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J.F. .... start out by asking you when you were born and where?

M. Well, I - I was born in - in Natal in 1955, 27th. October.

J.F. And what kind of background did you come from - were your parents very political, were they - what kind of work did they do and did it have an effect on you?

M. It did - actually it's a very difficult question - political or non-political in the South African sense, but my parents had - were people of a very high moral integrity, to begin with, which infected all their children, I would say - in a particular way with me, as a first born, because I then grew up, I think, with a relatively high sense of justice, and it was for me basically from that moral point of view, to begin with, that my awareness found a base, because I rebelled not only at one of the earlier stages against the question of black, white dichotomy in South Africa but in a way I was also aware of the poor, rich dichotomy, which then tended to have this racial overlap in the South African context - I wouldn't say that is typical of every young black South African, but I'm talking of a particular case.

I became conscious of the question of rich, poor - probably to a certain extent as well this reflected the whole Christian religious background, which most black South African have to develop from in the context of the relationship with their parents and the community, the immediate community that is.

J.F. When you were growing up what part of Natal was it from - what area - what group area?

M. I was actually born in Zululand and grew up there in Zululand - although there were regular periods when one would go to - to Durban and the other urban areas, but I basically come from - from the countryside of Natal, not far from where Gatsha Buthelezi stays (Laugh)

J.F. And what did your parents do - was your father working in Zululand or did he leave - was he a migrant?

M. No, he was working there.

J.F. As what?

M. Well, as a - as a teacher - both my parents have been teachers.

J.F. Do you have a first name or surname?

M. No, I just have Mzala.

J.F. Growing up in that rural setting - were you always in the rural - were you always in Zululand with your schooling or were you sent away?

M. Well, I was - I schooled there for a short while until I did my - my Standard Five, and then I went to study in the Cape, because my parents were interested that I should study in English because we - they saw no reason why I had to do some science subjects, even at that early stage in - in Zulu, as dictated by the bantu education system, so I went to study in the Cape from primary.

J.F. Was that a factor that you went from a Zulu area to a Xhosa area - was that - being in Zululand you only were with Zulu people mainly, right, and then suddenly you were with people who spoke a slightly different language in Cape Town?



M. What is the suggestion in the question?

J.F. I'm just saying was it a factor - I'm not suggesting (.....) - I'm saying was it a factor at all for you to be - maybe the bigger factor was Cape Town's a big city - maybe the two languages are quite related, but I'm just wondering....

M. Well, I think in my own view, first of all being in Natal itself was a very big factor, particularly in the countryside, because I grew up being very aware of the presence of white farmers, and I saw a lot of cruelty meted out against the people - I saw a lot of people being evicted from their farms, and my father was the type of person who'd relate very closely with people, and I remember many occasions when I would actually experience a situation where these people in their own country were almost without a country, or rather they were actually without a country - there was that contradiction.

Now moving to the Cape probably only broadens - broadened one's perceptions of South African political realities - in my own view, one of the biggest advantages one had there was that I sort of looked at the world beyond the confines of a rural Natal set-up - one began to be aware that it's not just Zulus that exist there, there are other peoples

Incidentally, the school that I went to did not only have Xhosa speaking people, students - it was a mission school and many people were there from almost all ethnic groups, so much so that when it was time for vernacular languages, we would go out into almost five or six different groups and come back to study the sciences and the other subjects that were taught there, so that I think it had this particular effect that it broadens one's conception of the problems - one was able to relate with other peoples from - from the different parts of South Africa, I would say.

J.F. What was the school - do you think that your experience - just from what you've studied about the years of the congress alliance - do you think that there was a different kind of ethos that was prevalent in the years that you were growing up in the '60s in a mission school in the Cape - it was interesting and unique that you had the different groups, but from some of the people - I'm just comparing your generations - the people I've interviewed who grew up in the '50s with a congress tradition that they were very aware of - there was a different approach to seeing Coloured comrades or Indian - they were seen as comrades - was there any sense when you went there - was it just Africans at the school you were at?

M. Well, it was an African school, but being a mission school, I think like the - the others, the teachers were white - and by the way, in the school itself, I think this is where one also saw these racial differences now in the sense that one, whereas this was a school set against the background of a Christian religion, which teaches that people are equal - this is how we had been brought up by our parents as well as in the school itself - however, there were actually clear distinctions in the schools in term - in the school in terms of the places where the black teachers lived and where the white teachers lived - they occupied bungalows and were aware and were very conscious, and the only criterion which every student in that kind of set-up could attribute to that distinction was the question of race.

Maybe it is not surprising, therefore, that one's elementary rebellion against the system assumed the form of our moral objection within our local environment to that racial distinction that existed, because to us it contradicted the whole basis of our education from the Christian point of view, which was the main ideological basis of our understanding and outlook of the world at that time, and also from the point of view of pure moral education from your parents, who say to you - you must not steal - you must not treat your sister like that.



- M. That forms a kind of basis from which then you move to face the world, but the world was not exactly what we had been brought up to know, to understand, to appreciate, to value, and to admire from that moral point of view, and then one rebelled - probably that's why at a certain stage I was expelled from that school, precisely because we happened to know that the teachers, black teachers and white teachers were not getting the same salary, and we went on strike and I was one of the two students who was - who were expelled for having participated in - in leading that strike.
- J.F. How old were you then?
- M. I must have been 15 - I was very small, I was very young.
- J.F. And so what did you do after that, once you were kicked out?
- M. Well, when I was kicked out from the school, first of all I was detained immediately - actually the - the people who came to fetch me at the school, and I wasn't aware at that stage, were the special branch, and that's how I got detained, and then they were questioning us - well, they questioned me because I was the only one who was detained - we were two who were expelled, but I was the one who was detained by the special branch and they were questioning my political affiliations - I was not politically affiliated at that stage - although I had a very close friend who was slightly older than me at that time, who also I - I guess, had some influence in one's development - it was Abraham Tiro..
- J.F. Was he....
- M. .... and they questioned me a lot about - about Tiro - he was not at the school but he - he periodically came to the school and I - I happened to know him - I was - I was close to him in a way - and then I had to go to Natal - my parents, after one was released from detention - it wasn't a long period actually - I was detained for just slightly over two weeks - I think it was about 16 days or so - there wasn't much that they could get - you know, I could give, because I was just taking a stand of saying that I think things are wrong and I repeated the very same grievances which I said at the school and - and I was released, so I attended school in - in Natal at another school, where, incidentally, the following year I was also expelled from that school for different reasons but which also moved from the - from the same basis, and then I was charged to - well, to - to trial with 40 (?) students, charged for public violence.
- J.F. From the action of the school?
- M. From the - ja, from the action of the school the following year.
- J.F. What kind of - what was it involved in generally....
- M. You see - incidentally, at that school our strike coincided with the - with a very interesting period in the history of the students in South Africa, and also to a certain extent with the black workers, the 1972, '73 strikes - I think to a certain extent we were broadly a manifestation of that rebellion which we were very much acquainted with, although we had our own local grievances - the kind of thing which you'd see, for instance, in South Africa today, where workers in a particular factory or student in a particular school have got specific grievances, and others elsewhere have got also their own specific grievances and so on and so on, but when you look at the whole phenomenon you actually see that there is a national revolt, so we were part of that revolt in the general sense, but we had our own particular problems that we faced at the school, which were not clearly articulated as pure political, nevertheless which had a political essence.



- M. I think I can go as far as that - I wish I could actually discuss with you other details and so on - it's just that it would, in the long run, make it obvious who I am, that kind of thing, but I'll give you as much as I can and as I feel you - you actually need.
- J.F. So this is still high school - did you - then you were tried and....
- M. Ja, then we went to - went to trial and then we were sentenced to six months but suspended for three years.
- J.F. For public violence?
- M. Ja, for public violence.
- J.F. And then after that you couldn't go....
- M. Then they tried to - well, I - I - I wrote my matric - incidentally, well, I - I - I passed it, having included two more subjects, which means that my matric actually I did eight subjects - in South Africa you do six, I did eight - fortunately I passed all my subjects, and of course the two subjects were outside the main certificate - they had their own certificate - and then I tried to go to Fort Hare University - was registered at Fort Hare - it's one of the most interesting things.
- I was registered at Fort Hare, but within a week of registration I was called to the office of the registrar and I was made aware that I'm debarred from attending a public school after registration, and that's how I left the university - that's why I left - I tried to find out how am I debarred - I'm not banned - so it was very clear that my name must have been submitted by the special branch police, because after our trial - both before and after our trial, our public violence trial, I'd been detained by them as well, so I had to register with UNISA, which had to be the following year, because I had to - had to start doing something - then the next year I tried to - to enter the University of Zululand - I found that the doors again were barred there - in fact I was told about the suspended sentence, which was a bit strange because there was no link up between the suspension of that sentence and my entering a university and so on.
- So I had to wait for something like three years, so to say, until I applied - I kept on applying until I was admitted again at the University of Zululand finally, but then there was the Soweto uprising and I took part in - and left the country immediately.
- J.F. You took part but from Natal?
- M. Ja, from the University of Zululand, where I was a - a law student.
- J.F. You took part in terms of rallies and support and actions in support of it?
- M. Well, we took part in a strike that ended up in the banning (burning) of the University, but (?) some of the fellows that I see you (?) have there, like Master Kies Gumedede (?) and so on, who by the way, was in the same SASO branch with me.
- J.F. So when did you get into SASO?
- M. I got into SASO actually in 1973.
- J.F. And before that you were actually organisationally - had you been affiliated at all before then?



- M. I'd never - I'd never affiliated to a - any specific organisation.
- J.F. Why was that - was that because you were - that wasn't because you weren't political - was that because there wasn't an organisation that you felt you should go to or....
- M. You see, I think the reasons are the following, that one, during the time of my involvement at high school there was no - there was no high school students organisation among blacks at that time, because if you remember very well SASM came after the formation of SASO, and by the time I was in a position to join SASO, that's when SASM came about, so it belongs to a generation of - well, I guess it should be my generation, but I mean students who were younger than me in - I mean in the academic sense, so to say - at one stage - well, there's one - that's one fact - the second fact - factor is that I was actually asked to take part at a certain stage in the formation of NAYO, and I participated in the preliminary discussions....
- J.F. Natal Youth Organisation?
- M. It was the National Youth Organisation, but I was in - in Natal - I was with people like Themba Rubheka, Mandla Longa, but then my difficulty in that sense was also in that I was based in - in Zululand, so these are the fellows I would only meet when I was coming to Durban, and where anyway I already had this close link with SASO and I was with some of the fellows like Terence Tyrone, Strini Moodley, Saths Cooper, Ralph Mgiijima and all those fellows at that stage - Nkosazan Dlamini.
- J.F. And then you were in SASO from '73 and you left in '76?
- M. And then I left the country in '76.
- J.F. Did you have a position in SASO, any official?
- M. Let me not tell you (Laugh)
- J.F. Now....
- M. I had - let me just say I had, but I just don't want to....
- J.F. Can I say an office bearer, an executive member....
- M. Ja, I was an office bearer in SASO.
- J.F. Just taking it back, were your parents - you grew up with this idea of moral imperatives, but were they at all organisat - did they talk about the ANC or any organisations in the home when you were growing up?
- M. Well, not specifically - there were general comments about the injustice in the country of a broad sense, but not about the ANC - you see, I must make it very clear that, you see, the attitude of my own parents was that they did not actually want to encourage me to be involved politically, despite the fact that there were occasional slips when they were talking and I would - I would hear their own viewpoint about the situation generally - I'm the one who actually fitted in the flesh to that moral skeleton, the political flesh - I don't know whether I can say I was influenced, or rather it was determined by them or not, but what I can say is that there was a strong moral influence in my - in my - in my development in judging what was right and what was wrong in the country including, I believe, a certain element of - of rebellion.



J.F. But did you grow up before you met Abraham Tiro, before you got more well read (?) or met people yourself - did you grow up with an understanding of what the ANC represented - I'm just interested in what the perceptions of people were, because some people said they grew up with this understanding from their parents that there were those people who tried but failed, or some people even had this idea of - this aggressive kind of hostile view of ja, where's the ANC, they're failures.

M. I must be frank with you - with me I did not know about the ANC in my - in my young days, until, I think, I was at the school in the Cape - this should be when I was doing what we regarded as Standard Seven, so to say, but even that was a very casual knowledge, which tended to be more of an association in a historic or (?) traditional sense with certain leaders which one considered as outstanding spokesmen, representatives of our people - Lutuli, Mandela, Sisulu, Duma Nokwe and others, and then it sort of built up gradually in that sense, but even then it - the ANC with me did not register itself in a - in a forceful way until at a very late stage, until at the stage when I began to participate now in political debate, discussions, particularly when one joined SASO - that's when I began to - to participate actively in that kind of debate, and the ANC then began to feature more prominently in one's mind as a factor that has to be reckoned with in terms of its approach, its ideology and so on.

Not in a refined sense, not in a - in an erudite sense, so to say - in a very general sense - I hope you - you get my point.

J.F. But how did it feature - I'm just interested - when you got into SASO finally, you'd had this general understanding - from some people's development now you get the feeling that maybe SASO was full of a lot of people who were just criticising the ANC saying they'd done nothing (?)

M. That's not true - that is not true - you see, first of all, starting with the first question - you see, it featured in the sense that here we found ourselves being students, and one of the basic criticism that we're making of ourselves, self-criticisms as black students - we were saying that we are ostracised from the community - we are just enclosed in tribal colleges - we have to be part of the community, we - we - we come from the community - and if you'll remember very well there was - actually one of the most basic policy approaches of SASO was that we are part of the community before we are a student - you are not a student first and then you join the community, so to say, which was meant of course among other things, to encourage student involvement, not to postpone or to procrastinate one's involvement - to feel that we have a duty to perform at every level of our student days - now that's one.

But then secondly, we were coming - we were not coming from nowhere - here we were organised - have there been any people who were - who were organising before - what ideas did they hold - it was in that sense that we tried to find roots, to identify ourselves, and in that historical process, in that debate among ourselves, the ANC was bound to feature - whether one took a positive or negative attitude to its policies is another question, but it did impose itself in our thinking, in our debates, in our discussions, as an indispensable factor that black students had to relate to - and then there was another aspect.

You see, there were a lot of influences within the BC movement - I must say that to a very large extent - or rather, let me put it this way - to a certain extent the struggle of the black Americans had its own influence - there were people who identified more with fellows like Eldridge Cleaver and maybe even Malcolm X and so on in the sense that there were books that we read written about black Americans, and you must be aware of how close the cultural affinity is in this - I mean from the point of view of these books being, you know, sold in South Africa and being available to us, and actually at a certain stage they were deliberately being made available to us.



M. But I actually remember a particular event - in one SASO meeting which we held at Ngoye, which was to be addressed by Mafika Gwala - Pascal Gwala, the poet, and we had this habit of dressing black - you know, a black shirt, black trousers, black everything, and we came to the meeting at the hall and a very interesting remark was made by Pascal Gwala - he said: By the way, we are sufficiently black to add black clothes and other things - we must not forget that our slogan in the South African context of the struggle of the black people is not black power but power to the people - it would be more interesting if we came to this hall rather dressed in our typical traditional clothes, South African - because that then began to give a new interpretation, or rather it only manifested another version, which I must say in parenthesis, it was a demonstration of the fact that there was no homogenous or monolithic approach ideologically within the BC movement - at least not between 1968 and 1973, or '7 - maybe even later, I should say.

In other words, there were people who began to contextualise the struggle of the black people in South Africa without disregarding influences like the black American movement, but we began to see ourselves as an indigenous South African, or maybe even more than that, African phenomenon - a struggle for decolonisation, a struggle for the right to self-determination - now I think it's important to - to - to establish that point because probably it will introduce another dimension in the ideological concepts as understood by us participants in the BC movement, and perhaps this is why SASO had to define black, because it could not be taken for granted that the definition was a dictionary definition of the term.

SASO had to say by black we mean those who are by law discriminated against - I can't remember the formulation now - it's more than ten years ago, but what I'm trying to assert is that the very fact that we tried to make a definition, I think this was a political attempt to try to indicate that basically we - we are referring to a struggle of a particular group in South Africa in political terms for a particular objective, which as I've stated, was our right to self-determination.

J.F. What moved you in that direction or were you already there before - Mafika Gwala's one comment was that - was that a turning point or was it - had you been moving in that direction - I understand obviously people would discuss the ANC, but wasn't there a lot of negative critique - what were the people saying in the early to mid-'70s - or there is the ANC - it's the oldest liberation movement, we should just join with them - if more people had said that you wouldn't have had the.

M. Well, I think there were divergent local experiences - I'll tell you about one example - you know, we had a - what I would call a seminar at the University of Natal at Wentworth at one time - some of the people who (?) were there - I'll just name two only - there was Norman Ndu-bazana, there was Jerry Shongwe, who was our local SASO president at the University of Zululand - and probably I can say it now without any fear of contravening security considerations, because SASO is banned after all - and we were actually discussing the Freedom Charter.

J.F. What year was that?

M. This was in 1975 - no, no, early '76 - we were discussing the Freedom Charter - maybe I can go even further and say to you that the person who had the Freedom Charter, who was responsible for this seminar, it was somebody called Trixie, Terence Tyrone - he's outside now - he's not in South Africa - but we were discussing the Freedom Charter and there were divergent views on the Freedom Charter, particularly on the clause that South Africa belongs to all who live in it.



M. And in this seminar there were actually delegates from all the black campuses - there were people from Turfloop, from Fort Hare - I was in a delegation of two people from the University of Zululand - I was actually - I had come with Jerry Shongwe, representing our SASO branch there - and there was a very interesting lively, constructive debate on this question, but I think I will not be misrepresenting the views of that meeting when I say to you that at the end of the day the overwhelming majority of the people, of the students, came to the conclusion, which did not contradict the SASO policy, in the sense that SASO had said we are pro-black, not anti-white - you must remember that clause in the SASO policy manifesto - it clearly said SASO is not anti-white but pro-black - probably that - we'll get back to that later (?)

However, we came to the conclusion that the kind of South Africa that we are striving for finally is a South Africa where black and white will be able to be equals and where we'd have a fair share in the processes of political administration and the wealth of the country - in other words, we're striving for a non-racial society - the fact that we had organised ourselves at black student had a certain tactical relevance which had its own historical background, and I still think that at that stage it was important that black students had to go through a process of asserting themselves almost in the same way that the ANC, as a political constituency in the organisational sense, had for - had for a long time, for decades, and despite its non-racial policy, kept itself as an organisation of the African people - it was a stage.

I think with the debate, with the healthy debate that was taking place in SASO, and with the influences that were brought to bear on us, and moreover, with our clear and definite move to what cons - contextualising (?) our struggle in the African end (?) South African context in particular, it would be interesting for a historian today - and a political analyst - to find out what would have finally happened - whether we would have moved towards a situation where we thought there was an organisational basis for the involvement of other races within SASO or not - perhaps the answer is found in the policies that are adopted by AZASO and COSAS, which came after us.

J.F. And AZASO which is not called AZASO any more?

M. Ja, by the way.

J.F. But what about that movement - I - a lot of people are talking that way - I think if I take anyone who's border on - who's about your age - Terror Lakota, Diliza Mji - there's a lot of similar (.....) an understanding of what you're saying, that there was a movement, but what I'm trying to do is understand the impetus towards that movement, because there also are people like Saths Cooper who moved in the other direction - for you do you think it was influences before you came to SASO - was it ideological questions - you're saying you discussed the Freedom Charter, but you didn't adopt the Freedom Charter - surely there were people who were arguing against it - why - seemingly you're saying it appealed to you - why did it appeal to you and not to the others to the same degree?

M. I would say probably in my own case, as I've stated before, I think the whole background from which one moved, my premises in looking at the society were what I would safely regard as initially humanist, hence the strong moral factor to it - however, I should add that in the course of development, and in the process of one acquainting oneself with the specific political realities of South Africa, one had to relate in a specific manner to them.



M. And it was in this sense that one was overwhelmed, even at that stage, even within one's participation in SASO about the objectives that we were striving for more than the tactics we were using to achieve those objectives - and by the way, another aspect which I think should not be left out of analysis, and which, as I said to you probably in the beginning of our discussion, that it was an issue that we had to reckon with, that we had to address ourselves to, was the fact that there were white people in South Africa who were in prison - there were few undeniably, but one of the factors we had to concede - or rather one of the questions we had to answer as black students - now I'm referring to those who, I would say, took the struggle in - in a real serious sense, in the sense in which everyone who thought himself or herself or aspired to be a leader among the students at any level - even at a small local level - had to address oneself to was how do we relate to the white person who is in jail, who died in jail - and by the way, Bram Fischer died during our - our - our time of struggle - how do we relate to people like Bram Fischer, how do we relate to people like Denis Goldberg, how do we relate to people like Raymond Suttner, which came during our period of struggle, and we debated this.

I remember there was an article that appeared in the SASO newsletter where somebody talked about black men in white skins - I find it very interesting now, after one's further development from those days, but what it does seem to indicate very clear to me is that there was a significant, if not a dominant tendency among the trends within SASO which wanted to encompass within the definition of a black man - even those few whites which were regarded - and I must make it very clear here that we did regard them as contributors in the liberation struggle, and who were themselves, at one time or another, victims of the system in the sense of them being either detained or being banned - whether those whites were what we referred to as liberals or not - and I think we had not yet developed, by the way, to the point where we made a very clear distinction in the - in the ideological arena between what was referred to as a liberal or a - a - a revolutionary democrat or even a communist, for that matter.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

M. .... to fellows like Matanzima, Gatsha Buthelezi and others - now, you see, I can cite for you a number of examples which can demonstrate - and this has been my argument for some time even from our discussions within the movement, particularly at the time when we arrived and joined the movement and these questions which you are throwing to me now were one of the most debated, to find out how SASO and SASM looked at the question of race in the - in the - in the context of the South African political struggle - I can cite a lot of examples to you and say that I would deny that SASO was composed of a prepondering in great number of what would be regarded as black chauvinist, because if it was so, SASO would not have said in its manifesto that we are not anti-white but pro-black - secondly, SASO would not have had occasions to do anything with any white person, which it had - for an example, if you look at the relationship between Steve Biko and some white priests, and to a little extent Donald Woods, which - who was needed, by the way, as a journalist insofar as we felt that the BC movement did not get a proper coverage in the press - and there were many others we related in - in - in a certain sense.



M. My emphasis in the process of this discussion is not so much to try to prove that SASO was a non-racial organisation, but probably I'm trying to fill in a dimension that is often neglected by many people - some of the late-comers in the BC movement, who completely misunderstood the motives and the political direction that motivated the founding fathers of the BC movement in South Africa and - like Barney Pitso Moseneke and so on - but also to indicate that there was no homogenous approach to the question of race - it was a question that was debated, as it had been debated in the earlier periods of the liberation movement, which is still being debated in South Africa, and that the debate itself was not moving from false premises - it moved from the fact that South Africa has a racial problem, and the manifestations of this racial problem are that we have in South Africa the whole white community that occupies a specific political and economic position as different and distinct from the black people.

In other words, the racial dichotomy is the reality of South Africa, which is known not only from within the country and even abroad - now from the point of view of our own theoreticians, we were trying to - to grapple with the problem to find solutions - I won't say we had found them - you know, this thing is a process - it has taken the ANC close to 75 years to arrive at the position where we feel today that a white South African who identifies with the Freedom Charter, with our policy, with the ideal of a non-racial South Africa, can participate at all levels of the organisation, including being a member of the national executive - something that was unthinkable just a decade ago when we joined the same ANC - how much more with SASO and the other organisations that are inside the country.

J.F. Wouldn't you agree that it's a fact that if you looked at that issue of a white on the NEC - if you look at the issue of white involvement - that they're - in the '50s you had an acceptance - you had a congress alliance as the kind of prevailing point of view - by the '60s and '70s you had - you're saying you debated the Freedom Charter, but you would agree that it seems I would think at that meeting, debating the Freedom Charter with those who were putting another point of view - you didn't accept the Freedom Charter unanimously with all your - you were debating it - it was on the agenda to look at, right, whereas now in the '80s you have kids, young people, and older people, but you have people who never had the congress alliance tradition who were endorsing it wholeheartedly, who have absolutely no problem with a white on the NEC - why do you - how do you explain it?

M. Well, I think the explanation is very clear - first of all, if you were to look at this phenomenon very closely, it directly corresponds with the emergence of the prestige and the influence of the ANC in the South African political scene - during our own time of struggle in South Africa when we were members of SASO - and this has been admitted even by the leadership of the ANC - the political influence was latent, due to factors which are understandable - the arrest of the leadership in Rivonia, to begin with - the problems which were faced by the leadership that was abroad in reaching effectively the mass base inside the country, of which we were a part - and as a result, a substantial number of those who regarded themselves at any level as leaders of the new movement that was developing inside the country developed without this direct effective constant and consistent ANC direction in terms of ideological questions of the struggle.

However, I must say that the processes were gradual but they were clearly in the direction of the ANC developing an approach which was to reach to us - now I know that when we discussed that Freedom Charter in the seminar that was at Wentworth, it was not without some level of ANC organisation.



M. Whether or not this was the phenomenon throughout the country is another question, but what I'm trying to emphasise at this stage is that the development of this non-racial outlook as a political philosophy in the struggle of the people in South Africa owes itself to a very large extent on the traditions that were set by the ANC and which the ANC had a historical obligation to keep and continue it (?) in the period which some people refer to, and maybe correctly so, as a lull in the post-Rivonia period, because it is that tradition - if it is kept constantly, and as I think the ANC was able - was able to work towards - that accounts for the adoption of this political outlook by the new generations of struggle - rather, new generations of people that have joined the struggle in the - in the process of time, particularly in - in the late '70s and the beginning of the 1980s.

J.F. I think everyone agrees the ANC has seen a resurgence, a tremendous resurgence and support.

M. And this includes - and this includes - because when I talk of the ANC I'm not only referring to the people in exile - this includes the members of the ANC, many of whom lied dormant inside the country, but when the ANC made this resurgence they began to identify - they began to take their own positions in communities, within trade unions and so on - hence the immediate link between Oscar Mpetha and the young generation and so on and so forth, and they began to give some guidance to say: Look young chaps, let's sit down and discuss what are we about, where are we going to, how do we understand our society - how do we address ourself to the question of the white people in South Africa - are these South Africans or not - a very interesting question - for the workers even more.

In one way or another at the industrial point of production we are all standing on the conveyor-belt, irrespective of the colour of our skin - we only differ when we live here and we go to different suburbs and locations and in the differentiation in the wages, but we occupy the same place basically, and all these factors contribute, but I would highlight, personally, I think the influence of the ANC, the ANC in its true broad sense, including the ANC which exists in South Africa from the point of view of its members that have been there participating, and many of whom are prominent today, whether in the UDF, whether it's in COSATU and many other organisations that are affiliated to the UDF, and who will continue to be there.

In other words - in other words, this is a - a - this is the principal political outlook, this is the principal tradition of the South African liberation struggle - perhaps which is different or distinct from other experiences in Africa.

J.F. I'm just concerned that we're talking a bit round the issue of the non-racial aspect - let me just take it back - you went out in 1976 - did you go right into the ANC immediately?

M. Yes, I - I went straight into the ANC.

J.F. You'd have to admit that you weren't - that there were many others who didn't do that - would you say you were a minority?

M. No, I think we were a majority.

J.F. You think so?

M. Ja, I think we were a majority, and there's no question about that, by the way.



- M. It's just that with the people who did not go into the ANC with whom we were inside the country, it became more pronounced that they were not in the ANC, in the sense that they were clearly identified distinctly as a group of BC which was inside the country - whereas those who joined the ANC did not have this distinction in the sense that they - they meshed, they integrated within the ANC, but - but I know we - most of the students that I was with were in the ANC - Penuel Maduna and....
- J.F. Would you say that....
- M. .... others.
- J.F. .... that that was partly a security and profile consideration - that the press would get to know about those who weren't involved (.....) whatever, who could easily go to the press, whereas people like yourself, or else the young kids who went into MK, they couldn't go round blabbing now we're in ANC.
- M. Very, very clearly - I should actually say, had it been known by the mass media that so many of us who were involved in the BC movement had actually found it logical to join the ANC, perhaps there is very little attention, comparatively speaking, that would have been given to the group that was specifically identified as the inheritors of the BC tradition, who were few in comparison to those of us who joined the ANC, so I agree with it (?) and I think it's a fact I can - I can demonstrate it.
- J.F. And did you have any - I don't want to know any details, but did you go to the ANC never having had contact in the country or did you know of the ANC before you left?
- M. Actually there are numerous people - you see, my own position, I must make it clear, the generations that joined the ANC from 1976 I can say safely up to about 1980, I almost know all of them, particularly those who were involved in one way or another, but even those who were not involved, by the nature of where I was placed and the kind of work that I - I was doing in the ANC I know, and I talk from - from practical experience - and being one who also participated inside the country who knew people that were participating inside the country, I can again affirm that the majority of the people came - what was the specific question that you posed, by the way?
- J.F. I was saying did you - were you involved with the ANC before you left....
- M. Ja, ja, ja, I was trying to come to that - and there are many people who joined the ANC not because they were given directives by ANC personnel inside the country - there are many people who nevertheless found it logical for them to develop towards the ANC because of a number of factors, but the most dominant of - the most important of which - or rather the most significant one being that it was the ANC, by the way, which provided the kind of leadership, that had this force of attracting the young political activists - Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo and so on - I think it's a factor that should constantly be brought into the picture because it - it influenced us tremendously.
- J.F. But you didn't deal personally with them?
- M. Well, myself, no, no....
- J.F. Did you....



M. Let me say that, you see - let me say something to you - you know, at one time - you see, when 1976 came about, in my own case I'd already been involved - I was already concerned - even more than concerned - I was involved in a way, in the sense that we were already trying to find ways out - what do we do with the situation - something had to be done - by that time I had been detained about three different times, by 1976 - three different times at - at different places - and we said to ourselves, among other things, that look, is it sufficient for us to burn tables in meetings, during SASO meetings, or is there a greater measure of contribution that we can make, and if so how do we do it.

Incidentally, I happened to belong to what I would call a political unit, an underground political unit, at the University of Zululand....

J.F. Of the ANC?

M. Now let me explain that - it was not an underground political unit of the ANC in the sense that this was our initiative - it was not guided by any member of the ANC - I know that because - I must say this very modestly - because I was the head of the unit - let me say something to you which won't be a problem - it may be worthwhile actually to - to say - because in our underground unit there was, for an example, Penuel Maduna, Wiseman Khuzwayo, Nklanhla Ngidi, but I'll only mention those, because those are abroad and they've joined the ANC - I was the head of that unit - we (?) were there - and we said to ourselves : But how do we relate to the main movement - this is how we perceived, you see, at that stage, to the main - how do we relate to the ANC and the PAC - we asked ourselves that question, and when we discussed this thing somebody said : Look, I know somebody who is ANC - he has been at Robben Island, he's in - he's in Hammersdale, let me go and make contact, because we are in a cul-de-sac - as long as we think that our involvement can be taken to its logical end within the confines of SASO, we are not going to get anything happening - we are just students who are within the university campus, we - there's nothing more we can do.

And then we said : O.K., you X (?) you are going to see this person and you'll come back and you'll report to us, because we want - we want to link up with the - the historical forces that are definitely going to shape the future of this country in - in - in a fundement - fundement - in a fundamentally different direction - and it was agreed that myself and somebody else, we should go to Swaziland and try and meet the ANC - perhaps you'll ask the question why - why did we just think of the ANC - maybe it - it's because, among other things, there was this influence of the leadership which I've referred to, but there was, by the way, another aspect.

You know, despite the fact that the Freedom Charter at that stage was a banned document, it must not be thought that we never got hold of copies of the Freedom Charter, which had been drafted in South Africa - the Freedom Charter was not a document imported from exile - it was a South African document - where you (?) took a book by Albert Lutuli, Let My People Go, which you would read inside the country - appended at the end of that book was a copy of the Freedom Charter - so the Freedom Charter actually had its own political momentum in South Africa in the sense of guiding, of being what I would refer to as a lode star which we looked forward to, and incidentally and interestingly so, there was no alternative political programme or policy document that existed within the African - within the - the circles of the black liberation movement in South Africa other than the Freedom Charter, and insofar as it wielded that kind of influence, both from the point of view of its historical sense of origin as well as the tremendous political and moral force that it had to whoever came across it, it was one document that no-one who was involved in South Africa would have not come to identify with, whether positively or negatively.



- M. So that's another aspect that I wanted to - to bring into the picture.
- J.F. What year are we talking about when you had this unit, approximately?
- M. '75, '76.
- J.F. And did you - you went to find someone, this person from Hammersdale you'd heard of?
- M. Ja.
- J.F. Did you ever try to contact any PAC people - did you - when you said we thought how we should relate to the ANC and the PAC, did you ever try to relate to the PAC?
- M. Well, in the case of our own unit, actually we did not try to relate to the PAC, although I must say that a predominant view among us - I'm talking now about the people that I've mentioned - was that we - we didn't really understand what was the - what - why the ANC was a different - had - I mean the ANC and the PAC had to be different organisations - we knew the elementary differences in the sense that one was a pure black nationalist organisation that differed with the ANC in the sense that the ANC adopted a broader outlook, but frankly speaking, our initial response - and I'm being very honest and very frank to you - was that we thought that look, these two organisations should - should - should come together - we can't afford disunity at this stage - we are still struggling.
- Up till the time when I actually joined the ANC many of us never - except a privileged few who happened to know things in finer aspects? than we did, the majority - we thought look, these organisations should come together, but in the process of us being acquainted with details about the various policies of the two organisations - and I know that this was not propaganda because I've not just heard it from members of the ANC, I've heard an independent, or rather, independent sources - I've read literature written by people who are not members of the ANC, and it has only confirmed my own view that this position of the ANC is not only the principal view that was elaborated by the founding fathers of our liberation movement from the beginning of the century throughout, but that it actually constitutes a higher ground, even in strategic terms, than one that looks at South Africa in parochial racial blinkers, because then you don't see the real South Africa - you only see a part of it.
- J.F. But you were a minority or a majority in having that view - it was a secret unit....
- M. You see, in our - in our unit actually all of us had that - that view...
- J.F. In your unit, but in South Africa generally in BC circles wouldn't - maybe....
- M. You see, BC - the problem is this - you see, unfortunately, you know, things are easily (.....) - you know, movements are easily identified with opinions of their leaders - it would be a very interesting thing, by the way, just to research how much movement membership at the rank and file level, at the grassroots, have positions - political, tactical, strategic or otherwise - in relation to what may be held by one or the other leader - now please, and let's not make a mistake, I'm not referring here to the - to the ANC - I'm not saying we also have just one idea - at least this one, as far as the ANC's concerned, we have settled - it is settled - it's not an issue (?)



M. But you see, the BC movement has tended to be identified and to be given the meaning that was elaborated by Steve Biko - no-one has ever troubled himself or herself to do an - a field work research from members of SASO at the time and find out what concepts they had - Biko unquestionably was an outstanding personality and he had his own viewpoint, and he influenced tremendously SASO and the BC movement - I know him personally - I've met him on two different occasions - but what I should say is that there were people within SASO, contemporaries of Biko, who might not have shared the finer points of his understanding or the approach to the non-racial question - and by the way, my own understanding of Biko as well - I don't want to stir (?) a debate about this - is that a real close study of some of the things he said will clearly show that he was not a racist - I can substantiate that.

This is - this is my own view - there were actually people who were - I'm not saying there were no people who were - who were - who were extreme to him, but if I were to consider Steve himself, you see, he had this - he was - he was a sincere fellow - and I don't know - perhaps I put a lot of moral (.....) in my conception of the parochial (?) question, and not without reason - but some of the approaches that have been taken up by people have often appeared to me to be a bit insincere, and if not insincere, then it just becomes pure ignorance in the looking of the South African situation - because if it is neither insincerity and ignorance, then what - what makes a person to look at South Africa and to see something that the majority of people do not see.

J.F. How did you grapple with some of those issues as they happened - for example, the Suttner trial - that was '75?

M. Yes.

J.F. You were - he was in Natal, you were in Natal?

M. Yes.

J.F. What - just - you're being - you're speaking more generally and theoretically, but just if you can recall what did people say, what did you say, what were the arguments?

M. There was a big discussion - you see, in my generation of - of struggle the appearance of Raymond Suttner in the Durban Supreme Court, you know, sort of threw into our midst a very interesting factor for - for chewing politically, because we asked ourselves : O.K., guys, we are a BC movement - how do we define a person like Raymond Suttner - here he's been sentenced to seven and a half years, he's going to serve imprisonment, he's white - and there's no question about that - and that here we (?) are being harassed by black stooges, bantustan leaders, who are black - it - it caused up a debate within my circle of people in SASO - we discussed this, and I was just almost shocked when at one time I was reading this - our - our newsletter, the SASO newsletter, and I found here was an article which was talking about black men in white skins - I'm not saying that might have been the best definition of terms, but it does indicate one thing and it indicates it very clearly, that even at that stage black students found themselves having to acknowledge that if it was rule that whites were oppressors, then there was an exception to that rule, and we went even slightly further.

By 1975 - and this can be confirmed by people like Diliza Mji - in SASO we already began to address ourselves to the socio-economic problems of the South African question, because as soon as we began from that premise as different from the other, which was looking at the colour of a person's skin, then we were bound as black students to arrive at the conclusion that the enemy of the African - of the black people in South Africa was in fact a system of white supremacy and not the white people themselves.



M. So the other premise of the pure race approach might have, and probably still does, become the immediate point of departure for a lot of people who find themselves caught up in this situation, in this problem, whereas blacks, we are the ones who stay in the townships, we are the ones who are given poor wages, we are the ones who have got no sufficient different things at school - we are the ones who do not have this and that, we are the ones who do not vote - we are the ones who have to go in the - in the mines and dig - we are the ones who are in the hostels, we are the ones - and we can actually enumerate the whole catalogue of problems that we have - but that becomes a very natural point of departure, and I'm saying this from my own experience - it was a point of departure.

But those who then begin to think about it, not just feel it - those who begin to take the problem into the mind, and not just in the heart, are then bound to begin to look into the roots, into the causes, and the most inevitable conclusion, unless one is prejudiced, is that objectively we are faced with a system whose perpetrator is a government, is the state.

J.F. So what did you do about Raymond's trial?

M. Well, for my own purposes, it was a dramatic experience that confirmed what had developed to be my own perspective, even at that stage, that basically we are striving for a non-racial society, and that in our hatred of racism and white supremacy, we share that opinion with the enlightened section of the white community, of which people like Raymond Suttner at that stage were an example - actually I - maybe I'm just using Raymond Suttner - it shouldn't be like I'm - I'm just in a process of trying to build up Raymond Suttner - actually there were a few other people who were being detained in the '70s - David Rabkin, among others - if I'm not mistaken, I think the Cronin fellow was also being - was detained more or less around the same time - there was - these chaps, Jenkin and - who was the other one - not Moubaris, the....

J.F. Lee.

M. Ja, there was Lee and so on - more or less those people were being arrested, detained in the '70s for - for activities against the South African regime - I was only citing the case of Raymond Suttner first within the context of my involvement in Natal, and secondly because it was one of those cases which for me became a very dramatic experience.

J.F. But if there had been a black person or people - if Solomon Mhalanga was on trial in 1975, you would have gone to the trial probably....

M. Well, I must actually say that there was a trial that was on - there was the Pietermaritzburg 12 trial, where Harry Gwala, Mayiwa, Xaba and others were on trial, and we were following up that trial very, very closely, which I think, if I'm not mistaken, went up to about 1976 - the beginning of 1976.

J.F. And did you go to that ever?

M. To that particular trial, no, we did not - I can't actually think of anybody now in our school - you see, I was a - we were university students, and we absolutely identified - we absolutely identified with those - with those comrades.

J.F. When you spoke about the SASO manifesto, do you mean SASO on the attack, the manifesto?



- M. No, the SASO policy manifest - the basic - there a basic - it's very important for you to have a look at it, by the way, because it will be a very interesting document for you in this project, because I'm quoting it directly - I can actually find it for you - I think it's reprinted in the volumes of Sachaba of 1973 - you know, there are some bound volumes - I think the 197 - just check the '72, '73 - but that was the basic document of SASO, which will actually give you a very clear view that even SASO - and that were a very important point - even SASO at that policy level did not claim to be a black chauvinist organisation - in other words, it had to reckon with the - that's a very, very, very important point - SASO when it was being formed, it had to reckon with the concept of black chauvinism, and it took a position that SASO is not anti-white but pro-black, and there's the whole explanation to that - one of the drafters of that manifesto is - is - is Barney Pityana, by the way, and it would be interesting to - to know that Barney had this fortunate background, more than many others - actually more than all the other founder members of SASO, more than Steve, more - more than Harry Nengwekhulu, more than all - Strini Moodley and more than many other fellows - Barney Pityana at least had been a member of the ANC youth league at Fort Hare, and he was one of the most influential forces in that formation period when these policy documents were being drafted.
- J.F. With your involvement in a pro-black organisation - did that include Coloureds and Indians for you - there were no Coloureds or Indians in your unit, I noticed - did you work with them when you were with the ANC before you left the country or whatever contact you had....
- M. Ja, well, I must say that, by the way, one of the most interesting developments that SASO made.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

- J.F. .... is it central or is it peripheral - how does....
- M. Well, I think this is central - it's a very central question in South Africa because it arises from a number of basic historical premises, the first one being that in the South African context of struggle, perhaps more than that of any other country in Africa, we saw the - the presence of a large white community - immigrants from Europe - I mean let me not say immigrants from Europe because that refers to only a certain section - actually let me just say that the presence of a large white community that is settled in South Africa that has cut all cultural ties with the former metropolitan country, and has in the course of these past three centuries virtually evolved a new South African based outlook, so to say - is a group that - or rather, is an experience that no other African country had.
- Nevertheless, this presence of the big, or a large settler community, if I can use the term, often confuses the problem, as well as the attitude and approach to the question of racialism, because it tends to blur the fact that despite their presence and their being South Africans by historical evolution, nevertheless that - or rather to - as I said, to follow up my sentence correctly, it tends to blur the - the colon - colonial context of the struggle.
- J.F. To blur it?



M. It blurs it, or rather it - it - it tends to - to create an impression that there is no colonial context of the struggle - in other words, that the position of the - of the blacks in South Africa in the same as that of the black Americans in the United States, for an example, except that unlike them, we are in the majority - because it depends on the premises from which one moves that one then set one's objectives and strategic goals, and this point I think is often made (?) - maybe if you'll allow me I - I'll go just slightly further and avoid a lot of cliches - you see, South Africa is in Africa - South Africa is not an extension of Europe or America, and insofar as the oppressed people in South Africa are fighting for liberation in the historical understanding of the concept liberation, then its meaning does not differ from the experience of decolonisation that other African countries have experienced, save for this distinction, that in South Africa it becomes an internal affair insofar as the white people in South Africa do not belong to a metropolitan country that is elsewhere, either in Europe, America, but are circled within South Africa.

What are the implications - the implications are that insofar as we agree that the black people are colonised by an internal colonising state, that does not remove an iota of the fact that in essence the struggle is for the creation of a new state of the former oppressed in the whole territory of South Africa which, as we've said, since the formation of the first liberation organisation in the continent as - and also as we emphasised it in the Freedom Charter, will be - will be non-racial.

But we must not be ambiguous in this, that there - the - the responsibility for the creation of a new state in South Africa does not lie - absolutely cannot lie with the present oppressor state and its organs and machinery - it is in this context, therefore, that we demand the dismantling of apartheid - in other words, there is in South Africa in fact a basis for the implementation of the universally recognised principle of right to self-determination insofar as it means that we, who have never had the right to vote, who have never had a right to participate in the administration of our country, like Zambians were before they were independent, like Algerians were before they were independent, like the Mozambiquans were before they were independent, still have to exercise that right and determine the kind of state that we want, the kind of economy on which that state shall be based and so on and so forth.

And insofar as the principle is self-determination and not joint determination - and this is my firm view - it may not be representative of other people, but I - I - I state it because it's a firm conviction - it means that the oppressed people, who are presently led by the ANC, have to wage a struggle which will end up at the dismantling of the - of the apartheid system, the dismantling of the state itself, and the construction of a new state by the oppressed people themselves.

Now you may ask yourself where does the question of anti-racialism fit in this whole concept - it fits in very neatly and - and this is how the ANC has - has seen it - it fits in in the sense that, one, our objective is clear - it's non-racial objective, and we manifest it even organisationally in the sense that we have among us people from the various racial groups, including the whites, but I must add a qualification that it is only those whites who identify clearly with the goal of the destruction of the present racial structures in South Africa and who stand for a non-racial and democratic South Africa who then have a home within the present processes of the building up for that kind of future.



M. But it does definitely mean that insofar - as far as the ANC is concerned, we do not only confine ourselves within the created racial barriers - we - we have broken them in the historical process of our development - we have gone to the other side - and our message has been, and will continue to be, that white countrymen and women, we have got a common future to build, and as we say so, we are exercising even at an elementary level, that right to self-determination.

It doesn't mean of course, as the concept has been discussed and debated, particularly within international law and even, for that matter, from the point of view of the experiences of various anti-colonial struggles, that we are demanding some kind of secession - secession or the creation of a separate black state, that kind of thing - this is not what we are looking forward to, but we are looking forward to the creation, as I've said, of a single state which, for obvious historical reasons, will be overwhelmingly black insofar as every black will have a right to vote and will be a reflection of what I was talking about initially, that South Africa is not an extension of Europe and is not an extension of America, but is founded in the African continent where 90 percent - or let's say 80 percent of its population is not allowed the right to vote and participate, but will (we'll) not be racist - and we are already demonstrating that in the ANC and people have a right to participate at all levels.

My own assumption is that we may have cabinet ministers in South Africa who'll be white - it's there in the UDF - they are members of the executive which are white - I think this is a true reflection - I think perhaps where we differ with the regime at this level of the understanding of things is that they don't see the real South Africa - we think we see the real South Africa - they only see a part of South Africa - they see the tree, we see the forest, and we are concerned that we should meet together the various threads in South Africa into a single rope - there is no thread that must be left outside.

And in South Africa there are Africans, there are whites, there are - there are Coloured, there are Indian South Africans, and when the rope has been knitted together, it may actually be difficult at certain stages to pick out one colour from the other insofar as they shall have been brought together, and this is what we would like to build up towards, which will finally end at the complete reversal of the vestiges of race consciousness - people in a future South Africa will begin to consider themselves as South Africans and not in racial categories, because that will have no social, economic, political or even cultural meaning - we want to end this base.

And perhaps this is even why from the point of view of the ANC, and from my own personal point of view, any talk about the rights of minorities is a very, very, very, very suspect concept, because such a concept wants to entrench (?) racial privileges, because we must once (?) start asking ourselves who is a racial minority - by the way, the term racial is not usually used - what is talked about is the right of minorities....

J.F. Groups, minority groups.

M. Or minority groups - now the question that is very, very interesting is who are these groups - who determines these groups - who are the spokesmen of these groups - from the point of view of the Nationalist Party, from the days of Malan in 1948, past (?) Strydom, Verwoerd, Vorster, Botha, perhaps it was best articulated by Connie Mulder himself - among Africans there are minority groups.



M. The Xhosa, tee Zulu, the Sotho, are supposed to be minority groups, but alas, when it comes to the whites, they together are a minority groups - not the French minority group, the German minority group, the Afrikaner minority group, the English minority group, the Jewish minority group, the Greek minority group - so if we were to be consistent with the concept of minority groups, which would not do, but I'm just creating a hypothetical situation, I think we'd not even agree with the Nationalist Party ideologies on that concept of the creation of minority groups, and secondly, you see, racism is not just an ideology.

We're not only fighting against ideas that exist in people's minds - we are fighting against a material situation that exists in social, in political, in economic terms - the regima has, over the years, over the centuries, created a situation where the whites enjoy certain privileges - they're the ones who stay in Johannesburg in the city - they stay in the suburbs - we are staying in the ghettos, we are staying in the - in the - in the - in the farms - we have been created bantustans for - they are the ones who possess the right to have factories, ownership of factories and so on and so forth, and clearly if by the right of minority groups is meant the right to retain the present economic and social conditions, which are in themselves founded on a racial basis, then what will be the use of this whole struggle for liberation if at the end we will not be able to enjoy these economic, social and political things together with - with - I mean as a people together with the white on an - on a - on a just basis - on a just basis.

I sometimes even get afraid of the term on an equal basis, because unless it is not moving from the premise of - of minority groups, then yes, on an equal basis, so we regard the white in South Africa as - as South Africans, and I think our future constitution - and this is where this question is - will be clearly established - will not have within it entrenched clauses based on the racial origin of people, otherwise it will mean we are pandering on - on - on racialism.

J.F. Tell me something - in the South African context what is the national question - is that at all related to what we're talking about now?

M. Yes, it is very much so - the term is a very conventional term in the sense of its historical - of its historic origin - you see, the national question addresses itself to the nation formation processes and resolving problems related to the nation formation processes, whether it is problems of liberation, whether it is problems of such a nation's right to self-determination, or even sovereignty and independence - whether it relates to questions of language and so on and so forth - as a concept the national question actually evolved in world history for the first time I think at the period when nations were formed, because in my own view nations were not always there.

For example, if you look at the example of Germany, there were - there were different principalities - there was Prussia (?) there was Alsations and so on and so forth - Austro-Hungarians and so forth - but at a certain stage, because of the development of a common economic life, then these various nationalities that had lived an exclusive independent life gravitated together around this common economic life and then formed, for the first time in world history, these new nations, the British, which had within them the Welsh, the Scottish and so on - at times without absolutely obliterating the parts from which they had been formed but nevertheless, do creating (?) this single ethnic community, so to say, around a common economic life, which then developed to share a common language of communication, which was necessary insofar as the buyer and the seller had to understand each other what was being the subject of transaction.



M. And insofar as the labourer and the - and the employer had to understand each other, then they (there) evolved this common language - you see it as German, you see it as English - despite the fact that the Welsh might have their - their own, but they developed this common language, and in the process, in the - in the process of the historical evolution of that, then also a common culture developed, a common psychological outlook.

Now if you look into the South African situation, one of the most interesting aspects, at least from a theoretical point of view of the liberation processes, and one of the sharpest struggles between us and our oppressors, has been actually our understanding of the national question - the South African regime insists - and this has been their position, by the way, until very recently - that there is no single nation in South Africa but South Africa is composed of various nations - according to them the Zulus are a nation, the Xhosas are a nation, etc., then the whites are a nation together - I've already referred to that aspect and the short - and the pitfalls of that kind of argument.

And then, moving from that theoretical premise, they then concluded, as was argued by Mulder, by - by Verwoerd and so on, that these various nations have got a right to self-determination, which is in line with the principle of the United Nations, which calls for a respect of the principle of right of nations to self-determination, and for them this could only be exercised within the confines of the bantustans which they then created - the various land boundaries in the reserves of South Africa.

However, what they missed, even from that universal approach of the principle, was that the principle is called self-determination, and it is not without reason that it's not just called nations right to determination but self - they were not - we were not determining it ourselves, they were determining for us the boundaries of the bantustans - we have never participated, whether by referendum or whether by negotiation - we have actually been excluded from any referendum, from any negotiation in South Africa which determined the constitution of the state, which determined the various other aspects that are related to this concept of self-determination - we have been excluded, so how then can it be called self-determination - it's been determined by the oppressors.

Now our own approach - our own approach has been an approach which I think is historically correct because it is founded on historical facts, has been that in South Africa, by virtue of colonialism, and despite the existence of the colonial state within the boundaries of our country, there existed the oppressor and oppressed nations, and that the oppressed are struggling to create a single nation - at times it has been considered by certain people - I think I remember reading a speech that was made by Jan Smuts, who appealed to the whites during the time of the formation of Union, after the Treaty of Vereeniging, and said to them : We are one nation - the distinction between Afrikaaner, English, Jew and so on, must be forgotten - we are one nation - that's what Jan Smuts said to - to the white people when they were - when they were - when they wanted to form the Union constitution in 1910 - and indeed, two years later the founding fathers of our own liberation movement came together also in Bloemfontein on the 8th. January and Pixley kaSeme said : We are one nation - and actually referred to the feuds that might have existed between the Xhosa and the Zulu and the Fingo and so on, and said : We are creating one nation.



M. In other words, there has existed in South Africa two nations, but the existence of these two nations has been a manifestation precisely of the South African problem, because a country with a common economic life should not be divided among itself, and this is why our struggle is to create a single South African nation which is consonant with the level of the development of our economy, which pulled (?) together various peoples and ethnic groups from all the corners of South Africa into one social medium (?) whether it was Xhosa, whether it was Indian, whether it was German in the South African context, and we found ourselves within a common economic life, but we're being separated artificially and deliberately, in contrast to this social and economic reality, by the political structures of the oppressor state, and we're struggling against this, because we feel that there is an objective ground, there is an economic basis, there is a social justification for the unity of political, educational and other structures for a single South African nation - it is not yet there but it is struggling to be born - it exists potentially.

J.F. The mechanism to help it be born - obviously one needs a lot of initiatives to get there, and different strategies and tactics - one of the questions that recurs in South African history is how far should one go, or should the people go in setting up non-racial but ethnically based organisations within the liberation movement.

M. (laugh) Ja, that's a very interesting question - very, very interesting question, and I must confess that some of these questions - maybe it's because of laziness on the part of I mean ourselves, you know - we should be addressing these questions very, very, very clearly now you see, it is true, and I think the ANC is a very clear example of what I'm going to say, that if, as we are, struggling to create a single South African nation, then we must begin to manifest this objective, of which we are an embryo, through (?) the forms of organisation that we are creating - now the ANC has addressed itself to this question insofar as the determination of the membership of the various racial groups, including the levels at which they should participate in the ANC, and correctly so because partly it answers the question you have asked, and the ANC has answered this question correctly by practice - by allowing membership to the ANC to belong to anybody, any South African who adheres to the principles of this non-racial democratic future society, and this has included various racial groups, as you are aware.

It has been a process, because the constitution of 1958 was an exclusive Africanist constitution - the ANC could only be joined by Africans - not even other racial groups - by Africans - but one of the most outstanding characteristics of the ANC - and I'm not saying this because I'm either brainwashed or what - it's because of the ability of the ANC to rise to the occasions, to the demands of the times, and I think we've done this.

Now two, the UDF - this is the principal democratic movement in South Africa today - how does the UDF see this question - actually I may say that the UDF has resolved this question slightly before the ANC did, because whereas in 1969 the ANC only declared admission - we're not talking in organisational terms, not in terms of policy - we have always been non-racial in our policy approach insofar as the objectives that we are fighting for are concerned - but now we are moving into the - into the other sector, which we have asked about, the question of the structures - at its foundation in 1983 the UDF already had within its executive members of the - from various racial groups.



M. Within the ANC - actually even before that time this debate had been going on - I know as a matter of fact that even in the '70s people were asking what is the point, comrades, of white comrades participating in the struggle equally with others, even going to battle, going to jail, sharing everything, sharing even the grave, but we can't find a place within the organisational structures of the ANC - this debate took place, a very healthy discussion, in the ANC, and its result was manifested in 1985, when the ANC opened the doors of the leadership at the national executive level - the doors had already been opened at all other levels save for this policy making organ - to open it to all the racial groups, which I think was a very great development.

But now you have referred to ethnically based organisations - you see, first of all I think we must clearly appreciate one fact, and I want to say it very boldly, because to me it's, I believe - no, more than that, it's a conviction that we should work for and towards the creation of single non-racial organisations in South Africa in line with the ANC, because the ANC is a reflection, and it must be a true reflection of what happens inside the country, and equally, I think, to a certain extent what happens inside the country must be a true reflection of our own objectives - we must - we must work towards this.

But the other aspect which you must understand in the context - in the - in the process is that, you see, political developments, unlike natural developments, are not determined in short periods like seasons, where you know that now it is spring flowers are going to come about - they're worked for - you know, an idea can exist within a movement, within a community, within a people, for quite some time without it finding realisation in practice, simply because firstly, at a certain level there may not be an initiative to implement it, because if such an initiative could be taken, then it could be realised - and this is how historical processes have sometimes been made, by taking an initiative and implementing the idea - but at another level it may be a reflection of the fact that we do not yet think that this idea has been, you know, absolutely canvassed in our constituency and everybody agrees with it - and because unity is one of the main factors that we have to take into consideration in determining organisational and leadership structures, then we tend to keep the idea up the shelf, or up our sleeve, without forgetting it, without ignoring it, without neglecting it, talking about, debating it, throwing it around, until such time that we think and we feel that it is now proper to make a final break and to canvass for its final realisation.

This is why I referred to the debate about this question in the ANC far earlier than 1985, but it was only in 1985, after extensive discussion, and I think this is where lies the strength of democratic processes - so I would not be quick to give judgment, not to mention condemning, people whose clearly stated objectives are the realisation of a non-demo - a non-racial democratic South Africa, but who for certain reason - probably for tactical reason - at a certain given stage still have to mobilise and organise within certain ethnic groups.

Now let me be more concrete and stop doing a lot of theoretical gymnastics - you see, as a matter of fact, in South African history, which has not always been determined by us, the oppressed, nor (?) by the liberation movement, there have been laws passed by the government insisting that there should be no political interference between one group, one racial group and another - there has been that process, by the way - that - that's one.



M. Secondly, because of the various laws of segregation, different racial groups have been accommodated in different areas - now at the practical level of political work and organisation, it means that an Indian democrat with whom we share the same perspective and approach, has to work within the confines of these realities and organise within his or her own area of residence or work, not because he chooses to do so, or he or she prefers that exclusive racial environment - it has been determined for him - somebody once remarked, and I think it was one of the best illustrations of this point, that people are the makers of their own history, but not under circumstances chosen by them.

Equally, which (?) white democrat in South Africa would be able to go to the location, to the township, without having to get permission, and state the purpose why he or she is going there, but again the political organiser in the township must work there, not because he or she's a racist, but because these are the given practical circumstances.

Perhaps conditions have changed - perhaps conditions have changed, but insofar as these realities persist, there is nothing incongruent - there's nothing contradictory - if you are a constituency based organisation, which we have always been, in having an organisation like the Natal Indian Congress or the Transvaal Indian Congress trying to build up - it only becomes a problem if and only if we then create some kind of blinkers, you know - parochial structures around it - but the question is - is very interesting - it falls within the category, therefore, of what I would refer to as a constituency, politics (?) - it's a question of constituents - given constituents in an environment, in a geography that has been determined for us.

But then I think the comrades who are in the - the people that are in the Natal Indian Congress, the Transvaal Indian Congress, cannot easily be called racialists only because they organised within those communities, and more so if they've clearly demonstrated both the intention and the ability to work with the other racial groups in single organisations as has been the case with the UDF and many other campaigns, because in the final analysis, by the way, it is on the ground, it is in the field work, where people are judged, not so much on the structures - we can spend a lot of time arguing about structures, which unfortunately some people tend to - to do in South Africa without looking at what we are substantially contributing in regard to joint campaigns and so on and so forth - it's almost like if - well, I think that - that more or less that more or less concludes my - my approach to it, but it's a - it's a very thorny question, I must admit in.....

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M. .... been debated inside the country - I think with time these questions will - will be - will be solved - what I just do want to emphasise is that, as I said, political processes are not mechanically determined, and neither are they determined at the will of the oppressed themselves only, so we have to work within a real situation, but I think there is no doubt about our goal, about where we are heading, what we're heading for - perhaps linked up to that aspect is another question that has been questioned by people - there's a clause in the Freedom Charter which talks about all national groups shall be equal, and I know that it has been attacked by some people.



M. For an example, Neville Alexander has not only written about it - you must know about this book, *One Azania, One Nation* by No Sizwe, where he actually goes wrong (?) in attacking the ANC, the - the South African Communist Party, even in the - in the founding conference of the national forum committee in 1984 in Hammanskraal in June the 11th. to the 12th., these questions you are posing were - were raised and there was this vicious attack on the existence of the TIC and the NIC and the - what is regarded as the concept of nations that has been propounded by the ANC, which is not true - which is not true - all national groups shall be equal - does this mean that the ANC still has racial categories in its approach to the South African question - does this suggest that a future liberated South Africa, led by a government that would be headed by the majority political party, which I believe will be the ANC, will have entrenched racial clauses which refer to Indians, Coloureds, whites, Africans or to national groups - I want us to understand this question very clearly, that first of all, the Freedom Charter, which is a statement of aims, of political principles, of objectives, put in a very succinct and graphic manner has this limitation that it does not elaborate on the meaning of certain things which we (?) would do very well were we to develop it and substantiate it further.

The Freedom Charter, secondly, is addressing itself to a situation in South Africa that has been created - what is the situation, one - there is social, economic and political differentiation among the various racial groups brought about by the policies of the apartheid regime, and insofar as that exists - insofar as there is a racial hierarchy, where the white are the topmost, then they are followed by the other racial groups, and the Africans occupy the bottom layer of the hierarchy, then it is only logical and scientifically correct for the Freedom Charter and for the ANC statements to say that in a future South Africa all these racial groups shall be equal.

Our mere reference to the national groups does not suggest that we are recognising them as fixed, as frozen entities, but it merely indicates our - our awareness of their existence in the conditions of differentiation in the South African context - and then since that is a problem that we have to address ourselves to, we then say that these national groups shall be equal - now how do they become equal - do they become equal as groups in the sense of clauses of our future constitution having to fossilise them, put them in a cocoon and say : Now you whites as a group, how do we make you equal to Africans as a group - there's nothing to suggest that, and I think that should not be read into the ANC policy.

What we mean is that individual members, individual citizens in a future South Africa, black and white, Indian or Coloured, will be equally treated, and this is how the Freedom Charter answers the question when it says that every man and woman - we must note that - it does not say every race group - it does not say every national group shall have a right to vote - it says every man and woman shall have a right to vote, and it does not make any racial qualifications - in fact on the contrary, it says irrespective of race or colour - now that to me clearly indicates that there is no intention on the part of the Freedom Charter and the organisations that support the Freedom Charter to build a South Africa on the basis of racial categories - I think I - I - I've explained this question as well, because I know it is a very thorny theoretical question, and people have accused the ANC, they have accused the Freedom Charter, for recognising these various racial groups, but to me it would be equal to criticising the Freedom Charter for - for recognising the fact that policemen in South Africa come and they raid people's houses at night when it says that in a future South Africa our people shall have a right to security and housing from police raids and so on - it states the problem, but then the solution is - is suggested.



J.F. With regard to the solutions, to really make - to actualise the goals you're talking about, do you think that there'll be a need to actually implement some kind of tactic so that you would ensure working class leadership or African leadership - you can have these - this non-racial society, but there are those who'll say : Look, the people who've been oppressed to the bantustans have had no opportunities - the kids who've been out on boycott, they're never going to move into the positions - you're going to have the - a hegemony, a dominance of Indians, Coloureds whites, educated blacks - do you think that you - do you have a concern yourself for ensuring African hegemony or working class leadership, or do you think that's not anything you concern yourself with, or do you think the ANC does?

M. Well, it does because the ANC has got its own strategy and tactics document - we are presently evolving another strategy and tactics document as a result of the conference in Zambia in 1985, which is still a draft document and it still has to be discussed within our ranks - at the present moment we are operating on the basis of the document that we adopted in the Morogoro conference in 1969, which addressed itself to these questions.

Now what is our approach - our approach is, first of all, a historical one - we recognise the fact that the white community occupies a privileged position by processes of historical injustice - they occupy positions which they do not actually earn - they are founded precisely on the oppression of the black people, and our aim is to correct those historical injustices - now how do we go about doing it - first of all, since every man and woman will have a right to vote, it is only natural and logical that the new organs of administration, the councils of state, the executive organs and the judiciary, will have to be a true reflection of the composition of the South African society - what is the true reflection of the South African society?

First and foremost, state organs will have to reflect that South Africa is not only a country composed of white people, and neither is it composed only of black people, but that it is composed of all these racial groups - that's first and foremost - but secondly, without contradicting the first one, it is only logical that since the Africans, the black people are the overwhelming majority of the population, the tendency in a new South Africa will be to see them occupying greater and larger areas of responsibility in the economic, in the - in the political and other administrative spheres - but this is easily said than done in the sense that, as I've stated, it is a historical problem - how do we go about it - will this mean that we will take a black and fit him in any position on the basis of the fact that his colour is black because there has to be this preponderance of blacks - I think that's a very interesting question.

In my own view, we cannot leave things to the natural order of evolutionary processes - it means we will have to work out means and methods when that time comes of how do we arrest this artificial prosperity of the whites at the expense of the blacks - it will have to be arrested, and democratic whites will understand that - now I'm choosing my words very carefully - I'm saying arrested, stopped, this artificial growth, and then we turn our attention to those who have been underprivileged and we build them up so that they come to a position that is equal to that of the whites, but this will have to be a deliberate policy, because if it is not deliberately and consciously done, then we shall not solve racism in South Africa, because these two communities, the blacks and the whites, do not occupy an equal position - there will have to be a process of - of building up the black to a position where he's equal to the whites.



M. But as to how we will go about it in the nitty gritty, solving problems of housing, where, for an example, you find a white family of three members occupying a big bungalow, I don't know - I - I cannot commit myself - it would be wrong - I think I shouldn't - I don't want to make an irresponsible statement, irrespective of what I feel personally, but those nitty gritty will be solved not at the level of - at that level only - I mean at the level of houses and so on - but certainly what it will mean is that we - we won't have racial schools, and I doubt if we will have schools where people will only be eligible for registration because they're able to produce - to have huge sums of money, so if we're to use the - the educational sector as an example of what we are referring to by arresting this artificial growth of white prosperity and the building up of blacks to their positions so that we are equal sharers, as the Freedom Charter promises, then it would definitely mean that blacks will have a right to register in universities, in colleges and in a lot of private schools and other government schools that are today kept exclusively as a right of the whites - we can look at other sectors - there are many - to demonstrate this point, and what I'm saying is the ANC policy because it is there in our strategy and tactics document of 1969.

In other words - and I think the sooner the white community begins to understand this the better - we will - our liberation struggle will have to be seen and - and I want to emphasise this - our liberation struggle will have to be seen to be resolving the practical problems of the black people in the various spheres of their life by - by making sure that they enjoy their right, because it's a right, not a privilege.

J.F. Do you worry that the kind of non-racialism that's been built up and solidified from the '50s through BC and then really buttressed by the UDF and it's seemingly quite secure in place now, will be threatened by the state's brutality, that when eight year olds are detained, when you see that the white police and army behaving in the kind of way they are, that this will threaten non-racialism, that people will say no, anti-white....

M. I - I - I - I - I don't think so - you see, incidentally, we have always been persecuted and killed - when the liberation movement today adopts this perspective of non-racialism, this is despite the fact that from 1652, three (?) hundred years of resistance in the Cape - through the battles like Blood River and (.....) - through the various processes in which our people were killed in the mines - we have upheld this principle unshakingly, because it is fundamental to our own objective and perspectives of correcting the situation.

To us, if we're to abandon our non-racial political outlook, then it would mean that we no longer have a solution for the racial outlook that has been perpetrated by the regime in the spheres of life - the racial - the non-racial out to us is a light - we are holding firm to this light in the midst of darkness, and this light, like any light, can never be blown out by darkness, no matter how intense the darkness can be - we have survived with this policy through some of the most trying times - at times we have even had to take some of the most painful decisions to exclude from our ranks people who had been with us all along throughout the journey, because at a certain stage we thought they wanted to blow out this light - I'm referring here to a number of examples, the most clear of which is the case of the group of - of eight persons who we had to expel from the ANC, Makiwane and - and others - precisely because they - they held this view - they complained about the ANC being led by whites and other racial groups, which we felt was - was a bit primitive for people who claim to be leaders.



M. You know, at times it is understandable, and we understand because we are from that situation - for a person in a shebeen to shout abuse at the whites as a race, and we understand, but for anybody who has looked at the question deeper and not sentimentally, we think that it is inexcusable that such a person should fail to make a distinction between a black Kaiser Matanzima and a white Barbara Hogan, Spargs - what's her first name - Marion Sparg and others - those - those are closer to me - are closer to us - Barbara Hogan has sacrificed her freedom, Neil Aggett has died for the same cause - I'm closer to Neil Aggett, I'm closer to Barbara Hogan, I'm closer to Marion Sparg, I'm closer to - to Ruth First, because we share this common perspective, but I've got nothing to share with a black policeman, with Gatsha Buthelezi, with Kaiser Matanzima and others - with Rajbansi - I think that answers the question that I - I don't foresee - I don't foresee.

What I may add - what I may add - and I think it (?) will be important to your question, lest I forget it - is that the regime is deliberately creating a situation where the conflict in South Africa would be seen in racial terms, and you know, in the - in the - in the - in the - in the storms of anger at times you may see, even in the coming period, these processes where people become angry and they - they just decide look, let them feel what we've been feeling, and this is what Sibuyiso Zondo did in Amanzimtoti - you see, he - he was not under ANC instructions, but he experienced a situation where his people were being shot - he couldn't be ignorant to the fact that these were black people who were being shot, and decided, like it happens in any war situation, that he's going to revenge - it was an action that was done at the height of anger, and there is anger in South Africa.

The people are angry, but that anger has never been a determinant of the policy of the democratic movement - while we understood because we ourselves are angry, but the onus is on the white community to make sure that, while we have done our part and will continue to do our part in holding high and serve (?) the banner (?) of racialism, they should shift more and more towards that kind of perspective and not vote for people like Botha, for parties like the Nationalist Party, but should see themselves as part of the future and not just of the present - I hope.

J.F. I think it's (.....) - I actually don't think there's too much more to ask, but let me just - I just have a few questions which are a kind of a critique of non-racialism - one of the perennial critiques is that what has happened so far is that the leaders are together - you can have an executive of UDF and have a Raymond Suttner sitting together with a (.....) but at the grassroots level the people aren't together - just as with the congress alliance you had the four spokes of the wheel meeting at meetings, but on the ground people (.....) to their group areas - is that a problem (.....) show you that there's some - is that for you a critique of non-racialism, is that just inevitable - what do you say when people say that as a criticism of non-racialism?

M. In other words, when they say that no, it's only at the level of you leaders but at the grassroots not there - I don't think today - probably even at an earlier stage - that that criticism would have a justification - it could only have a justification in a situation where somebody would be able to come up and say: In this period of struggle in South Africa there has been no white person or group of persons who has participated in the struggle - you see, first of all, it is clear to us that whites, unlike blacks, are not victims of political oppression in the - in the - in the general sense of the word, in the normally accepted sense of the word.



M. I'm not talking now about some of the recent limitations of democratic freedoms and so on and so forth - I - I'm now referring, you see, to - to the fact that at the political level of social life whites in South Africa have got a right to vote, participate in the same way as the French are doing in France, in the same way as the Norwegians are doing in Norway, unlike the black people, who are deprived of that - now we are not ignorant of that fact, and precisely because of our awareness of that fact, it would be rather insensitive of the liberation movement to expect at certain stages of the development of the struggle that great numbers of these people who have been given all these privileges should then suddenly swing over and behave in such large numbers in the same way as those who are actually the direct recipients of oppression - that is to begin with.

Nevertheless, we must say that in the real South African struggle, in real South African history, we have seen white people - indeed no-one has questioned the fact that there have been few, and one of the reasons is the one I've mentioned - we have participated in the struggle because of various reasons - some of them have found it morally indignant (?) that a people should be oppressed - other have found it illogical - others have found it theoretically unacceptable - there've been many avenues from which whites have come in to express their hatred of oppression, and it has manifested itself in their own organisations - there was the Congress of Democrats.

The Congress of Democrats was not just the group of leaders, it was an organisation of whites - it had its leaders, but there were whites on the grassroots who were rejecting oppression, rejecting apartheid - that's one - today what do we see in South Africa - we have got organisations - we've got JODAC - we have got Christian churches in South Africa who are saying today that apartheid is a heresy - where (?) tens of thousands of whites are members, and they are saying that apartheid is a heresy - they're declaring their opposition to racism - these are interesting beginnings - who are those - who are those?

You go to universities - not very long ago there was a delegation that we met in Harare of students representatives from white universities - University of Cape Town, Witwatersrand, University of Natal - I think Rhodes - if I'm not mistaken there was even a delegate from Stellenbosch, representative of SASPU National and so on - and we produced a communique with them - do you know what is the contents of that communique, that the signatories to this communique agree that apartheid as - and racism are the root cause of the South African problem.

Now here you find a delegation of thousands of students rejecting racism as a political philosophy, and they went back to their constituencies to report back - they were not rejected - it was not said that you did not represent what we said - that communique was a public document - instead they were accepted as heroes who did not only defy Botha - and then I say to myself who is the real leader of that section of the whites is it Botha or the ANC - who is being defied - and then you leave the - the universities and then you get some of the young chaps in the army - they may be few, but I know as a matter of fact - and I have made a study of the development of the conscription problems in the South African army, and I can say that I can actually plot it on a graph and indicate a growing number of whites who refuse to be part of the apartheid police - indeed there are few, as I've said, and there's no denying of that, but the fact that this number is growing is a very clear indicator that in the course of time as the struggle sharpens (?) as the crisis engulfs them, and today we see, for the first time since the 1930s, whites being unemployed.



M. We are going to get a situation where more and more whites are going to begin to question not just the morality of the apartheid regime and the oppression of the black people that goes along with it, but they are going to go further and refuse to be part of that scheme of oppression - actually we have already seen a group of whites, and they are growing, that have even moved further than that, who have identified with the liberation movement to a point of taking up arms, like in the case of Marion Sparg - how many Marion Spargs are there, some of whom have not yet been found by the regime - maybe in a way - and I must make this comment - this reflects on another question that has been worrying a lot of people in the process of a debate of this - the elections, where you find that Botha has been returned to power and there's a move to the right by the right wing and so on and so forth - I think this does not at all indicate that this trend I've been referring to has not been growing.

As a matter of fact the liberation movement, the ANC said actually that some - that the whites must not vote - it will be a very interesting challenge for researchers to try and find out how many whites in South Africa did not vote, because even if half the white population had not voted, Botha would have gone to power with those who voted for him - but an interesting theme would be how many whites did not vote - how many - how many whites have thought like van Zyl Slabbert that look, let us get out of these structures because there is nothing that is going to come about within the apartheid framework, because apartheid cannot commit suicide - it cannot be anti-itself, it - it cannot make itself out of existence - so when we study this phenomenon, I think the area of focus should not be within the apartheid structure itself - we should move out and look at the churches and look at the universities and look at other institutions and look at the white community and look at Black Sash and see them and those in the Freedom Charter, and then we must say to ourselves there is growth.

J.F. One last critique question and then I think we can just handle one more area and that's it, and again this is just devil's advocate questions - but since the ANC's had such a long history and tradition of non-racialism, how and why was - have there been periods of derailment of that impetus - for example, the ANC youth league when even Tambo and Mandela felt that they were not - admitted to being anti-communist, anti-Indian and anti-white, the PAC, and then the BC period - if it's such a strong, tenacious, persistent aspect.

M. Yes, sure - I was looking for a paper - I had a piece of paper somewhere around here - anyway it doesn't matter - I just wanted to (.....) I make my notes so that I don't just talk in a way that is not constructive - well, how do I respond to a question like this - I should say that, as I've stated before, the policies of the ANC have been developing - they should be looked at from that angle, from the angle of processes, if one were to use a - a jargon that is typical in the liberation movement these days, that it should be looked at dialectically, and this is not only with regard to our approach to the non-racial perspective of struggle, but also with regard to many other things, including the strategies that we adopted at one period and another.

However, I want to make something very, very clear (?) because I've studied the history of the ANC very, very, very thoroughly - if one reads the history of the ANC, of what its founding fathers stood for - Sol Plaatje, Dr. Pixley Seme, Mangena, Selope Thema, John Dube and others - it will be very clear that our perspective from the beginning was for the creation of this non-racial society.



M. You see, this perspective is older than the ANC - it has got - it has got a history - that should not be forgotten, and that I'd like (?) to refer to - you see, you'll remember that in South African history there was a period, after 1854, when the Africans in the Cape were allowed a qualified vote in a common voters' roll, and after the - the discussions between the Afrikaaner and English leaders in South Africa in the post-Anglo-Boer War when they wanted to form the Union of South Africa - in the process of that debate the representatives of the African people who looked at this Cape liberal constitutional tradition of participation in central organs of government as a symbol of what would finally be for all the other Africans in the other provinces of South Africa - that is in Natal, in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State - expressed their views in no uncertain terms during the process of that debate, when we knew that the Union was supposed to be formed, that we are expecting and hoping that with the formation of the Union of the four British provinces - because at that time the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had been annexed by Britain - that the African people, that the rights to vote will be extended to the African people - we had this faith - in other words, the common voters' roll of the Cape Province was seen as held in trusteeship (?) for what was to be in future, but it occurred to us that this was a deal about and against us, and that the English and Afrikaaner, former opponents in war, were agreed on nothing else but that the blacks should be kept subjugated, and that was the basis of their unity, and that we were (?) excluded.

The ANC wrote letters of protest to the governor general, who represented the British government, and in those protest notes we clearly stated that our belief is that South Africa must be a country where all the racial groups must participate in the administration of the country - that's one.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

M. Petitions were signed by people like Tengo Jabavu, Professor Tengo Jabavu - some of them sent to Britain, which expressed our own conception of what the South African society should be - incidentally, these comments did not only come from the ANC - one of the outstanding white women in South Africa in the last century, Olive Shreiner, actually made a very interesting remark also during the period of this debate - she said that she hoped that the 20th. century would be founded on a different basis than the past century - that was the - that was the spirit (?) - now then the Union was formed - the Union Act was passed by parliament - now the Union Act it was - a gentlemen's agreement was reached that this clause of the Cape Africans was not going to be removed from the South African constitution unless there was a two thirds majority in both houses of parliament, so it was enjoyed for some time, and as you are very much aware, in 1936 Hertzog passed his infamous bills, one of which was this representative - representation of Natives Act - I think at (?) No. 12 or No. 18 of 1936 - I can't remember now - and if you look at that period again - because that's an interesting period to look at the history of the ANC's position with regard to the concept of a non-racial society - what happened - protest meetings were called.



M. In 1935 a convention was called, initiated principally by people like Rev. R.H. Mahabane and Prof. Jabavu himself - John Dube - there was an - an all African convention, and if you look at the record of the deliberations of the all African convention, it clearly stated that it rejects the provisions, or rather the Act which is being proposed by Hertzog, because the Africans believe that South Africa is a country that belongs to all who live in it - that - that thing has been there - it is there - Prof. Matthews and - and - and Mapikela - these were the people who took up this perspective.

In other words, I'm trying to cite this historical background to demonstrate one and only one thing, that the tradition of non-racialism in South Africa dates to those - to those periods - now let us come to the areas - I'm - I'm - I'm gradually coming to the areas which we have posed questions about - but then we (?) should see that from 1936 to about 1944 after the government had made its own substitute for the Cape voters common roll, where Africans participated in voting, what happened was that after establishing the Native Representative Council, where we participated again in good faith because we thought we could make something out of it - and by the way, that belief was not a misplaced one - it's very easy today to see some of the superficial historians rapping (?) off and sometimes even ridiculing the - our participation in the NRC, without looking deep into the question and - and what - and how we debated the very question of participation and so on and so forth, but I don't want to - to be taken away into a discussion of that aspect.

But it is only relevant with regard to this aspect because when the youth league came about in 1944, it came about principally not so much as a group that was anti-white, which would have had no basis insofar as the ANC did not have whites as members, but it came principally as a body that was differing with the ANC's - you know, the old guard in the ANC's trad - you know, gradualist approach - in other words, it was principally a - a difference of strategies and policies insofar as those policies determined how we went about to redress our grievances, and this is why, through the agitation that was done by the youth league, it led to the stalemate, to the crisis within the NRC itself, and people like Dr. Moroka then moved that motion which led to the - to the stalemate in the NRC which - which called for the indefinite adjournment of the NRC just before the Nationalist Party came to power later on, about four years later in - I mean in - in 1948.

But the point which I wanted to emphasise was that - now - but you must - we must also look at the world, by the way - what was happening in world history during the time of the - of the - of the youth league which determined their ideological approach to nationalism - first of all, this was a period in world history when new nations were being formed, when nations were being attacked by fascism, the Hitler fascism, when nations were defending themselves and nationalism was at the peak - the French were resisting occupation, the British were resisting occupation, and at times certain class interests were subordinated to the defence of national survival against what was regarded as a fascist menace.

Even the most outspoken representatives of the working class - even organisations like the South Afr - the Communist Party of South Africa at that time actually almost plead precisely on this question, whether or not to participate in war - there were those who said : Look, our task here in South Africa is to organise the working class to wage a struggle against the bourgeoisie - but there were those who said : Look, nations are at stake, fascism has been let loose - now this only illustrates the world context in which this new wave of nationalism was taking place.



M. Some of the countries - 1944 already some of the countries, for instance in eastern Europe were being liberated by the - by the - by the Soviet army at that time - I can't remember which one exactly now, whether I mean Finland, Czechoslovakia and - and so on - I need not be quoted on the exact countries, but countries already by 1944 which were already being liberated - now this whole wave caught up and South Africa, by the way, we've had this fortune of following up these world events very, very, very closely and more than that, relating to them.

Now people like Anton Lembede, one of those geniuses that has been thrown out by the South African liberation struggle - Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki and others like Mda and so on, were naturally caught up in this fervent nationalist spirit, which was a healthy one - which was a very, very, very healthy one, and they said: Look, let us stand up and let's keep our heads up and live - we are not going to plead for our freedom from the oppressors any more, we are going to march ahead and take it - we're going to have a programme of action, which will include defiance of these unjust laws.

Now I will not (?) be repeating these historical facts - the point is that I was just trying to develop and to build up towards an understanding that this was a militant nationalism of the oppressed - that must be understood because I think, by the way, your book to have that - you know, to have a real solid and objective stand which will be unassailable even from any angle of serious critics - not now petty chaps, man, who'll just dismiss it and who'll be inconsequential themselves - now I'm talking from the point of view of - of serious people who are (?) really theoretically grounded in political science and - and a grasp of the South African revolution - the ANC - it will have to make this balance, which is a very important one, and that'll show your (?) quality, in my view, between the stand of non-racialism, which I say has been characterising our movement and at the same time showing the - the healthy nationalism that differed from the narrow one (?) but the healthy nationalism which said: Look, we are oppressed, we must stand up and do something for ourselves - and to indicate that there has never been a contradiction between the non-racial approach and the broad nationalism of the - of the ANC, and that that nationalism is being supported - it has been supported, and continue to be supported, because it is a manifestation of an unsolved national question - right up to the '50s - actually in the youth league period itself, to demonstrate it - in the youth league period itself - then you saw the Dadoo-Naicker-Xuma Pact.

In other words, this was a real progressive development from the point of view of the ANC in the guidance period of the youth league, which saw the crossing, the transcending of the narrower ethnic bases that had been set up in 1912, the Indian community being encompassed - further than that, in 1951, '52, during the period of the defiance campaign, people who participated there included people from all racial groups - people from all racial groups - you see, the other aspect which we made a reference to, of the youth league taking positions which were more or less understood to be anti-white, because you see, now we're writing the true history of our people - you see, a lot of things have been said, and sometimes repeated so many times that they are taken for granted, it's like that - and I think we need to make a really radical break and - and - and have a - a real people's perspective now of that - of the history of the South African struggle - you see, the - you see, their worry at that stage - and this was at a stage when they were still young, not only in age but also politically.



M. Their worry was with regard to the - the Communist Party, the youth league - the initial anti-communist sentiments - however, even then were a bit misplaced, in my view, because it was not true - at least not since 1928 - that the South African Communist Party was a white dominated organisation, but it is believed by the way, and strange enough - I'm sorry to say this - even as late as the mid-'60s Cde. Mandela was still able to say in the dock : It will be difficult for white people to understand why African nationalists find communists as their friends - I can't remember the - the whole thing, but went on to say that it is because these are the people we've been able to eat with and, you know, the - which was a bit, in my view - in my view - you need not write about this - a bit unfortunate in the sense that, you see - and of course Mandela - I'm not criticising him - I'm not saying he did not understand this aspect.

The fact of the matter is that there has been this image that the communist (.....) whites - not the communists are the whites (?) the whites are the ones who are coming, you know, into the ANC as communist that - that type of thing when (Laugh) as a matter of fact if one looks at history properly, as early as 1927 already 70 percent of members of the - of the communist - of the CPSA then were blacks - incidentally, for some reason which you could discuss in another subject, there's been the prominence of - of - of - of white leaders - I mean Joe Slovo, Jack Simons and so on, but maybe in a way this also has been interesting and good for us because it has consolidated our very non-racial approach, because it is precisely these white communists who I'm saying are not the only ones who are communists, because there have been blacks and Africans who have been communists, like Moses Kotane, J.B. Marks, but they have demonstrated perhaps more than many other groups, political groups among whites, the level to which they are willing to go not only in defending this non-racial perspective but also - but also in sacrificing towards the struggle and helping to crystallise and to solidify this non-racial approach.

I was only making this slight digression because I thought I needed to make a very brief clarification, which of course I know you are aware of, with regard to the positions that were held by the ANC youth league, and that this was nothing else but a progressive militant nationalism, the same nationalism that characterised the struggle for self-determination, whether it was in Guinea, whether it was in Congo, whether it was in Tanzania, it was in Kenya, in Zambia, in Mozambique, or at any other area of which experienced national domination and oppression and where the oppressed had to assert themselves, but to go further and suggest that it was hostile to whites, I think would be to take things a bit - a bit further - it would be to read into the programme of the youth league something that was not expressed, and I've had occasion to - to - to read it and to study it.

J.F. Whether it was expressed and condoned, there were elements of anti-whitism and anti-Indianism.

M. In the programme?

J.F. In among youth leaguers....

M. Well....

J.F. .... it seems - if one looks historically - if you look at the documents - Sobukwe went through a whole contorted....

M. Who were the leaders of the youth league - that will be very interesting by the way, to - I've named some.



J.F. Lembede died so early....

M. Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo....

J.F. Sure, I think - Mandela and Tambo spoke about how they had a period of anti-communism and anti-whitism and that they actually came out of that and became the solid congress alliance ANC, but of the Lembedes and the Mdas and the ones who went into the youth league and into the PAC, I'm just - my question is just sure, I understand the history you're saying, but I'm saying in the '40s and the '50s and then again in the '60s and the '70s you had a period where non-racialism was challenged by something else....

M. Yes....

J.F. I'm just wondering if we can talk - because - even with BC you'd have to admit that there was a serious challenge - even now in the '80s there have to actually be put to the test whether COSATU would accept CUSA or - and the issue was non-racialism - it was put to the test and it survived the test - in the '70s - in the late '60s it didn't.

M. Well, I think that now the question is - is - has been posed in a - in a - in a clearer way - in short then, I should say that in studying - you see, in studying the - the nationalism of the oppressed in South Africa, I think it would be honest of us to say that there have been two tendencies - there has been the main tendency, the dominant tendency of what I would regard or define as progressive nationalism, which did not narrow its scope - and there has been narrow nationalism - ultra-Pan-Africanism, which tended to see things in a narrow perspective, and consequently also came with shallow solutions - now you do find that - I think we must - we - we - we owe it to historical record - I mean we shouldn't say things here - I mean the purpose is here - we're not just talking for the sake of it or engage in - in some exchange of propaganda, that kind of thing - we are discussing objective historical facts, and one of those historical facts is that there have been two tendencies.

Now these two tendencies have got their roots - now that you posed a theoretical challenge to me I may actually go further to say that they've got their roots in a class divided society, because one tendency is a tendency of a group among the oppressed who want to substitute the oppressor in the exploitation of the mass of the working people - they also come with the banner of nationalism - they are using nationalism for their own interests because they are coveting the luxury, the social security of the oppressed, and they want to substitute him.

This tendency has been found, by the way, not only in South Africa or in Africa, for that matter - it's universal - I link it up very clearly with capitalism as a system of production - the other tendency is a tendency that does not represent the aspiring bourgeoisie - it is a tendency that represents the oppressed masses, the working masses, the small peasants, the working class, and even certain sections of the - of the petty bourgeoisie, the progressive bourgeoisie - and I'm very happy to say that the ANC has represented this grassroot sentiment which manifested itself in the progressive nationalism, which represents in fact those oppressed classes whose foresight, whose perspectives of the future, whose strategic objectives is so overwhelming that it determines even their tactical policies and organisational structures and methods in resolving various issues that appear on the way.



M. In other words, with this broad progressive nationalism expressing and reflecting the views of the people at the grassroots, the working people, who want to build a new society, who do not want to be substitutes because they've no desire to - the substitutes of the exploiters - it is only logical for them to espouse a nationalism that is non-racist in the South African context - now if people saw it - or rather, if this phenomenon was present in the '40s it might - it must have been for a very, very short time - I must express that because this tendency in the youth league did not last long - at least it doesn't manifest itself, by the way, very strongly in programmes and documents of the ANC, which I've studied in the - in the - in the early '50s until the foundation of the Freedom Charter in 1955 - and yet even there I must say that the Freedom Charter had to be debated and discussed by people - their views had to be incorporated not only in the suggestions that were sent forward to the steering committee that was responsible for collecting these views together and summarising them, but people went further to elect delegates to go to Kliptown, and they raised questions in Kliptown, but what did the people resolve in Kliptown on the 26th. - from the 25th. to the 26th. June - they resolved this principal, this main tendency of a non-racial South Africa.

And for me it is clear why the people came to that kind of conclusion - it is because it came from the grassroots which I've been referring to - the delegates to that conference were not intellectuals spokesmen - it was not a group of people who are keen to substitute the oppressor, or rather, the exploiter, but these were leaders of people from the various rural kraals, from the factories, from the mines, who came there and said: Look, man, we're tired of racism, we're tired of national oppression - we want to have a society where we must enjoy, man - we are human beings - at a certain level of understanding of political struggle we are compelled to arrive at the conclusion that, by the way, we are all human beings, and we are rebelling precisely because there are those who often forget this - no, who've become inhuman - and we say then these policies are inhuman - that's how the PAC then came about in the sense that, in my view - may probably differ, I don't know, but in my - in my well considered view, the tendency which has been the secondary one has often come from a clique, not the masses, and that point is crucial - it has always been a clique.

It has always been a tendency that is espoused, elaborated within seminars, whether by some zealous intellectuals or often in anger in a particular situation....

J.F. But it's not a very intellectualised approach, because the other analysis of it that comes from kind of the (.....) PAC - that kind of history that's written about South Africa is that this is the natural view, and then there's this new union or this is a resuscitation of BAWU and Patrick Lawrence wrote (.....) - this is the natural way.

M. Actually it's a (.....) - you see, when I talk of (?) intellectuals it is in this sense - it is in the - in the - in the class sense of a particular intellectual, you see - in the sense of a - a black chap who has suddenly got a BA and feels therefore that he should be the one that occupies a particular position instead of a white - it is in - in that sense - it's a petty bourgeois intellectualist tendency, if I were to give it a very definite class term - it's a petty bourgeois intellectualist tendency, and incidentally, the mass movement is not composed of these petty bourgeois intellectuals.



M. Even some of the petty bourgeoisie, shop-keepers and other peoples have more often than not associated themselves with the broader, but there is a class definition of this one.

J.F. But I'm saying the other point of view that is argued is that actually this comes out of the masses - I don't think we should spend a lot of time on it, but I'm saying just to answer that, that they say it's the BAWU, this Black Allied Workers Union that - your average black worker knows that he hates the boss and the boss is white and finished, and all this nonsense about non-racialism - that's the argument you'll get - it's intellectualised to describe the PAC, it's being in touch with the grassroots, and then it's brought up again last month, two months - couple of months ago and the Weekly Mail had an article on this Dlamini, I think it is, who started BAWU - it's a Jo'burg, it's what (... ..) union broke from and they're back again and they say Africanism - and when I give seminars in the States professors say to me : You know, you really under-estimate Africanism - you've not spoken about Africanism - I say : Well, I don't see it in South Africa today - and they say : No, you haven't done your history, Africanism is very important tendency and it's not died out and that's what blacks support etc. - I'm just wondering how you answer that?

M. Ja, well, I would say that you have mentioned a number of things, but I would say that as a matter of fact I think there has been a very superficial look at the - at the - at the - at the development of nationalism in South Africa, because a more analytical approach, particularly one that moves from a historical perspective, will clearly demonstrate that the main tendency, the main theme of African nationalism, or even black nationalism in South Africa has consistently and specifically focused on the state of oppression and has sought to mobilise and utilise broad sections of the people to storm the citadels of oppression.

It is not correct to say that non-racialism has diluted this broad national approach - it has been part of it - the ANC has been in fact the typical Pan-Africanist movement in the broad meaning of the term and, you see, some people forget this - because there is a neo-Pan-Africanist - you see, some of these terms we must - a neo-Pan-Africanist tendency, which is exactly what we are talking about, the one that's narrow and extreme - you see, Pan-Africanism, which would be another thing that would be very interesting for - for - for your book, I mean because it is these ideological trends.

You see, if we look even at the history of Pan-Africanism - when you look at some of its great leaders, like W.E.B. du Bois - no-one can hardly (?) have the moral courage to stand up and say they were racialists, despite the fact that they were coming from a real racist set-up in the United States - of course there were others who had a narrow approach, but I may just draw your attention to the fact that some scholars are presently seriously debating some of the works of people like Marcus Garvey - I may make you aware, for instance, that there's a book that has been recently published on (?) Marcus Garvey - you can just contact Francis (... ..) because he's doing a - a revue for Sechaba - which is throwing a new light even on that - anyway the point is not to divert now to talk about those aspects, but what I want to point out is that the ANC participated in the broad Pan-African movement - Mandela addressed (... ..) in 1962 when he left the country before he came back to be arrested....

J.F. He addressed?



- M. Pan-African what what what what what - it was called something like that - it was some conference that was - but the Pan-African, you know, in continental type of thing, you see - and Mandela can hardly be defined as a racist and so on and so forth - so I was introducing to you a term that is actually used by some scholars now with regard to the tendency of these people who call themselves Pan-African - it's called the neo-Pan-Africanist.
- J.F. Which people is that - this person I mentioned or this AZAVTU....
- M. Ja, all I mean the AZACTUS, the - the - the - the - in AZAPO - I mean this - this really narrow, you know.
- J.F. But you don't see - I just want to get (.....) because I'm afraid you won't have to stop and I just - one last area - you're saying you don't see Pan-Africanism as some inherent aspect of African people in South Africa, that there is some streak of Pan-Africanism that will rear its....
- M. The problem is in - in our understanding of the term Pan-Africanism - I am saying that Pan-Africanism - and I'm giving you a real considered scholarly approach to it because I've read about it - Pan-Africanism strictly speaking - and we must forget about PAC calling itself the Pan-Africanist Congress and therefore associating Pan-Africanism with that - Pan-Africanism means nothing else but the move - the African movement - the African movement for the liberation of Africa and the safeguarding of the interests of the people of Africa against oppression, exploitation.
- J.F. I'm just asking you in the black mass of people in South Africa, do you see a - do you think that there is something behind or underneath of Africanism of just thinking even beyond Coloureds and Indians and certainly beyond whites that there is Africa for the Africans that kind of lurks there that should be noted or do you - is it a natural tendency if there is such a thing - do you think that makes any sense - do you think that's rubbish - when people - what do you say when somebody says to you ; Why don't you discuss Africanism - sure, there are these other motivations to do with class etc., but there are people who argue that Africanism is a motivation, it's a kind of BC but they're putting it not even transcending to include Africans - to include Coloured and Indians.
- M. Well, you see, I would reply to that question in this way - I would say that, first of all, the South African situation has its own distinct aspects in looking at the problems of nationalism - as we said in the beginning of our interview, that in the South African situation nationalism - and I've not saying there's been - there's no nationalism in South Africa or that there has been no nationalism - neither am I saying that the ANC does not espouse such nationalism, and this is where I said in my own view I know you'll be - you'll be able to do it - we must be able to clearly make a differentiation between a progressive broad nationalism and a narrow nationalism.
- In other words, it would be dangerous for us to create a dichotomy and to say there is either nationalism or neo-nationalism, because once you create that dichotomy, then you are going to fall into the problems of what I would call some liberal pitfalls, you see - Alan Paton can easily say that kind of thing, or Jordan Ngubane, whoever were members of the Liberal Party, and it would be dangerous because I think it cannot stand the test of - of scientific analysis I mean politically speaking.



M. So there is nationalism but nationalism that (?) has got two tendencies - I think that should be our approach - now then the question must therefore be posed in this way - is it natural in South Africa that blacks should instinctively gravitate towards narrow nationalism, and I say no, that is not the tendency - but if you ask is it natural for the blacks to gravitate towards nationalism, I'd say yes, because they are nationally oppressed, and then in that way you are putting it in a real balanced way and cannot - it - it - it becomes watertight.

J.F. I think the last that I'd like to talk about has.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

J.F. .... to have any questions - the one question I could say is - but please feel free to - is this whole issue of non-racialism - does it relate to (.....) does it relate to the Communist Party's approach?

M. Ja, now I think it does relate to the Communist Party's approach in the sense that according to the South African Communist Party's own policy, it is struggling for the end of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial society based on the Freedom Charter, but then the Communist Party becomes distinct, or maybe even different from the ANC in the sense that according to its own programme, it then considers that South Africa based on the Freedom Charter only as a stage towards the final establishment of a socialist society, which also would be a non-racial society, by the way,

To me the Communist Party has made a tremendous contribution in the development of this non-racial approach, because first of all of its own humanist traditions linked up with the international working class movement, and also because the origins of the Communist Party in South Africa were from a group of white immigrants from Europe who came to South Africa and challenged the system of class exploitation there, the capitalist system.

Of course later on - I would like to emphasise this - the overwhelming majority of the members of the South African Communist Party - of the Communist Party of South Africa were blacks and Africans in particular, but even from those days, from 1921, the Communist Party had this perspective of a non-racial and democratic South Africa, which is contained in its programme, as I've said, as a step towards the building of a socialist South Africa, and this is how I understand it.

There has of course also been the contribution of individuals - white communists, like David Ivan Jones, like Bill Andrews, communists like Jack Simons, Michael Harmel, Joe Slovo, Bram Fischer - what (that) is the record - I think they can be clearly cited as an example of that outstanding although unique group who contributed fearlessly, most of them until the end of their lives in the struggle for the creation of this non-racial society.

It is in this sense that the South African Communist Party is part and parcel of the democratic front headed by the ANC and reflects (?) its support to the Freedom Charter.



M. Actually I would even go further if you were to ask, because it was actually within these circles maybe even more than within the ANC itself that the debate on the national question took place - when the ANC finally arrived at its own approach to the national question the Communist Party had gone through various periods in its own history of trying to resolve this national question, because, as I've said, its founding fathers, incidentally, happened to be white immigrants, and when they looked at the South African problem they initially thought that the white working class had a potential of bringing about change and then liberating the black people in a socialist South Africa.

These were honest beliefs, but the reality of South Africa, the racial reality, the colonial aspect of South Africa, was demonstrated in 1922 when white workers who were thought to be having a revolutionary potential to liberate South Africa and liberate the blacks, actually went on strike precisely because they were opposing the promotion of blacks in the mines, and this event crystallised the view held by the - by the mass (?) Marxist section of the liberation movement in South Africa, which did not begin then - and I want to emphasise it did not begin there, but it sort of crystallised and demonstrated that another route had to be sought, and through debates with other peoples, including outside South Africa, the party took a position that the problems in South Africa can only be resolved if the blacks, particularly the black workers are the one who are organised as the motive force of liberation, and white revolutionaries and democrats were to pledge unqualified support and solidarity with the struggle of the black people.

J.F. Tell me - there is anti-communism or fear or ignorance about communism among people throughout the world - there're blacks in South Africa who have the same reaction - I just wonder what you think the reasons for that are, and did you yourself - were you always open to it as a point of view or did you have to come through a kind of process as well?

M. Well, first of all I'll begin by trying to answer why I think there is this prejudice - first of all, people have got prejudice about everything that they do not know, like people fear darkness - even if in a dark room there may actually be something that may be beneficial, but people have got this tendency to fear what they do not know - now with regard to communism, it is the regime, the apartheid regime that has given its own definition of communism - it is there in the Suppression of Communism Act, one of the most distorted definitions of communism, at least from the point of view of the understanding of those who have read what communism is about - that's one.

And then secondly, there has been a bombardment of propaganda by the apartheid regime which has confused issues to a point where no-one actually knows what is communism and what is not communism in the context of the liberation struggle in South Africa, because we have seen priests being detained, being banished in the name of communism - we have seen people who've not even qualified to be members of the Communist Party being persecuted for being communists.

Now this whole process has created the kind of attitude where at one level people become curious and they want to know what is communism, and secondly, people want to identify with it because they see everybody who has been condemned, who's been banished, who is being regarded as an opponent of the regime being described and defined by the regime as a communist - even when these people do not understand or know what communism is about - and this is - this is really how I would - I can't remember exactly how you had posed your question.



J.F. I want to know about your experiences with it - did you have to go through any of that - you came out of....

M. You see, I was part of this process in the sense that, you see, I'm just one of the millions of South Africans, having been a young I mean black South African in - in that - in that environment of - of oppression - I - I never knew what was communism, but I can tell you I was 16 years old when I was first detained by the security police, and I was already being accused of being a communist, and that naturally in - triggered an interest in me, an interest to find out, first of all, what a communist was, and secondly, wanting to know what communism had for us - what was there in this communism - it is triggered by the regime itself - I'd never met a single (?) classic example of Marx, Engels or Lenin - the regime said I was a communist at a time when I only rebelled morally - I did not even belong to an organisation at that stage.

Now you're asking how I - I regarded myself or how I - I approached this question myself - I must actually be clear and very straightforward and say that, you see, in my own case I don't know what label you are going to give to it or can be given to it - I've always believed, from the very early stages of my involvement, that South Africa, Africa and the world should be based on a principle where the - there's no group of rich people existing in the midst of people who are - who are poor - in other words, I've always believed in a classless society, which found its basis on my own appreciation of the past African society itself, from which I come, because in the African society in the past, despite the fact that at certain stages there were class differentiations, there was what some people have referred to as African communalism - I'm not suggesting that for the future - you must note that - I'm not suggesting that for the future, but what I'm saying is that personally I - I - I - I believe in a classless society - I believe in a society where people have a - a common share in the social means that are - that is producing wealth in a country.

J.F. I'm just a bit worried about that because that's what Buthelezi says - African community....

M. No, no, no, actually I'm just trying to trace my - my development in the sense (.....) - maybe I've said something that is - that is out - I was never - understood - please let me repeat it un - in - in - in - on record - I'm not an African communalist - I don't - I don't - I don't believe in it - I was just trying to point out that in my own view I was accepted to begin with by the past African society, but I - I've developed to understand the limitations of my own perception of that African society, and I think that needs to be added, and I've reached a point today where I actually believe in a classless society, but in a more scientific understanding of the term.

J.F. Speaking of terms, do you use the term racial capitalism?

M. I don't use the term racial capitalism because I think it is a very misdirected term in understanding the South African question - misdirected in the following sense, that one, if the problem is seen as racial capitalism, the implications are that one might either be driving or striving for a non-racial capitalism or a racial socialism - at another level the term is also a bit unfortunate because it does not address itself to the colonial aspect of the South African question, which is - is basic, which is fundamental - it sort of creates - it sort of sees South Africa as existing from nowhere.



M. Here in South Africa there is racism - where does this racism come from - there's capitalism - where did this capitalism come from - in other words, it takes South Africa out of the context of Africa and places it in Europe, and then here is a racial problem in this capitalist South Africa - how do we get rid of it - it's - it's too divorced from historical reality - it has been a typical expression used by an intellectualist group that are (?) probably sincerely trying to grapple with the South African problem - have however not delved deep enough to see that in South Africa there is the substance for the struggle for national liberation.

That does not mean that things will end there - the struggle will - will continue, but that does not become determined by the pens of theoreticians - it's determined by the - the people involved in the struggle itself.

J.F. Have you ever feared, or would you fear that through the SACP's influence on the ANC there would be an over-accentuation of class over race, that their influence might accentuate class in an exaggerated way, or do you think that it's a healthy focus on class - do you actually see class as a greater factor than race?

M. Actually it is outside of the SACP/ANC alliance where there is an over-emphasis of class over race - the experience of the alliance of the ANC and the South African Communist Party has been an unambiguous emphasis on the racial question, on the national liberation, on getting rid of a racist society - I would even go further and say, by the way, I'm not very happy about the way you posed the question, the question of the ANC's influence (Laugh) - I understand....

J.F. It's just that (.....)

M. Ja - what has been very obvious to me is, by the way, the extent to which the ANC has influenced the Communist Party - in the acceptance of a programme of national liberation - so there is a healthy political climate in the relationship of the ANC and the SACP - they have a common understanding that the goal we're striving for is national liberation, is the building of a democratic society on the basis of the Freedom Charter, the - the SACP has accepted the Freedom Charter, even though as its minimum programme, but nevertheless it has accepted it, and it is in that sense that I say there has been a mutual influence.

The SACP of course does not seem to make a - a distinction - no, let me not put it that way - it's a very sensitive question and I must answer it very, very correctly - the SACP refuses to create a dichotomy between class and race as if there is a Chinese wall separating the two - its perception is that there exists in South Africa a class struggle and a struggle against race - racism, and in the inter-relationship of the two it has evolved certain strategic approaches which are the liberation of the black people from racial domination led by the working class and the advance of the revolution towards the establishment of a socialist society by that working class which will utilise the organs of state it shall have acquired in the process of the struggle for a democratic republic to establish a socialist society - this is the perception of the South African Communist Party.

The ANC of course does not address itself to the question of socialism - the ANC only stands for a democratic South Africa, but without monopoly capitalism, and that point is made very clear in the Freedom Charter, but the ANC and the SACP agree that the political programme at this stage of the revolution - when I say this stage I'm saying from the point of view of the SACP - is the establishment of a non-racial democracy that is anti-monopoly capitalism.



- M. I think it would be fruitless to speculate about what will happen there-after - what is important to emphasise at this stage is just that the struggle is being led by the ANC, and the SACP is in alliance, and this alliance is grounded on clear objectives, the Freedom Charter - if (?) the ANC has been influenced by the SACP, it is only within the confines of this Freedom Charter, so the ANC does not feel dragged out of the Freedom Charter - taken out of its own defined arena - it is operating within the parameters of national liberation in which the - the SACP also operates, precisely because, as I've said, it does not see a Chinese wall even between the stage of national liberation and socialism in the sense that there will be an uninterrupted process, but this the SACP is working for and is working towards, but certainly it's not the programme of the ANC - I can answer any question in this regard of the ANC/SACP alliance if there's anything that you are still interested in.
- J.F. .... do ever think about the fact that there are certainly more white South Africans in the SACP or - you've talked about historically the CPSA, but those immigrants - there was the purge that history - but in terms of the reconstituted party, the current leadership etc., does it concern you - do you think it's a factor that there are disproportionate numbers of whites involved - do you worry about white domination in the SACP?
- M. A very interesting question, which I've thought about precisely because this question has been raised many times - first of all, I happen to be aware that whites are an almost insignificant minority in the SACP.
- J.F. Of membership?
- M. Yes - there is an - and quote me directly - there's an insignificant small number of whites in the SACP - the predominant force in the SACP is composed of black people, Africans in particular - you see, it is a pity - maybe not a pity - that the members of the SACP are not known - were they to be known tomorrow, you'd actually find that in the SACP there are more blacks than whites, even in the leadership.
- J.F. I guess - I don't think there's any point in doing a numbers game, but the - secretary general of the SACP is Slovo, that's the title - he happens to be white - it's that key position perhaps - so there is that influence.
- M. And there's Dan Vumi (?) - he's the chairman.
- J.F. Sure, and I'm sure many of the other office bearers would be black, but the fact that of the two top positions one of those two is (.....) by a white South African - that's the only thing that's quantifiable that one could talk about - I think - I understand your point (.....) for the rest, and that has certainly been historically the case as well, as you said - once that change-over came there was a vast preponderance of African membership, but in terms of the leadership would you answer the same question viz-a-viz that the fact of whites in the leadership?
- M. Actually I must say that for us in the liberation movement in South Africa, both from the point of view of the ANC and of the Communist Party, there is absolutely no awareness and concern about Joe Slovo's colour, who happens to be one of the few white leaders in the South African Communist Party, particularly because we are instead more aware that his choice as a leader, or as part of the collective leadership in the SACP, comes about solely because of his personal qualities and merits, which can be traced to his record of participation in the liberation struggle.



M. I think that it would be unfair for the members of the SACP to choose somebody less capable than Joe Slovo simply because such a person is black - it is unfortunate that the impression given about Slovo's leadership in the mass media in general, and at times one can understand this - why this impression is easily given, but I can tell you as a matter of fact that it is an unfortunate impression - it's a bit misguided - and Slovo does not act alone - he represents a collective, a central committee, and as I've said, which is overwhelmingly African - I don't know how big it is - perhaps I know, but even if I - I did, I think that's not the - the - the important question here - what I want to make very clear is that Slovo is a part of a collective in the central committee that is overwhelmingly African, and he carries out the policies of the Communist Party, and insofar as he's able to carry them, the colour of his skin, at least from the point of view of the Communist Party, becomes a non-issue - and one of the most interesting things, Julie, which I think maybe we need to mention, who - who are the people who are worried about Slovo's colour - is it the black people in South Africa - is it the people who are singing about Slovo and Tambo - is it the MK cadres whom Slovo has been commanding at various stages of struggle when he was still the chief of staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe - no, no, these people are not worried about Slovo's colour - these people are overwhelmed by the fact that Slovo is a committed freedom fighter - that he's a sincere freedom fighter.

The people who are worried about Slovo's colour are the very people who posed the colour problem for South Africa, the racist regime and those who support them from outside - they're caught in their own racist set-up - they've created a world composed of races - we are defying that - then they're worried why we are not race conscious in the ANC and in the SACP - I think we are not going to follow them, because we want to create a non-racial world, and both the ANC and the SACP have demonstrated clearly that we - we will never use race as a criterion of the choice of who is a member and who is a leader.

END OF INTERVIEW.