on and you know, and you see, so we had many, many meetings -

Now about the third day we were - I looked through this peep-hole, you see, to see - you see, the unity - I know you - you anxious about the unity - well, the unity I'm telling you is about the white people who gave him refuge, eh - that's one way - and they had to be told who it was, you see, and they were quite willing to do so, and they took big risks because the newspapers were - were full of it, you know - he was being sought after all over - I had to be so careful, you know -

Every move of mine I had to be watching and, you know - because I was sort of in charge of his security at the time, you know, and organising his meetings and so on, you see - Eli Wienberg took that picture, you know, of the stripes - you know this famous picture of Mandela, he's got a striped tee shirt on - you'll find it anywhere here you'll see, and you'll see over here there's a black thing here and a little hole underneath - well, that's my cupboard, you know, in that flat, and that black thing is the handle that pulls out the cupboard, the wardrobe, you know -

That - we had to smuggle Eli into the - into my place to take that photograph of him.

J.F. Why did you take the picture?

W.K. Well, we felt we had to have a picture of Mandela, you know.

J.F. Did you also feel that he would be caught sooner or later?

W.K. Oh, yes - you know, we all thou - we hoped not but we thought ja, you know, and he also, you know, but he was quite willing - he told Winnie and his family that, you know, what was happening and so on, you know - then - you know, but the remarkable thing about him was also that - you know, I looked through this thing and I saw the man who'd usually cleaned up the place, through this peep-hole, because I'd always looked to see if there was anyone in the passage in - in line with my vision, before I opened the door to have a peep myself, you see - and I saw this - this African there and I said : Has he been in to clean up - so he said : No - so I said : No, but we have to get him to clean up, man, otherwise he's going to tell proprietors that that flat is not being cleaned any more, and they going to come and make enquiries - he said : Let me have a look - and he went and looked, and he looked through this peep-hole and he saw this bloke - he says : I'm telling you that chap is a Zulu and I'll speak to him, call him in - and we

W.K. put our story into operation - and I knew that that chap could hardly speak English - brought him in, I made tea, sat down, and then I sat down, and he looked at me - he was sitting now - he's not standing, ja, baas - he's sitting - and I don't know what Nelson was talking to him about, you know, in Zulu, and they were - and he - hell, he had this chappie laughing -

Anyhow he spoke to him - he had a wonderful personality, that one - he got this chap to go and do - do things for him, you know - you know, if I went down before I came up again he'd send him to get things in the shop and so on for him - and he's David in the story until one night he said : Just go and see - and I used to live up-stairs in those days - they had what they called flats in the sky, you know - went up to this ch - I knew where his room was - it was about a five storey building - and I went up and his door was open, his light was on, and there was a magazine spread out like this (Laugh) and the magazine said Black Pimpernel Still At Large, and there were pictures of Mandela, you see, so now when he was dressed as a milkman, as a - you know, when we went out, O.K., chauffuer, you know - but there's no question about those pictures and that David in the eyes of this bloke, and he wasn't in his room -

So I thought oh, Christ - anyhow I looked round and there he was, so I thought, all right, I'll take him down nevertheless - took him down, Nelson spoke to him - he said to him, he shook his head and he went up, and I said : Oh, Christ, we have to take you away - and we had an alternative - always had alternative places - that I also learned during that period, you know, in - in the emergency, you always have alternatives even for meeting - if you not here eleven o'clock you somewhere else at five past eleven, just in case something's gone wrong -

At five past eleven if you not there then it's off, you see - so we had altern - and I had an alternative place so I said : We'd better take you - he said : No, this chap he'll never give me away - don't worry, I'm telling you, and this is a good place to be in - for the very reasons that the car was in position underneath, you know, and I'd really got that (.....) you see, and so it happened - but then afterwards he went to another place and he had the same experience there with a woman who worked for this doctor, a white doctor who let him stay there, you see, and this chap let him stay there - now he was a gardener if anyone came, but he was gardening in fact, you see, just open, but if there were any futher questions he was still David, you see - in any case his name was David -

If anyone came unexpectedly he would just pick up some tools and dig, you know, but he was actually in the chap's study - in the doctor's study and - and she was a journalist, the wife - and he would be doing - you know, he wrote many articles at that time, you know, for the movement, and - and she turned out to be an old A.N.C. member in Alexandra - we called it Alex, you know - you know Alexander Township - and she never once - she knew that he was Nelson Mandela but she called him David, and he knew that she knew that he was, but he never said that he was Nelson (Laugh) you see - that - you know, that's wonderful relationship -

And she did many, many things for him in that period, you know....

J.F. How long did you hide him - how long was the period?

W.K. Och, it must have been for - you mean in my flat or together with that other chap?

- J.F. Together with him.
- W.K. Oh, it must have been a few months, mmm.
- J.F. And you.....
- W.K. And then he left - oh, and then he left for - later on for England - for overseas, you know - our people smuggled him out - ja?
- J.F. So you weren't involved in the smuggling out?
- W.K. No - no, that was a purely security thing, you know.
- J.F. What do you mean, purely security?
- W.K. Well, you know, the - I didn't belong to the security section of our movement at the time - I, you know - you know, we had like people who - who had to look after the security of thing, you know, of people....
- J.F. How was it then that you hid Mandela if you weren't security?
- W.K. Oh, well, because I knew what - I was an organiser, you know - of course in a sense that I was security - his security in that period, but I - I wasn't as such, you know, his - you know - you know - you know, your security can be divided up into different sections, eh - you know, certain people do this, certain people do that -
- My job at the time - I was working on New Age, you know, newspaper, don't forget and - but I was sufficiently well versed in security matters to be able to know what my duties should be, you know.....
- J.F. This was all in Jo'burg - this happened there?
- W.K. Ja, mmm.
- J.F. Because you had said earlier on that you were a grassroots person - an intellectual - is that what you'd describe your role in the movement all along, as being organising and administrating kind of or.....
- W.K. Well, I had - I had some - you know, I had some leader - I was in the leadership, not in the very top leadership - I would say I was in the middle leadership, you know, where I was on - on like a district committee, you know, and so on, at various times - you know, in the committee of a district, of Cape Town or Johannesburg, you know, and so on.
- J.F. I'm afraid this is going to take forever.....
- W.K. Ja, I know - I know - no, but you better ask me and then get simple questions....
- J.F. Just maybe some quick things - when were you first banned, do you know?
- W.K. First banned, I think in '53 - early '53.
- J.F. And then you were the first person who was put under 90 days?
- W.K. Yes, far as I know I - Mosey Muller they couldn't get hold of, otherwise he would have been with me in Johannesburg - under the 90 days? Yes, and Loza whom they subsequently killed in jail

- W.K. years afterwards - he was - he was arrested in Cape Town at the same time that I was arrested in Johannesburg.
- J.F. What was his full name?
- W.K. Hell, I forget his first name now.
- J.F. He's in the list of people who died in detention.
- W.K. Oh, yes - Elijah Loza....
- J.F. Elijah Loza - I just remember that list - so you were picked up in.....
- W.K. Johannesburg....
- J.F. I guess - what was it, '60's (?)
- W.K. Yes - in - when?
- J.F. 1960, wasn't it - the 90 days?
- W.K. '63.
- J.F. '63 - and so you were in for one 90 day period?
- W.K. No, for about 58 days - 60 days, something like that.
- J.F. Had you not been detained before?
- W.K. Oh, I'd been - you know, I'd been in and out of cells because I was on - giving out leaflets on railway property and all that - I was arrested that time with K n and - and Brian Bunting - you know, this type of thing - but I'd never served a sentence, no.
- J.F. And when did you leave the country?
- W.K. '63, in July.
- J.F. And under what circumstances did you leave....
- W.K. Exit visa.
- J.F. Oh, did they - why did you leave - did they tell you you had to go or did you.....
- W.K. Well, they - they - well, you know, I personally think it was a mistake to have done so, but you know, they had - he came in - Coetzee, who's now the chief of the police, is the one who arrested me - you know, the General Coetzee - and he came in over a period, you see, and he said : Ag, you know - what's his name - God damn it, what's - the one who died - after Verwoerd - what was his name, the prime minister....
- J.F. Vorster.
- W.K. Vorster - was then the minister of justice - he says that ag, he'll get - he'll rather get rid of you, you know, because I refused to answer any questions - they weren't torturing me - the only thing that happened to me at that period was that that chap who eventually let the four escape - that policeman - that young policeman - he used to give me some punches in my kidneys because I wouldn't go fast enough down to the exercise yard, you know, you see

W.K. but I wasn't tortured at all, I think because I was white - because it was the first one to be - you know, they didn't know what to do with me in that sense - and when I told them that I wasn't going to answer any questions, they could do what the hell they liked, you see, and they were getting nothing out of it, and I suppose they didn't have real evidence for a court, because what Coetzee would do, he'd come in, a very smarmy bugger, you see - he'd come in and he would say : O.K., if you don't want to say anything I'll keep you here, you know, for 90 days and 90 days and 90 days - and I thought oh, well, do that, you know -

But I - I - so then he came along one day and he said this : Would you go out - so I said : Yes - so he said : Where to - I said : Oh, just to what was then Basutoland - he said : Do you think I'm mad to let you out in (Laugh) Basutoland, carry on all your activities, you see - so he says : You can go to Israel or to England - so I thought now what - what should I do -

There were little kids in our - in jail, and we could look through the Judas Hole, you know, and I saw them one day - little - little kids - they were in transit going to reformatories, you know - looked through and I saw these kids and I said : What are you here for - they said : Oh, we going to a reformatory - what for - for bag-snatching or something like this, you know - so who you - so I said : Never mind **who I am** - so they - you know, they so clever, they so - they said : I know who you are - you - you politics, eh - to me - so I said : Yes - what can we do for you -

So I knew that they only closed our door by the lock outside - they never used the key at the time, but there was nothing inside, you see, at the flat (?) - so I said : Try that - so they open it - Oh, Christ - they said : All right, you go, we'll watch out - so I went to - to - to Levy's cell, Leon Levy, then we opened the cell of the Indian comrades, just by putting our hands through, and then we got together for about two minutes and I told them what Coetze had said to me, and so did Leon, you see, and they -

And there was an African who also came along, so it all happened very quickly, and they said - so we said : What should we do - they said : Listen, Wolfie, you and Leon, if you go, all right - you whites - because I brought it up - you whites, it's true, but if you get a chance go out and go and work there, you know, outside, you know, so when they - and I said : Are you sure - and we discussed it, you know, for those few minutes, and Chiba and Mosey Muller and Charlie, you know, Jassat, who was you know, working up there, they all said go -

So they said go but in fact we were told at the late **stage**, after all the preparations had been made (Laugh) not to go, you see - well, by that time we both felt that we were so committed to it that it would create difficulties, you know, you see, and I suppose in a way I suppose I thought it would be better, you know, instead of being here for 90 days and languishing here, but it was wrong - politically I considered it was a wrong decision, you know, that I should have stayed in jail, and I regretted even to this day, but I've worked over this period, you know, and been involved very much -

I've been in Africa for ten years practically, you know, at headquarters - I'd been the head of our A.N.C. logistics, you know, over this period.

- J.F. What does A.N.C. logistics mean?
- W.K. You know, to get all material aid for - for our people in Africa, you know, and also if possible for other places.
- J.F. So you went out to England in '63?
- W.K. Ja.
- J.F. And when did you go back to Africa?
- W.K. I went back to Lusaka in '76 - '76.
- J.F. And were you kind of told to or did you want to?
- W.K. I volunteered to - I wanted to much earlier but I couldn't - they - apparently they had difficulty with the Tanzanian government for whites to come out, you know, at the time - and then I volunteered, you know, to go in '76 and they said O.K.....
- J.F. So you were in Lusaka for ten years?
- W.K. I was first in Luanda and then in Lusaka - they called me over from where I was in Luanda to come to headquarters and take over this job of the head of our logistics, you know.
- J.F. So how was that experience - there must have been much, much fewer whites in the A.N.C. structures in.....
- W.K. Oh, yes, there were - there were - but there were some of course, you know - where, you mean in Lusaka - oh, yes, I was one of the few whites - you know, the Simons were there and there were several others - Slovo, you know, and - and Albie was all - he was working, you know - there were (.....) only a few, you know - few white...
- J.F. How did you find that time?
- W.K. Oh, wonderful - wonderful - then I got ill and I had to come here for an operation, you know, and then I've been here since then - two years.
- J.F. Two years ago you came?
- W.K. But by the way when I landed here in - in Southampton they didn't let me off the ship....
- J.F. In '63?
- W.K. Yes - they took me away from the whole queue and said : You go to that table - and there were the British Special Branch and they said : No, we not letting you in here - we didn't - we didn't give you that exit permit, your government gave it to you - we not accepting it - so they went away - I was on that deck - I was trying to get off, you know, on that ship, and then finally in the afternoon I saw what looked like telephone kiosks, you see, and I was walking towards it and a man came along dressed - well dressed, you know, unlike the special branch who saw me off from Cape Town - they allowed me to go to Cape Town under arrest, you know, by trying (?) to see my family who were mostly in Cape Town, you see, and I took a ship out -

W.K. And so he said : I wouldn't do that if I were you, Mr. Kodesh - there was one gangplank still going down near to where these - I said : I'm not - who are you - he says : I'm here to see that you stay on the ship (Laugh) - and he spoke with a well modulated tone and nice English, you know, unlike those who'd seen me off, you know - Boorer was saying : You tell Sam Khan we still here and you tell this one we still here, you know, and so on, and smelling of liquor, you know, in South Africa -

So then he says : Oh, you can go - I said : Are those telephones - I was going - he said : Oh, Mr. Kodesh, go along, who do you want to phone, anti apartheid, civil liberties, you can do so - so I did that, and then they asked a question in the House of Commons, you know, why is he being kept on this ship, you see, when he's a refugee and so on - it was that woman - she was a labour minister after - Judith Hart, eh - yes, she asked that question, you see, special - - I suppose they allow special questions -

And then the instruction was that I must be let off, so I got let off the ship.

J.F. Did you have any family in - have you married in Britain at all?

W.K. No...

J.F. So when you went of here you went on your own?

W.K. When I what?

J.F. When you went from Britain to Africa....

W.K. Oh, yes, ja, ja.

J.F. So you were '63 to '76 in Britain - and the whole non racialism theme - how did you find that when you arrived in Britain....

W.K. Oh, it was staggering, you know - you mean the non racial - it was wonderful - I couldn't keep my eyes off kids, you know, who - or couples, you know, black and white couples and children - even to this day it still strikes me, you know, as something - ja.

J.F. And within the movement - did you see the same?

W.K. No, well, in the movement - you see, that's where I also saw that these people are genuine, you know, at the beginning, because you were amongst - for the first time I was mixing freely with black people, you know, on an equal basis, socially - all right, we were in different segregated areas, but we were all equal, and some of my superiors in the movement on committees and so on were black people, you know, and I found that very easy to accept at that particular period, whereas previously I would never have dreamed that that could happen to me - you know, when I was younger -

Although I felt sympathetic towards those who lived in slums and so on, as I've told you, nevertheless until this thing gelled, as I say, at that particular time, I would never have accepted that a black person would be my superior in whatever way, you know.

J.F. And did you find experience of non racialism within the movement in any way different from outside the country than inside in terms of being in this country relating to - did you feel maybe they were all South Africans regardless of race as opposed.....

W.K. Oh, yes - oh - here you mean in England amongst our own people?

J.F. Ja.

W.K. Oh, yes.

J.F. And in Lusaka - I'm just wondering if the non racial relationships you had while you were in the struggle in South Africa there was anything at all different from how it felt to be in London or Lusaka working.

W.K. Oh, yes - well, the tensions, for instance, weren't there - the social tensions - I'd had experiences where some whites when I was walking with a black woman in - in Johannesburg had elbowed me in my ribs and sworn and even given me one or two smacks, you know, until our own people in the A.N.C. office there in Diagonal Street said : Look, you better stop - you better not be walking together when you go out of the office, you see, because there's going to be hell to pay, you see, but of course - so there were always tensions, you know, apart from which you had that Immorality Act, you know, where they could just jump on you even if there was nothing happening, you see -

And all these tensions there with your association - you know, with regard to your association with blacks, which of course fell away here - you know, there was no question about it - I mean I was shrewd enough to see that there were many people here who were still - who had at least antipathy towards blacks, you know, in some way, you know, but nevertheless it's not the same climate, not the same tense climate until recently, you know.

J.F. And how was it to be in a black country like Zambia.....

W.K. Oh - oh, well, I found that quite easy to get used to, you know, and one - one respected it, but it was a revelation nevertheless, you know, because there you could see, you know, that there were whites living peacefully in a country ruled by blacks, you know, in the main, there was no question about it - in Tanzania you had a few Indians in the government and so on, you know, and I think once Zambia had an agricultural minister who was white, but in the main they were whatever, whether Indian or not they were blacks, you know -

I found that very easy to get used to, but by this time I was a (Laugh) mature person, mature politician (Tape off) - when I was Elsie's River and they were living in these tin shanties, and if the meeting went on late I'd sleep over, you know, in the African's tin shanty there, you know, which was also very (Laugh) unusual for whites to do, you see, and there I found out a lot more about the actual living conditions, you know, of these shanty dwellers, you see - a very great experience for me as a white, you know -

Even with John Motowela I said : But if there's only a blanket separating you from your children who growing up and you and your wife, how do you manage life, you know, sex or anything - he says : You know, you're the first white person who's ever asked me about that sort of difficulty and how - because they always have to go out of the tin shanty into the bush at the time there to do their business, you know - dig a hole and then cover it over with the sand in the bush, and you know, that sort of close personal thing I got from sleeping over and staying and working in these tin shanties, you know, knowing the hard life, you know - anyhow but that's not what you were going to ask me.

- J.F. I'm interested, kind of related to that, about the logistics in terms of all the planning and hiding - hiding yourself and hiding other people, but you say that that was something that was quite beyond racial boundaries - you'd use white people and....
- W.K. Absolutely, mmm - and blacks of course.
- J.F. And would these be white people that you knew well, who were just friends who would say....
- W.K. Some of them I didn't know at all - this - this editor of that - of that magazine I didn't know him, but I knew somebody who worked there, and that person she told me that : Oh, he's very liberal, you know, and he lived in Parktown, and we wanted to get to the white areas for this reason, that the boere would never dream - it wasn't in their mental approaches - perhaps later on it became so, that whites would hide blacks or blacks would go into white areas into white houses, because that's not the way they thought and we took advantage of that, you see -

So that we had this meeting at this place and at some of the places where they weren't known - they were just sympathetic people, you see, who allowed us to do so because their sympathies were not left, not involved in A.N.C. per se but who nevertheless felt that there was something wrong, like this old chap, you see, and that's what happened -

But in the main, yes, they were either the people from the banned organisations who knew me from years before, from prior to 1950, who became inactive themselves, some of them, and who nevertheless retained that sort of sympathy and that political rapport, whatever, without being active, and who felt that this was their way of - of doing things, you know, for - for what they believed in, you see.

- J.F. With all the people of different race groups and just all the backgrounds that you've known, can you tell me who you feel were important influences on you - I guess....

W.K. Kotane.

J.F. Kotan?

- W.K. Very much - Sisulu, Mandela - he - although I was their age, you know and - but they had a great influence on me - J.B. Marks - oh, many, you know, many - and also people at ground level - you see, the people in - in - in Elsie's River living in these shanties, they had the greatest impact on me because the theory I could get from books and I could get it from some of the theoreticians like Bunting, who was a great theoretician, and others, but what I couldn't get from them, you see, from our theoreticians, was this experience that I myself had when I lived in the slum and which now, as an active politician I could get by working with them at that level -

When the A.N.C. was banned - the Communist Party was banned and so on - in between the time Communist Party was banned and the A.N.C. was not very strong at that particular period I went with - with - with several of the Africans, Ngovela, who was the chief - the A.N.C. leader there in Cape Town, in Langa - we used to go all over, slipping into townships, you know, at night and talking to the people - now you must build up the A.N.C. and so on, you see - the very people who previously we'd known in another organisation,

W.K. you know - now you must build up the A.N.C. and - and we also knew people who weren't in any organisations - we met them in the locations in - one of the - when they gave me a banning order about not being allowed to talk or anything in public they quoted a speech I made in Kiamandi Stellenbosch location, for instance - they were there - this was before my banning, you see - but they quoted that - one or two of the speeches I made there in the township -

And you see, what I got out of - as a white person what I got politically out of not the theoreticians, the people who lived in the town shanties is something that I could bring back to our theoretical people and say : This is what's happening in townships - this is what people are saying - this is what's worrying them - they want to make a procession against the - the - the Native Affairs Department, you see, for these reasons -

Now I could get it because I was working with them, you see, and having meetings with them in sand dunes - well, he'll tell you, this one, Goldberg - I mean I - I think I had an influence in getting him into the movement - he'll tell you how he went with me to Worcester and how we spoke to Africans outside the location and at night even, you know, in the bushes there, you see -

And so he had that experience of coming with me, you know, and then he himself became very active in that way, you see - and in the 22 years he's been in jail he's - he's gained so much knowledge he just wants it to come out, you know, you see - and he's a practical type of chap as well - he's an engineer, but -

But that's the value, so if you say who - John Motloela, this woman, Lesia who - Zolly Malindi - they constantly being arrested and - to this very day - all of them had an influence on me and I had an influence on them, and we influenced one another, you know.

J.F. Who's John....

W.K. Who?

J.F. John Motlami - the one you mentioned - what's....

W.K. John Motloela - oh, he's in Lesotho now - he was in Elsie's River then - they threw him out to Lesotho - Jack Mosiani - threw him out to Lesotho - even Mafkeng, you know - Elizabeth Mafakeng - I mean I used to go to her place there in Paarl, you know, and - and even had her husband chasing (Laugh) me out once, you see - so the people who influenced me mostly were - were - ja, were people at that level as well as the theoreticians, because you know, they had to take all the knowledge and all the facts that you brought and put it together, you know -

But we always had mixed committees, not in the Congress of Democrats, but I was banned from that so I couldn't belong to it - but we always worked behind the scenes, you know, and always with mixed people - we never - I never worked - I personally never worked only with whites - I worked with whites but I would feel that there was something wrong if I only worked with whites -

Except if I were eligible to have worked in the COD under those circumstances.

J.F. So even as it was formed you were banned from it?

W.K. I was already banned, ja.

- J.F. So when were you first banned?
- W.K. '53 - that's after Kotare and Dadoo and several of those people, you know, were banned in '52 I think they were banned - then I sort of followed on that lot, you know - very quickly.
- J.F. And were you banned continuously for many years or....
- W.K. Och, over the years but I - but I got away, you know, I got away.
- J.F. Were there periods when you weren't banned or was it always consecutive banning orders after the others?
- W.K. Oh, I think I was always banned - always banned while I was in South Africa - never unbanned.
- J.F. So from '53 until you left you'd been.....
- W.K. Banned...
- J.F. The very first order came with what, a five year or?
- W.K. Yes, five year - I think five or three year, one of the two - and then they followed five year.
- J.F. And when was the period when you were in disguise?
- W.K. That was after the Sharpeville - the Sharpeville emergency, you know - the Sharpeville massacre - then they declared a state of emergency, and a lot of people were picked up, and I got a phone call from Braam Fischer saying that he'd been warned by an anonymous caller in Afrikaans to say that there were going to be raids within a few hours - we tried to telephone Cape Town and Durban, you know, and then I just went - I didn't wait for more than an hour after that call, but we'd already had an inkling of it by a prisoner, an Indian chap who for embezzlement or what, but he was sympathetic towards the Indian Congress who'd been in jail and he was working in an office, and he saw a long list of names, and he saw them cleaning up the cells and everything, and he warned -
- He sent out a message to say that something was on the go, so we already alerted, you see, and so - so - and you know another thing that I want to tell you is that you know, during all those three days strikes and things like that, you know, that used to happen - you know, you've heard of them - like Nelson Mandela called for a strike - others before had called for a strike - we were always in different - we were all mixed, you know - you know in some - some of the communists could even hide in white houses in that period of three days, or in Indian houses, you know - Africans could go there and so on - there was whole mixture of that sort of thing when alerts cropped up, so there was this liaison between the few whites, you know - I'm not exaggerating -
- I don't want to exaggerate the importance of how many whites there were, because there were only a handful relatively speaking, but nevertheless it was there, and when necessary we could rely upon quite a lot of whites to help, you know, in that respect, but not - you know, not really - not a big proportion - I think there more now who are more willing to do so.
- J.F. So did you say when the disguise - that time.....
- W.K. Oh, I - during that time, yes, I was disguised and in hiding and - and as I say, you know, I had a sleeping bag and I used to sleep all over the show, you know - couldn't sleep in cars because

- W.K. the police would see you - a car parked or somebody sleeping in it - so I used to go with friends, and also on Observatory Golf Course in Johannesburg - often slept there at night, you know, in a sleeping bag, and (.....) - so whites helped in that respect, they helped me - that's natural, I suppose - but I'm sure that some blacks also found the same refuge.
- J.F. And - let me just (Tape off)
- W.K. Well, I in - in - in a white house are people who up to that time I didn't even know, and for those months, you know, that - that this - that Kotane and Dadoo and - and Harmel and Turok who - who was the secretary of the - general secretary of the COD - they were living together in this house of white people who Turok knew, but none of us ever knew - it's the first time we ever met them - they gave us refuge, and in spite of the fact that they knew that everybody, the whole of the police force, were looking for us, you see, so that's another instance, you know, of - where people who had been inactive but who had in mind, you know, the - where their sympathy really lay - showed themselves to be staunch and brave in a way, because as far as I was concerned here was a housewife with two children, two sons, and a husband who was a professional man, but who hadn't been involved in politics up to that point at all....
- J.F. So did they give you a part of the house where they could see you...
- W.K. Yes - no, they put - they put the house at our disposal - practically the whole house except for their bedroom and - you know, and the rest we shared.
- J.F. And so you had contact with them - you saw them.....
- W.K. Absolutely - every day.
- J.F. Really.
- W.K. Oh, yes, and then they - that influence I'm sure influenced them to become very much more political.
- J.F. When was this, during what period?
- W.K. During the 19 - after the 19 - '60 - 1960 during the emergency which lasted for five and a half months, and where thousands of black, whites were arrested and kept in jail, and we were operating out of jail - for instance, I would have meetings with Kotane, also dressed as a chauffeur, in a car, and we'd drive right out into the country with Ruth Mompoti - you know Ruth Mompoti - and a chap N hlapo who afterwards got killed - he turned traitor, gave evidence - but meetings in the car, you see, and driving all over on the outskirts of places into the countryside, you see -
- And other arrangements for - for - so these people knew what was going on - they knew that these were the top people in the movement who were directing the - and keeping together the whole of the Congress Movement because they were not arrested, and these were the leadership, and yet they allowed it - we had meetings there - people from overseas, I remember, came - people from - from - from Cape Town, Durban and so on I had to organise them, you know, and make contact, you see, when contact was broken after the - after the arrests - they came up all in disguise, and - and I mean I tell you Monty Naicker came up - Dr. Naicker, president

W.K. of the Natal Indian Congress - when he came up and I had to meet him beside a - a cinema, and he'd got out of his car into my car - when he came out in his disguise I laughed so much, because he was a very well dressed man normally - I laughed so much that I couldn't tell him what the meeting was going to be, the agenda, because every time I was going to tell him (Laugh) what the agenda I looked at him and I started laughing - it was marvellous - I would never have recognised him -

And Fred Carneson came up in disguise at the time to - to - och, there were so many, you know, so and - but most of them - a lot of them as individuals came to this house and those people were absolutely staunch - they never ever got scared or anything else - and at times we even had - had to get a place of one of these two whites, you know, for Harmel, and I got a place also amongst whites but nevertheless they were more antagonistic on the whole, the whites were than - but yet the - we found people who would do it, you see, take the risk - but this house of that headquarters, you know, where - where the whole thing moved from, in those five and a half months which kept the whole movement together was in that house, you see, so that's interesting when you consider that they weren't involved at the time.....

J.F. Can I just ask you for - I think that I don't have down very clearly what your positions were..... because there are so many.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

J.F. always worked in a non racial way, because before you were banned before COD you couldn't be in COD which - a lot of whites were working with whites....

W.K. Working in COD, yes.

J.F. But - so you were working with all the different race groups always - but what....

W.K. But even before that I did the same.

J.F. No, but I'm saying you didn't have a period where you devoted yourself to work organising just among whites - but what were the organisations that you were in?

W.K. Well, the peace organisation....

J.F. Which one was that?

W.K. Peace - I don't know, but it was - there was a peace organisation - you know, like part of the world peace organisation, and non European Railway Workers Union I was honorary secretary, so was Carneson before he was banned - well, I was in the CP at one time, you know, before 1950 (?) (Batteries not too strong now.)

J.F. Did you have any position?

- W.K. I don't know - I don't know - Christ, that's one of the things that I - I think so - (Laugh) What was I - well, I was on - I was - at one time - when it was I can't remember - I was on the - on the I suppose the Cape Town district committee, you know - but you know, I was - I was - well, you know, now - you know, I'll have to think of all the organisations which I'd belonged to -
- I belonged to the Congress Alliance, you know - (Laugh) just let me try and think - you mean from - from when I was banned you mean?
- J.F. No, all the time.
- W.K. Och, I mean I just can't remember all the organisations to which I belonged.
- J.F. And what were you mainly - if you would say what your main involvement has been - what organisation do you think of yourself as having been most committed to?
- W.K. Well, the Congress Alliance of course, you know, there's no question about that - you know, I belonged to that, I belonged to the trade unions, belonged to the peace movement - there - oh, there was the - what did they call it - you know when the Coloured people were being taken off the roll, you know, the roll - off the voters roll - I belonged to that organisation - what was it called.....
- J.F. Well, if it's not a main one don't worry about it - I'm just interested in the main....
- W.K. It was a main one - SACPO - you know, I - it's a pity I haven't got the list that they - they knew better than I did all the organisations to which I belonged - there were all sorts of organisations - I just can't remember - I know I was banned from about 13 different organisations - 13 or 15 different organisations, which included trade unions, which included parts of the - the Congress Alliance, you know, peace - what were the others - I just can't remember all the different names of the different organisations, but you know I've got - I've got a - you know, the order form banning me - the banning order, you know, and which they are all listed, and I just can't remember them now.
- J.F. But do you have that....
- W.K. I may have it at my place now, but if not I've probably got it stored with my furniture, you know - got my furniture stored - oh, I just ca - you know, I really can't think of all the organisations at the moment, but there were about 15 from which I was banned.....
- J.F. About 15?
- W.K. Ja.
- J.F. Because the way that I've done the books that I've done in the past I use a lot of visuals - did you see the book?
- W.K. No, if they (Tape off).....

END OF INTERVIEW.