

- G.M. .... the trial or anything, but to discuss political issues, in the same way that in NUSAS you would talk to people, you would be approached by people all the time, to rap (wrap) (002) about things.
- J.F. It's the same them - there was no kind of stigma or anything.
- G.M. There wasn't, no, no.
- J.F. But was there any curiosity on their part, or was it maybe not known - the younger ones who didn't have that agenda for not talking about it, try to ask you about it?
- G.M. They did, and I - well, what I consciously did was - well, first of all is to talk to everybody whose name I had mentioned in detention, or as many people as I possibly could, to tell them what I'd actually said. I think that that's simply a responsibility that one has, after being detained and after being interrogated, because I don't believe that there's - well, I think there must be less than point one percent of people who don't say a single thing, whether they tell them lies or doesn't matter - you still saying certain things, and it's : Correction : and at some point, where they cross indexed (009) with the system, it's going to come up and somebody else has to - : Oh, but Gerry said that so many years ago - what the hell are you telling us this about, so I try to talk to people about that - the people that I actually mentioned, no matter how innocuous, I try to say : Listen, I mentioned your name and this is what I said, and this is the context in which it came up.
- And the second part is that I try to talk to as many people about the experience of detention, because there weren't many white leftists who'd been through that, and I think that that was another - I felt that was a responsibility I had - just say what it was about, what happens, I mean, just what happens on a day to day basis. What are you going to go through - how are they going to treat you - what do they do to throw you off balance?
- What does it mean to be awake for three days, two days - what does it mean to do this - how dependant do you become on people - all of those kind of things. I try to talk to as many people about that as possible, and I think that that - I felt that was a responsibility I had, so even though it was difficult - it was traumatic at times, I try to do that.
- J.F. Did any blacks, over the years, ever ask you about that experience?
- G.M. No, no (Laugh) no - it's a mystery. Some day I'll - probably most blacks weren't interested one tiny (Laugh - can't make out a few words!) another particular trial (020) but it would - I mean it would have been very interesting, for example, to talk to Steve about that, and to find out, because he would have followed it. Those were people who knew him who were involved there, so ...
- J.F. Knew who?
- G.M. Knew Carol (Karl) (022) for example - knew me as much as they knew that I - ja - that I'd been in Durban, and that they'd seen me at parties, that I stopped off in King.....(023) that kind of thing - they .... (023) King Williamstown (?)



- J.F. (Can't hear - you're too faint)
- G.M. We were people in politics together. We were people in NUSAS and SASO, so they would have ....
- J.F. I thought you meant New Brechenbach (025)
- G.M. No, no, no, so - but I never got a chance to do that, so I don't know what black people thought of their Coloured trial (Laugh) I think it was largely - I mean, if you look at the newspaper clippings, it was largely something fought out in the Afrikaans press - enormous coverage - enormous coverage.
- J.F. And then you got involved in, what teaching, at Wits?
- G.M. No, it's - I moved from - having done the Honours course in development studies, I'd registered for an MA, and then we started - while we were doing that we started doing work in progress, and I then moved out of the university itself, and ja, work in progress, and maintaining a resource centre and doing research around that became a full time activity along with child rearing.
- J.F. So did you - for yourself, was that finding a role - a white role, using skills - offering resources - was that part of saying : I'm still political, I'm still in South Africa - what can I do?
- G.M. Very much so. It was something that I felt - well, first of all it didn't - I couldn't - whether - once again, whether rightly or wrongly, I decided that I could not go back to union work. Once again I had a responsibility there. The part of the - specifically what I would have been involved in with Brechtenbach, would have been union related. For then - for me then, having had those accusations, having had those kinds of accusations made against me, to then go and try and get back into the unions would have been irresponsible.
- I would have brought along those links (039) whether they were correct or incorrect, whether they were unformulated, whether they existed for two weeks, doesn't matter - that's what I felt I would have brought to the unions, and that's why I never even tried.
- I think my inclination would have been to go back to unions - to union work, but I didn't do it, and - which left me with then the problem of what to do, and in a way, it's - came out/ clearly. Glen and I spoke about it, and Susan Brown, who was doing the same course at the same time - we spoke about what we felt would be necessary to do, in terms of political debate in terms of information, and we decided that such a publication would be worthwhile, and I changed - it's changed drastically over the years, but ja, I still think - the fact that it's existed for so many years, and is now up to number 38 will be the next one, is an indication that we made the right decision at that time. It's the longest any such journal has lasted here. / fairly.



J.F. And what about, with the whole non racialism thrust relating to blacks - that was quite clear in union work - what about in this kind of work - did you feel that blacks let you know - did you ever feel ivory tower intelligentia?

G.M. Julie, I mean - I think the nature of the society - what I've stopped doing is agonising about the separations that exist. I regret them. At times they actually militate against what I'm doing, what I would like to be doing, and at other times - but it's - I don't think it's useful to, in fact, agonise over it all the time. I think it leads to a situation of paralysis if you just say: Well, we - I'm not actually in the heart of the townships - I can't experience that, and therefore I don't have a role. I don't accept that kind of position.

We went ahead and did that. We had sufficient contact, I think, with a large enough number of black people for their experience to feed into what we were doing, and for their comments to feed into it, and for us to feed into their debates, and I think that that was tremendously important - that work in progress, from the start, set out to interact with political activity in that way, and that it was taken up.

We wanted those issues to be debated, and we found out that they were. The places where work in progress cropped up, the places where we knew it was being distributed, showed us that it was fulfilling that kind of role, so there was not as symbiotic as one would like that role - that interaction to be, but most certainly there was that interaction, and still is.

J.F. And then, now - is that a departure from your - what you're involved - not being with - I mean you're dealing with white students - do you feel that that - it's also a political?

G.M. Well, it's not quite dealing with white students - I mean, (Laugh) sure it's a predominantly white university, but the students I teach are - I suppose half of them are black students. The first year African Government class is more than half - considerably - it's predominantly black - black African, as well, which is even - also says something about the class origins and class aspirations of the people who are doing it, because previously the course counted as a credit for law, and therefore you had a lot of - you had a lot of Indian students doing it, because they were going to do law afterwards.

Now you're getting African students doing it, because they interested in the course on African - on Africa, not because they want a credit towards a law degree, and that's why the - there're very - to just talk in racial categories, but I think those reflect class aspirations. There are very few Indians doing it. There are a vast number of Africans doing it, in terms of the percentage of the classes as a whole, and a few whites, and I think that that's probably the way that that course will now, ja, develop in future, so I don't accept that it's necessarily only white.

Obviously it is a white institution - the colleagues are white in the department - they're all white colleagues.



J.F. So do you feel like that - that that is a political involvement - teaching that course - do you see things happening with the students that you feel makes your role useful or.

G.M. I think it's a political involvement - it most certainly is a political involvement. It's a course that, first of all brings Africa real - it says : Africa's worth studying, and there are certain things we can say about Africa, there are certain things we can learn from Africa that are relevant to what we do here.

The second year course is totally on Southern Africa. Half of it's on South Africa and contemporary South Africa, so the tests that we give, they can answer from reading the newspapers, but trying to analyse it, to make sense of it in some way, so ja, I think it is a political course in many ways.

I don't think it's a course that's in any way divorced - it's not teaching the great tradition of British literature, English literature in 1980 South Africa - it's not that - it's ja.

I'm not trying to justify my position there - I'm just saying that that is what it is.

J.F. And does your position now, not at all related to your Afrikaans roots - does that in any way ever assert itself, from time to time - do you ever think about it - do you ever think of somebody else dealing with that background, or is that just coincidental?

G.M. I don't think - it's not an issue with me any more - it's not at all. I don't think of myself as Afrikaaner - not at all. It becomes real when, I suppose when I speak to other people who are more Afrikaans, in terms of their definition of themselves, and then those issues become real - then I find that what is written in the Report, which to me is simply a statement about the society, and something that I've got to incorporate in some kind of analysis.

To them it's actually something that they get incredibly angry about, because it says something about them as Afrikaaners. It doesn't say anything about me as an Afrikaaner. I don't have to take responsibility for what is being written in the Afrikaans press.

I don't have to take responsibility for what is said by an Afrikaans Government. In fact, I reject that kind - there was a Simon Jenkins article a while ago in the Economist, that had a whole row of Afrikaaner this, and Afrikaaner Laager mentality, and Afrikaaner this and - and I said to the students : Just read through it and see what this guy is saying. I mean, he's basically going right back, finding refuge in that thing, that as long as he didn't have Afrikaaners here, it would all be O.K. - the sort of liberal English tradition.

Now, if you look at Natal's history, that is just so much garbage it's just not true, so it doesn't hold water. I refuse to accept that kind of guilt. I think it's a naive analysis of South Africa. I think it's not only naive - ....



- G.M. .... it's totally wrong as an analysis of South Africa, and it allows an easy way out. It's ja, it's an ethnic - ethnic definition of the situation - a cultural definition of the situation. Bad Afrikaaners, good English - let us run the country (Laugh) and we'll sort it all out for you.
- J.F. And surely doesn't fit with non racial progressive...?
- G.M. No, no, no.
- J.F. I guess what I don't want to leave is where if .....(112) statement you can make is someone thinking the other is an Afrikaaner who just Anglicised himself and...
- G.M. No, I - well, on the other hand, I don't define myself as English (Laugh) that would be as wrong. I, ja. Sorry, you were - were you going to say something more?
- J.F. No, I want you to say something about that - I'm just saying I don't want it to come out that - that that's the happy ending - that you lost the Afrikaans background.
- G.M. No, no, when - I - that's why I brought in the example of Natal - that's - along with blaming it all on the Afrikaaners goes, let the English do it - you know - we're much more liberal, we're much more, ja, liberal than : Correction : in our outlook, and our politics will be so much more progressive, and as I said, in Natal, that is just simply trash - it's not true.

If you look at it historically, the English in Natal, the English tradition, is one of the most reactionary ones in South Africa, that at the time of Union they wanted a federation because they refused to have even the kind of limited voting procedures that applied in the Cape at that time, so just one example - ja - I don't define myself as English.

I don't reject being Afrikaans in favour of being English - not at all.

- J.F. But how are you Afrikaans - do you - I asked this before but on the record, do you want your kids to speak Afrikaans - is that part of it?
- G.M. No, I don't mind if they don't speak Afrikaans - I really don't mind. I would prefer them to speak Zulu because they would be able to communicate with the - with many, many more people in a much more real way. If they learn Afrikaans, great, but then they must learn it because it actually does have a richness about it.

It gives access to literature, it gives access to certain peoples' ideas, and I think that that's the value of any language, and, ja, and that's why they sh - that's why, if they learn Afrikaans, that's what I would like to get across, not because they have some cultural responsibility then if they learn Afrikaans.

- J.F. Did you ever finish the MA on (.....) (131)

- G.M. (Laugh) No, the - I - it was one of those poems (132) I wrote to the HS&C. I had a bursary from them, and I said I was detained with the subject (Laugh) of my academic study - could I please be excused for a couple of years while I finish this Honours!, and they avoided the whole letter - they just said : Rule so-and-so says that you're not allowed



- G.M. .... to register for two degrees at the same time, so we're cancelling your MA registration, and that was it! That was the end of academic work at Brechtenbach.
- J.F. If, then he was someone that you admired who happened to be Afrikaans, is there anyone now that you'd say?
- G.M. Well, they're friends - I mean they're friends (there're) (138) but there isn't - I don't think there is a political figure. Bayers Naude stands for a whole lot of things. I don't agree with a lot of what he says and the way that he comes across, but I think he's a very genuine person. The few times that I've met him I've found it well worthwhile talking to him, and he is still Afrikaans - Bayers is, in a very real way, still Afrikaans.
- J.F. And how long was the time of this - my last question is how long was this little - between meet me on the steps, to being detained - I can't..
- G.M./ It was brief - it was I think we - it must have been about four, five days after that, that I left Cape Town, but by then the security police were following us so openly that it just simply wasn't true - it was so obvious that - ja, we couldn't pretend any more, although I did pretend. I then - Brechten went off in his own way, we said we'd contact each other later.

I set off on a tour that we'd planned in any case, of campuses with Barry Guilder, and we drove off and as we - in fact, they let down the tyres of his beach buggy that night so we couldn't leave in the middle of the night. We had to leave in daytime, so they could easily follow us, and they followed us all the way, and then in Pietermaritzburg I was finally detained and taken to Pretoria, so it was brief. It must have been ten, twelve days after I met him, which also puts it in perspective.

There was no as though I'd become a member of an organisation (Laugh) or anything like that - it just wasn't true. Brechten had presented us with certain things - we didn't even have time to properly comment on those, and then it all ended, but the repercussions, of course, went - way beyond twelve days' worth of political involvement.

END OF INTERVIEW.