

Q Born and when?

A I was born in 1941, this is in Pietermaritzberg. Brought up at Ixppo, place called ~~Carisbrooke berg~~. This is where the film Cry the Beloved Country started. Possibly it is one of the reasons why one has always been interested in this whole phenomenon of non racialism, just because of the impact of that book. And also because ^{as} we grew up being religious people we used to sing songs like, hymns like, 'Let the black and white worship together, bla, bla, bla.

It did not take place then, so it became a very far off idea and somehow fascinating to pursue.

Q So the name of the place that Cry the Beloved Country starts is called what, again?

A It's Caris brooke. It is in the Ixopo magisterial area.

Q Did, when did you read the book first time?

A I think I was fairly old, I must have been doing the teacher's diploma then when I read the book.

Q And how did you feel about it on first reading? What did you think of the book?

A It was very engrossing. Quite emotional. Of course one has to say that one also tends to be subjective about it all because that's where I was brought up and so on. So I cannot really look at it that objectively. But it was quite engrossing and very emotional. Also because later on I happened to work together with Alan Paton in the Liberal Party. We went places with him, up North, northern Natal, during the times of the removals and so on.

So I experienced it in the book and experienced Paton personally as a party man.

Q So when you read the book for the first time you were what in your early 20s or something?

A Must have been late teens.

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Q And did this seem like a new idea for white man to write a book about blacks and whites living together or had you had exposure to it, to that kind of non racialism, to the church or anything? How did it strike you? Did it strike you as radical, strange, logical,?

A It's struck me as quite a feasible proposition but I..but that had been so removed from us. It, as I say once more, it struck me as an idea, a possibility but of course I must say that, I ~~mean~~ even earlier I am in the early teens at the age of 14 I read quite a lot regarding..the ANC literature and the papers called New Age. New Age was the publication of the COD then. Fighting Talk and what have you.

So already I had an idea of a future SA, one would like to be in.

Q I am just going to move here because it's such an echoey room. And my questions won't appear on the tape from so far away. So you had it.. it wasn't your first...you weren't a black who would say I have never experienced the idea of whites being progressive or liberal in their policies?

A No, not at tall. Also, when I was, even at an fairly young age, a golf caddy, in the same place, Ixopo, I knew that whites were of a number of strains. I mean there were those who were very kind, who would look at you as a real friend, as a fellow creature of God sort of thing. Be it rather paternalistically. And there were those who were just crude outright who would hit you with a club in the head, ja.

Q How did you get the ANC and COD literature? Did you have a friend or ~~were~~ your parents political or did you have ANC friends or how did you get that kind of literature in the 50s?

A In the 50s, ah, at that time I think ANC was quite strong as a movement and they published these papers, New Age and so on and so I would buy them and read them. The times I embarrassed my mother reading them in church during Sunday school.

Q I know the ANC was a different story then but I am saying it is not every black who would want to read them, find them, know about them. Did you just happen upon them? Your parents didn't encourage you about..?

A No they did not. My mother would not have loved me to read ANC literature

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A at that age but at that age, but she did also attend an ANC meetings but I think she might have felt that agh, the stuff was too much for me; I was too young then.

I am not too sure that I am answering your questions as well as I should.

Q No, no you are doing fine, I don't think I am asking them very well. I am just saying was the kind of thing that every young boy you knew knew about the ANC or was there a particular person who said hey this is good stuff or how did you happen upon finding that kind of literature? Especially the COD which are...

A No, I, thing is now the newspapers were on the road; I mean they were for sale on a door to door basis. So that is the sort of exposure one had and also I believe at the same time, at that very age I was inclined to reading. I still mind as if it were yesterday that one...people, other students were playning around during recess time, we used to be at the libraries reading.

Q Ok, now you how did you meet Paton? Was that your next experience or did you get involved with the ANC at all? Did you join the Youth League or anything like that?

A Ja, now I got involved with the ANC in 1961 when I started teaching. It was then a banned organisation; it was during the proclamation of the Republic of SA, we were organising boycotts, stay aways and so on and the man who introduced me to the ANC, although not directly so, he did not say that he was introducing me to ANC, he is a man called Izolo Keswas with whom we taught at a school in Edenvale, Maritzberg.

Q And was he an ANC guy or...?

A Yes, Very staunchly ANC.

Q Had he ever been to prison or anything?

A No, no.

Q So it wasn't until 1961 that you got to read this stuff or you had read some before?

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A I had read some before. I had read some as early as 1956. That is the ANC stuff and so on but then to be politically involved in ANC work, this was in 1961.

Q And what did you do? How did you get involved?

A It was literally going out organising people for the All In Conference which was to take place in 1961 May against the proclamation of the Republic; encouraging boycotts and so on.

Q This was before the ANC was banned or?

A This was after it was banned. That was underground work ja.

Q And you hadn't been involved doing work until 61? Did it take this guy to get you going or did you not like the ANC before? Why did you not get involved till 61?

A I mean if..I think it was just because this time I had a direct ANC contact. Whereas from 1956 my experience of the ANC was only through literature, so just through reading newspapers and so on. Through reading their publications.

Q And when this guy got you involved and encouraged you, did he say this is an organisation to fight the whites or did he say this is an organisation to help us move the economy? How did he put it? Was it in any way did you see it as a racial thing?

A Not at all. I didn't see it as a racial thing. ANC was never racial. I mean in our eyes. Also the way he put it across to us, I mean if, again if you..if again one had a look at the literature which we were reading at that time, there were such people as Bunting involved in Congress work, albeit, I think, ja. and that there were was Joe Slovo; we knew he was a COD man and so on. We knew ANC as a non racial organisation.

Q And did that seem to make sense to you? Did you ever have any thoughts? Did you hear about PAC? OR did you not hear about PAC??

SALHA
A We had learnt about the PAC and we were...for us it was a repulsive organisation. Repulsive because of its racial connotations. 361

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A We did not look forward to whites being driven to the sea. We did not look forward to Indians being excluded in the total decision making process, so even from my personal experience, like I have told you, when we grew up, more or less from the distant idea of a SA that had togetherness of ~~xxx~~all people.

Q So the PAC you had heard about but you didn't take any note of?

A Mmm mm. I would say that I did, in that...but negatively so.

Q Did you train as a teacher?

A Yes, yes-

Q And you were teaching with this other chap?

A Yes.

Q And was it a big thing for him to recruit you to do underground work? I mean didn't you, did you worry a lot about the consequences about getting caught?

A Not at all.

Sorry, sorry, were you meeting in here, (Yes we were).

Q The risk that meant what the consequences would be of working underground? How did you respond when he tried to encourage you?

A Ah, I think either through being **zealous** or possibly being too unsuspecting and naive it never really occurred to me that at that moment that I might just have brushes with the Security Branch and so on.

Q And what did you feel you were doing? Why did you feel it was a good idea to do that kind of work? What do you think you were going to contribute?

A That was...we were being, was being active furthering the objectives of the organisation that had a tradition of non racial democracy for years.

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Q When you did organising and that kind of work, how long did you do that work?

A I think it must have been until 1963. I mean when the screws really did turn on the organisation and a number of people went underground and they got lost and so on. This was somehow, not because I thought it was too risky but people were just nowhere to be found. People became too afraid.

Q So you didn't actually get caught you just stopped working?

A Ja, just stopped working. (And did you feel...?)
And I must say also that it seemed for a while that the ANC had a demise at that time.

Q And what it just seemed like it was no longer an effective organisation? Is that what you mean?

A Ja, it seemed like it was dead, virtually dead. And its place was seen to be taken at that time by the Liberal Party.

Q The Liberal Party?

A Ja and other wide, liberal student organisations. I mean that is as the fore front organisation at that moment and also the organisation that had considerable beating from the government. And it was 1963 that I joined the liberal Party.

Q Considerable what from the government?

A Sorry, that had considerable panel beating, ~~bad~~ beating by the government.

Q Being upset, being attacked by the government?

A Ja.

Q So did you think, did you see the Liberal Party as actually going exactly the same way as the ANC or are you saying, it...

Q No it certainly..ja, it certainly was in my own view going the same way as ANC at that moment. I mean, in as far back as 1960 it had abolished

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A the qualified franchise thing and it was then an open organisation as it were excepting that the only way where they default was that the ANC advocated a socialist economy and so on and the Liberal Party advocated a free enterprise economy. Liberal Party was anti communist, and ANC was pro communist generally.

Q If you had had a choice would you have preferred the COD or the Liberal Party? If the Cadre was still going?

A I certainly would, I would onely have gone the ANC way because I mean COD and so on..that COD thing it was merely a strategy to appeal to the white, to the white constituency. There was also the Congress of Coloured Peoples Congress, there was also the SA Indian Congress appealing to the different races of this country but all ^{under} one umbrella, the Congress Alliance.

Q So it was only because nothing else existed that you turned to the Liberal Party.

A Yes, exactly.

Q What had you thought of liberals before that? Had you known any white liberals?

A No, I had not. I had known them from a distance; I had known them as good people and that was that. I mean there was Peter Brown, and who was busy most of the time organising parties for the people and so on. Busy with YMCA and so on. Paton too was busy. I knew them from a distance.

Q Had you met Paton?

A No, not until I was in the party.

Q So how did you come to join? Who did you contact, did someone recruit you or how did you get into the party?

A I will tell you. I was a teacher at the time, 1963 I remember and we had problems at school and lack of finance, some pupils doing without books and so on and I went to the Liberal Party office because it had been, had that reputation of do gooder organisation. So I went to them

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A asking for some form of assistance to get jobs for the pupils, holiday jobs for the pupils and so on. That is exactly how I...then I had an interview with him and he is dead now.

First I had an interview with Peter Brown and later with an interview with a man who worked there, his name was Zachais Nyamisa. Somehow we discussed the whole poli cy of the Liberal Party and excepting that they were against the communist party and so on, they offered quite a lot in scope.

Q How did you feel that they ^{said they} were against the CP?

A I did not feel ~~very~~ strongly about that. I had never...because I ... they were the only alternative that was ~~av~~ailable.

Q Was it something that impressed you or was it something that you would have taken a stand against?

A I would have taken a stand against that. I would have taken a stand against that had there been any other option.

Q That you would or wouldn't ?

A I would, I would have taken a stand against them being anti communist, but we had no option. Somehow we had to get a political platform where to speak.

Q Why didn't you like the anti communist..

A The thing is we..I am a socialist. I had an inclination towards socia-
lism. We had always ~~l~~ooked forward to a society, albeit in a utopian
manner of equality, of equal opportunity and so on and in a completely
free enterprise situation you don't get that. I ~~me~~an if you look at
American it has been free for a number of years but because of free enter-
prise and so on you still have ~~very~~ poor people and very rich people.

Q And can you tell me, you got into the liberal Party, tell me a bit
about it. Did you ~~R~~meet Paton right away?

A No it took quite some time. I think I did meet Paton the same year. I
~~remember~~ we went up with him to some areas in Northern Natal, Ladysmith

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A and so on where people were being removed. I heard him speak, quite a forceful speaker. He would put the message home pretty brilliantly. Also, 1964 the party had hell of a haras.. sorry, 1963/64 the Party had every promise to be a powerful party and so on. It was attracting quite a number of Africans; they were coming in their numbers in it and sooner or later, I think 1965 the screws were turned on the party like anything; people were banned, John Ageson, you may have met him. Peter Brown himself was banned, being National Chairman and so on.

Again the Liberal Party seemed to be going to the ANC way in that now people just seemed to fear it. I mean when we joined in 1963 at National conferences people would flock in the hall and so on but when the screws were turned on the party people fled like anything.

Q And yourself, did you stick with the party?

A To its dissolution, 1968. I..it was a terrible thing, I mean looking at our party dissolve when this Prevention of Improper Interference Act was passed so we sat there in the office; the Progressive decided it would do away with .. it would retain the white character and the Liberal Party said it would not prostitute its beliefs, so it continued to prefer to die rather than expel blacks and Indian etc. So

So we looked at the party die, 1968 had the final communiques from the then National Chairman, Edgar Brookes. Ja.

Q How did you feel with your years in the party, was it a substitute for the ANC because it was legal or did you begin to like Liberalism and support liberalism? Did you feel that the work of liberals ^{was} what you believed in?

A I think it really depended on the individuals in the party. It was such an armafast thing, so many personalities. In some areas it was very much like a how best can I...a tea party party, as it were and I mean in some areas. But again there were times when principals had to be stood for, that is where you would admire such characters as Peter Brown, Alan Paton, of course he has changed dramatically since then. I think because of isolation or his senility and so on.

 But you would find those people who you would go with them up country,

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A who would fight the cause of removals; matters would be taken to court.

Then there were terrible laws being passed at that time - General Laws Amendment Act, the party would take a stand against them and so on. Now the question is whether the rank and file of white liberals did understand what the liberal Party was all about. I mean you would still find some people in the party say that still would not like misogeneration and that kind of thing. In other words they would privately go for this Immorality Act and so on and Mixed MARRIGAES Act. Some in their heart of hearts but however, for the sake of soothing their consciences they would go along with us.

Q So did you develop any kind of ambivalence or cynicism about liberals, white liberals during that period of being involved with the Liberal Party?

A With some of them but at the same time one really understood they were from a completely different background. They were from a completely different background and the struggle was really our struggle. In the final analysis what you have is that this is an African struggle. African working class struggle and the Liberal Party somehow recruited its members from the middle class, upper class whites and so on, so we had that problem. And as you say it is an ambivalent situation.

Q What about the black members? You were a teacher, your parents were teachers, were there African, black working class people?

A Many, plenty, particularly people who were facing removals in the Northern areas. There were many working class people in the Liberal Party. Ja. I think they just sought a political home, like we had, a form of protest, because otherwise there would have been no other home. There was no other home.

Q And then in 68 when it was dissolved did you cease to be political for a while? What happened?

A Now frankly I think one has got to refresh ones memory. Ja, I really ceased to be political and I just became more involved in ordinary social um, social welfare things and so on.

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Then at a local level I tried to, we tried with some people out in 560

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A Sobantu village to start a youth organisation etc. which was banned I believe in just six months of its existence. (when?) Banned by the local superintendent, he made it impossible for us to operate. Ja.

So I think for a long while one was in a political wilderness until some time, when was this, until 1979 I think when one got involved with this Inkata thing, also because there was a...there, it seemed working outside the system had just become impossible so we got involved in Inkata.

Inkata had this promise of being an ANC thing; operating from within.

Q You say outside the system, are you saying Inkata is the system?

A Ja, it certainly is, and it operates completely within the system. Also because at the same time, one, I mean I had just been to America during the Kata days and somehow we had been discussing quite a lot with some of the black Americans that were thinking it might just be best to address the system, to use the system to adjust the system so to put it.

Q Is that what the black Americans encouraged you to do?

A Yes. To use the system to address the system. They had had some dividends in working with Kennedy, ja, to some extent with Johnson and so on.

Q How did you happen to go to America? What were you doing?

A I had gone there on some course. It was not a USALEP thing, how would you call it, it was an exchange program I remember. It was only...at the same time that I went of a USALEP thing.

Q And just briefly, your job had been , you worked as a teacher in the 60s did you continue teaching?

A I was a teacher, left teaching and I was employed in an administration capacity in the Education Department; from there I was transferred to also to the Education Department but now in KwaZulu but in the same premises. From there I left, I became a personnel officer with the

Tonga Group. I became very much interested in the development of 591

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A of the people in Tongaat.

Q Why did you go to the Tongaat Group? What...

A What made me to leave teaching? It was frustrating, absolutely, I mean even in that admin. capacity in which I worked, I was...the lack of funding in the Kwa Zulu government was such that you got the whole thing so frustrating. I remember that I was in charge of supplying furniture to the schools, as books and so on; Now the financial year starts in April of each year and by August all the funds had been exhausted, that is for the supply of books, furniture and so on. All you had was now salaries etc. So it was a frustrating thing to find...who are having a thirst for education, coming to you hoping that they would get something but you wouldn't get a thing. There was just no money and as I say it was a frustrating exercise.

Q So then you went to the Tongaat Group as a Personnel? And was that working with KwaZulu people?

A No, no, it, Personnel Officer, I was working for the Tongaat Hewlett Group and somehow they also made use of me in so far as recommending them educational grants and so on for the peoples concerned.

Q Going to the States, did that make any impression on you, I mean, how did you feel about the way how blacks were doing in the States, briefly?

A One could feel that discrimination was there, there was no doubt about that. If you go to such places as Harlem you do feel that there is considerable discrimination there but at the same time there seems, there is quite an opening up for some opportunities but it is really window dressing. Finding a man being called a manager with a desk from this side to that, but with no decision making powers at all.

Q So you came back and you, had you not been involved in Inkata before?

A No.

Q Why not?

A It had just never appealed to me. I just looked at it from afar and I

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A just do not know really why I was not involved. It never appealed to me, it must have been for me some form of a yearning for the past that some day ANC would come up and be alive again.

Q Was that why you didn't join or you did join?

A That's why I did not join that moment. Then I believe of course 1978/9 also, there was a meeting between Tambo and Gatshe and so on and that had quite a lot of impact on local people.

Q So you thought if he is talking to the right people maybe I'll give him a chance?

A Mmm.

Q But you hadn't joined before but you are Zulu?

A Ja.

Q What about being a Zulu person? Had you ever thought I should join this, this is a group for the Zulus?

A I had never looked at myself as a Zulu in the first place. I normally look, I have always looked at myself as a South African.

Q So the fact that it was for Zulus, would that have encouraged or discouraged you?

A It would have discouraged me. That it was a purely Zulu thing, coz if you also remember Inkata in the late 70s it recruited extensively from other racial groups, from other tribal groups.

Q So then you joined and what was your experience like with Inkata? Did you stay with them for a long time?

A Now let's see, I think I was there in 1979, by 1980 I had already had serious misgivings. I think by 1981 I was no longer a member of Inkata.

Q What were, can you give me any incidents, what made you to decide this was no good?

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A 1980 you had the school boycotts out at Kwa Mashu and Inkata repressed them like anything. Then I became seriously concerned as to what direction this organisation was taking. And also there seemed to be such close reproachment between Inkata and the government, I seriously was, I say to myself as to what this thing is really. Were people being lead up the garden path.

Q So did you participate in activities for while and then quit or were you⁹ very active member?

A I think I was not a very active member. I did not for instance have an office in our branch. I was appointed to be the publicity spokesman for the local thing which was called Inkacord. Inkata Coordinating Committee and that sort of thing. And I did not do a thing for that either and that sort of thing.

So I mean I was never an active person in Inkata.

Q And would you...

End of tape.