

- J.F. Then can I start just by asking you when and where you were born?
- B.P. I was born in Uitenhage near Port Elizabeth in 1945, and I was practically brought up in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth.
- J.F. And your family - what did your father do - did your mother work?
- B.P. My mother, until recently, until she retired, was a nurse - she retired working as a nurse, and my father - and my father and my mother, as far as I know, were never together, so I was really brought up by my mother - they never lived together as such - but my father was a schoolteacher, and my father has got very little influence on my life.
- J.F. What about your mother and the extended family - were they political people - did they - had they belonged to any organisations?
- B.P. No, no, not that I know of - there's never been any, as far as I can remember, any history of political involvement in my mother's family - not even in my father's family, coming to think of it, who I know very well. They always were very traditional people, very much steeped in the Xosa culture - very sort of creative, artistic people, but they were never political.
- J.F. And when you were growing up had you ever heard of the A.N.C. or the African.....
- B.P. Oh, yes, of course - oh, yes - I mean you can't live and - in the Eastern Cape and not be aware of the great force and influence of the A.N.C. When we grew up the A.N.C. was just - was really an alternative church in Uitenhage in (and) Port Elizabeth, with great revival meetings, and actually going around in the streets singing freedom songs and ending up with rallies every Sunday, and in those days A.N.C. was very, very strong and was very, very active, and what I remember very well is both those meetings and revival meetings and rallies -
- But I also remember us going to the Sunday afternoon A.N.C. rallies, and I think as a young probably 12, 13 year old, have some idea of some of the important people who came to speak there, so yes, I - because it was something that we were interested in, but I don't recall anyone in my family -
- When there was - when the - at the time of the bantu education in 1956 the - we were told - instructed by A.N.C. that schools should be boycotted, and this is the measure of my family's commitment) - my family did everything to make sure that we did get to school against the boycott, and so did many parents, of course, because education was so vital and so important.
- In those days it was totally inconceivable that people could be expected not to be at school, so I remember we getting smuggled into school at break of dawn in order to be at school, and those children whose families heeded the boycott call, many of them had to struggle to get back to school afterwards, because the schools that the A.N.C. set up or instigated in forming didn't last because they couldn't have, you know, support.
- J.F. So how did that perception shift from the early childhood days of being the second church view of the A.N.C. to the late '60's, early '70's view that the liberation movement had abandoned the people, or wasn't there - wasn't a factor which you hear - you sense a bit from the B.C. - was it a sense that it had been

J.F. beaten into submission by the regime and it no longer was a factor or?

B.P. I don't believe that that perception is true, certainly of the B.C. movement. The reality, the fact, of course, is that by the late - mid, late '60's very many people had gone into exile, others were in prison - A.N.C., P.A.C. were no longer as visible and of as high a profile as they had been, and there was a major international campaign, but inside South Africa itself the reality was that the initiative, the political initiative of the black community had really effectively frighteningly transferred to the homeland leaders, and the whole media - and the perceptions of people in the urban areas was beginning to be that these homeland leaders were the leaders of our people, and that was the reality in 1965, 1966, 1967.

And people were - even those who were political - politically oriented - were beginning to say that there must be something behind what Matanzima is saying or doing - Gatcha Buthelezi has got something up his sleeve - and that kind of rationalisation was very, very dominant among many people, but from the beginning the B.C. movement had made it very, very clear that it did not see itself as an alternative to the liberation movement organisation, but recognised that the reality was that there was no liberation activity going on in South Africa at that time, and that was a fact, and therefore it is just no good - even for those who were politically radical it was just no good to sit back and say that the liberation movement is going to come - is going to arrive -

And there were many people who were saying that our boys left in order to prepare to get trained, and people - some people were sort of sitting back and waiting for this coming of these people who were trained, and the result was that the political climate was realistically totally dead.

And part of our task was to say that first of all the media and even the liberal constituency had begun to talk as if what they are saying is what the black people wanted - in other words, there was a grey area where the liberal establishment began to see themselves as the true exponents of the black aspirations.

On the other hand the same liberal establishment was at the same time putting up these homeland leaders as the true leaders of the black people. The community councils, or whatever they were - advisory boards - the Teba Hardies of that time (?) - the Gatcha Buthelezi - Motswanyanes - and all these people were being paraded everywhere, in the Institute of Race Relations, the whole liberal establishment was saying to black people like me that these are your leaders, and the homeland leaders - it was laughable -

Whenever there was anything in the Institute of Race Relations they were inviting these homeland leaders - in the press - the Daily Despatch, the Rand Daily Mail, everywhere you would find the homeland leaders, and we were saying: Rubbish, these can't possibly be our leaders - and so that meant that there had to be a very, very deep and serious analysis of what actually is behind this imposition of new leaders.

To do that it was necessary to say that we are seeing ourselves not as a new organisation, at the same time as a different organisation - different insofar as we were committed to finding

B.P. a new unity within rather limited means that we had, and we wanted to call the bluff of the liberal establishment to actually analyse what in essence it was that they were about, because it was not just ignorance - it was a political game that we felt had to be analysed.

And we had to say to the black community two things, that it's no good sitting back and waiting for the so-called children who'd gone to be trained - it's no good because the struggle must happen now. Neither is it good to think that the people - the liberals who claim - who appear to speak for you are actually representing deeply (Laugh) what you are actually looking for.

If that's what - how you see it you'll never be liberated - and that was the thrust of B.C.

J.F. Let me ask you - that's very interesting the way you explained that - I was kind of asking you about your awareness of the A.N.C. - what was your - when your mentioning the liberals so strongly - what was your awareness - I'm taking you back a bit - as a child or a teenager in growing up before SASO of whites - when I spoke to people like Edgar Ngoya and Henry Fasi they said they just had this kind of such a staunch non racialism, and I guess - and I said where did it come from, and they could mention Leon Levy and some of these white CP or (.....) people who'd been in P.E. or when they had been in other centres that related to - like someone like Govan Mbeki was dealing with whites - but for your perception, maybe even pre political, when you grew up did you have contact with whites?

B.P. I had no contact with white people when I grew up at all. The only contact I had with white people was the sort of people who were traders and salemen who came to the township. I went, as a young boy, with other people to work, doing a white man's garden, and I felt - I never knew any good whites myself - I mean I never had any perception of nice - nice white people - and yet I was aware, as I say, as I was growing up in the rallies and things like that that were happening I was aware that there were white people who seemed to be in the liberation struggle, who were there at Mloten (?)

I remember particularly Terrence Beard who later became - was banned - and later became professor at Rhodes University - I don't know if he's still there - coming to speak in something at the showgrounds - a rally at the showgrounds.

I remember some white people, but I - white people didn't mean much to me. My family were very, very simple people - they had no white friends, and I never was aware of white people really, and there was a distance, and when I went - and then I went to Lovedale to college and then I began to see white people closer as teachers - people, you know, who taught you, and also through - at that stage my own personal membership of the A.N.C. - began to be aware of white people - began, you know, from there on....

J.F. Your own personal what?

B.P. Involvement with the A.N.C. at school.

J.F. Oh - when you say at school, how old?

B.P. 1961 - '61, yes....

J.F. So before the banning?

B.P. '60 - '61 - yes, long before the banning - so, you know, I - I never - my overall impression of white people was - was - was white (?) (Laugh) - that they were white people - and there was a gulf - there was a distance between us.

J.F. So then you'd had basically no contact - you knew that there were a few good whites in the A.N.C. but they weren't know to you personally?

B.P. That's right - I mean I was aware - I must have been - I was aware of white people who were saying the right things, who were standing on platforms with the A.N.C. leaders - one was aware of that - but their presence was never overwhelming - was never great for me, and in some ways, you know, I never took much notice of them.

Probably it is fair to say that my position has tended a long time to be fairly sceptical of white people.

J.F. A year before SASO you mean?

B.P. Oh, long before SASO, ja.

J.F. And what would you say - before we get into the chronology - I want to know when you went to university and all that - but before SASO what would you say were the important political influences in your life?

B.P. I think the most important political influence for me was Lovedale - Lovedale College in Alice.

J.F. When did you go there?

B.P. 1960 - yes, I think Lovedale...

J.F. When you were fifteen.

B.P. Yes, yes - Lovedale in 1960 was, had always been, a very, very strong political - politically - lots of political activity - amazing thriving groups and activity and discussions. You couldn't be in Lovedale and be apolitical, but there were groups - and also for me coming from the Eastern Cape Lovedale was very good because for the first time I came across people - I began to see South Africa in microcosm - like there were people there from Transvaal, from Natal, from Transkei, from all over the place, so that it was a great new world for me.

But also in terms of aspirations there was Fort Hare - this great - everyone was sort of aspiring, you know, to become - to go to Fort Hare - this sense of being the leaders of tomorrow was a great thing in Lovedale, so I think Lovedale perhaps is the greatest influence on me -

Not the institution itself - not the official - because it was a government apartheid bantu education institution.....

J.F. Secondary school?

B.P. That's right - it was, by that time, it was gradually taken over by the government more and more away from the missionaries - Church of Scotland missionaries - but the students who were there

B.P. were very strong, were very militant, were very active. They were active actually in all the other organisations, not just A.N.C., but for me the debates that were going on between A.N.C. and the Unity Movement and the, to a lesser extent, P.A.C., decided, for me, that A.N.C. was where I thought I wanted to be, and I don't think even then - there was no great emphasis in A.N.C. (in) those days on so-called non racialism.

The emphasis wasn't that - the emphasis was - was how best can our country - how best can everybody participate in that country - you see the subtle difference - because I think that if you set up a policy and you call it non racialism, it seems to me that's a (Laugh) barren policy.

I would rather you set up a policy on the basis of what - what are the principles that are going to govern the body politic and enable people to become free people. If you are wedded on the idea of non racialism it doesn't necessarily mean that the end result would be a just one.

J.F. I see - you're saying the goal is important....

B.P. That's right.....

J.F. and that there's no hurry....

B.P. And that's what struck me, and I was aware of that. On the other hand this is why the P.A.C., for me, wasn't a useful vehicle, because they struck me as being politics of negativism, because they seemed to me to be so totally negative, even at that 15, 16 year old, and they were too negative for me.

J.F. Why do you say negative?

B.P. Because they were anti this and anti that and anti whites, and -- and even at 15 that didn't seem to be right for me, so they never had any attraction for me - and through Lovedale there were strikes and there was lots of confrontation with the college authorities, so Lovedale yes, was a great influence for me.

J.F. And that - I'm interested in what you said of the P.A.C. because I understand that Steve Biko's brother was arrested on (....)...

B.P. At Lovedale.

J.F. Was that just people you didn't know much about - that was a small current that....

B.P. Steve Kaya came to Lovedale after I got there, and was one of the members of P.A.C. who were arrested. Steve and I were at Lovedale at the same time - I don't recall him being very much in the political sort of activity, although he was there for a very short time before there was a strike and we were all expelled, and - and so - and I (was) also aware, although I doubt that Steve was actually ever a card carrying member of the P.A.C., but I'm also aware that that - that Kaya's experience has always had a great impression on him -

In fact made P.A.C. much more attractive to him, but I don't think that was ever a very key thing for him.

J.F. So did you guys discuss that - you said the Unity Movement, A.N.C., but there were kind of heated debates about the.....

- B.P. At Lovedale, oh, yes - oh, yes - oh, yes - At Lovedale it was always they were - there were very, very active discussions on the various organisations.
- J.F. So - let me get your chronology - you went there when you were 15, and then when was the....
- B.P. I went there in 1960 - I was 14 - and eventually left in 1964 when I was expelled, and that's the time Steve - no, 1963 - yes, 1963 when I was expelled.
- J.F. Without getting the matric?
- B.P. Without getting the matric - and then I went to Port Elizabeth to Newell (?) High School, where I finished my matric.
- J.F. And did that have any political content, too - going back to P.E.?
- B.P. Going back to P.E. was - there was a group of us who were expelled from Lovedale who went to Newell, because Newell was the only high school those days in Port Elizabeth - we were doing matric at Newell, and we set about forming the African Students Association so that we were the key ASA people in Port Elizabeth, and got the African Students Association going in P.E. through our - the - our transferrance (?) from Lovedale to Newell.
- J.F. Oh - you mean the A.N.C. ASA?
- B.P. That's right, mmm.
- J.F. And that was Tabu Mbeki that had it done (?)?
- B.P. That's right, mmmmm, mmmmm.
- J.F. I wonder why I never knew much about it until recently - doesn't - I don't think there's been much written about it - I guess it was so short lived.
- B.P. It was very short lived, ja.
- J.F. It was founded when?
- B.P. 19 - couldn't be '62 - '61, I think it was.
- J.F. And then was it banned or did it - what happened?
- B.P. No, I don't think it was banned - no, it was never banned.
- J.F. But just collapsed when the A.N.C....
- B.P. That's right - I mean most of the people who were in the leadership of it left, and A.N.C. was banned. In fact it did in '63 - A.N.C. had been banned by then - and we still did continue to function.
- J.F. So it wasn't just university students....
- B.P. No.
- J.F. And then after you got your matric....
- B.P. After matric I spent a year working at Ford in Port Elizabeth in 1965.

J.F. At what?

B.P. Ford Motor Company.

J.F. Oh, Ford.

B.P. In 1965 - worked at Ford with a matric certificate as a janitor - sweeper - cleaner - and found - found that a very, very unpleasant experience - I just didn't like it at all - and that was when I really came across two things, both the mentality of working white people, and - and I - when I was there I felt very strongly a sense that I could do better than this - a measure of resentment which must have made me a very sort of unexciting worker, but I resisted the - I resisted overtime - I just didn't think it was necessary for me to be at work on Saturday, so -

And I didn't like white people talking to me anyhow, so I had great difficulties...

J.F. Talking to you or ordering you around?

B.P. Ord - well, in the manner of talking - the ordering - I think one would expect to be ordered if you're employed - but it's just the sense of being nothing, which I wasn't going to accept, so I had enormous arguments - and I came across black working people who I felt then were amazingly submissive and - and - and allowed these white people to get away with too much, and after that - I didn't stay - I don't think I stayed the whole year at Ford.

After that I went to work for - as a clerk in a reinforcing steel place - can't remember what it was called - a sort of despatch order clerk - and stayed there and felt that this was not the place for me.

So having left school with the great ideal of going to work and well, with a great commitment to work, I decided I wanted to go to the university after all, so in 1966 I went to Fort Hare until I was expelled in '68.

J.F. And you had known Steve from Lovedale only - that was the first time you.....

B.P. Only met Steve in Lovedale - it was for a very short time, because he had just got there in 1963 - we were in the same class, and the college was closed down in April, '63, so I knew Steve for three months in 1963.

J.F. Was he just somebody or did you figure this guy I'll check him out in the future?

B.P. No, we got to know each other very well - we became friends in a very short time and we kept in touch. I mean I'd been there because I did my junior certificate there, so I'd been at Lovedale for three years, and this was my fourth year, '63 - but yes - no, I got to know him very well - I can't remember now - I suspect we were living in the same hostel, I'm not sure.

J.F. And then you went to Fort Hare in '66 and what was the political climate there.

B.P. Come - I mean going to Fort Hare for someone who'd been to Lovedale was - Lovedale people always claimed Fort Hare - they felt that Lovedale - or Fort Hare was a continuation of Lovedale and it was just in another place.

I think for me going to Fort Hare - most of the people that I knew at Lovedale were by then in their second year, and I was in the first year, and this was 1966, and there had been in 1964 an enormous blight of students who were major trials sent to Robben Island in 1964 and '65, and these trials were lingering on in 1966 -

There was a great feeling - cloud of informers and the security police were ever so active on the campus - and when we got there some students, including some friends of mine, had been excluded from the university because of their political activities the year before, and - and at the beginning of the year there was no student representation of any form or kind (formal kind) (?) and one felt that the student body was not - had no stomach to resist the university, and - and many people were almost feeling that, you know, nothing can be done, and we here to study and that's it.

I remember how - as a fresher how absolutely disgusted I felt about this place. It seemed to be unlike everything that I'd imagined it to be. And I remember actually as a fresher - and the freshers at Fort Hare don't speak for six months, you see, normally.

I remember as a fresher standing up saying how disgusted I was (Laugh) - so, yes, Fort Hare in 1966 was a different place from what it was in 1963, and - and I did - it was very - there were few students - much fewer than they had - than there were before - and they were beginning to limit the presence of non Xosa students - there were very few Coloureds and Indians in 1966, so Fort Hare was not the same place even - even within that short time of three years.

J.F. Was that - at Lovedale were there Coloureds and Indians?

B.P. No, no....

J.F. But....

B.P. Fort Hare had always had....

J.F. So Fort Hare you knew was non racial?

B.P. That's right.

J.F. Was that a factor to you - did that bother you - did that affect you that they had - aside from the regime pulling its bantu education stand but limiting it to Xosa people - was it actually a factor to you - were you angry that there weren't Coloureds and Indians just...

B.P. Well, I - I - I did inherit, you see, and I felt very strongly about the - or everything that was about the takeover by the government of Fort Hare, and this was the difference, by and large, between former Lovedale students and students who had no Lovedale experience, because we were there when the whole struggle about the government takeover of Fort Hare was taking place - in a sense we participated in that - so we went to Fort Hare full

B.P. of that historic resistance to Fort Hare as it was, and - and we went to Fort Hare, you know, knowing what its limitations are, in a sense, in that way, but determined to resist any further incursions on the university, so in a sense Lovedale students would have been much more politicised about Fort Hare and its inheritance and its heritage -

And I think this did show, by and large, in a particular issue that was always strong at Fort Hare - every year there was major discussion by the student body on whether we should have an SRC or not, and we always felt that our heritage was that the students vowed never to co-operate at all with the university as long as it was a pontification institution, and it seemed to us an SRC would have been to turn back on that tradition, so those of us particularly who were at Lovedale were always on the opposed camp and campaigned -

It was a very, very hot issue, and many of the students who had a different awareness of Terfloebe and Zululand, where there were SRC's and where they felt that they were SRC's that worked, and they were aware of the inconvenience of not having an SRC, and the lack of leadership that this produced and produced a very, very dull campus, and they, for no less political reasons, campaigned for an SRC (Laugh) -

But what made our strategy much more forceful, we felt, was that we felt that we had a duty to the tradition of Fort Hare to resist this to the hilt and we did, and by and large we succeeded.

J.F. I don't want to push for something that's not there but that tradition of Fort Hare it wasn't just the negative anti bantu education - was it a tradition of not just Xosa, not just African, or was that not a factor...

B.P. Oh, that was - that was a factor - it was - it was - the tradition was about preserving - you see, Fort Hare had always been a so-called non white university - it has never been really anything else - but preserving the traditions of academic freedom, it was felt, and that's what it was about.

J.F. It wasn't about non racialism - it.....

B.P. It wasn't - I don't think it was about non racialism - but an aspect of academic freedom was the presence of Coloureds and Indians as students and staff on the campus, and the international flavour of staff, students from all over the world who were there, and that it was felt - and also the fact that the university could decide on academic merit who was to teach and what was to be taught, and it was felt that the university as it then was, with hand picked rectors by the government, who were government agents would - in fact it did change the character of the place by one eighty degrees -

And we, specially those of us who had been involved in ASA, which was very much in the forefront of this campaign, and got to know many of the people like Galort, Tabor and others - Tamin (.....) Stan Labizela and people like that, always felt that we had this burden on us to uphold this tradition of not accepting a bantu education institution.

- J.F. When did you know Tabor or Stan Lambizeli?
- B.P. When we were at Lovedale.
- J.F. Oh, when they were Lovedale students?
- B.P. That's right - they were older students at Fort Hare, mmm.
- J.F. At Lovedale or Fort Hare?
- B.P. Fort Hare.
- J.F. So when you went to - you met them at Lovedale and when you went to Fort Hare they were still there?
- B.P. That's right.
- J.F. But not for long - when did they leave - didn't they leave...
- B.P. Oh, they left in '63 - they left '63, '62 - they were there up to '62 certainly.
- J.F. But you didn't get to Fort Hare till?
- B.P. '66.
- J.F. Ja, so you didn't know them at Fort Hare - you...
- B.P. I did.
- J.F. You did?
- B.P. Ja, because I was at Lovedale.
- J.F. Oh, I see - you were...
- B.P. Yes, yes - and I was involved with them in the A.N.C.
- J.F. I see - I see - sorry - O.K.....
- B.P. And in any case I knew them as well in Port Elizabeth - Hlambiso - and I stayed with Tamin (Tam in) New York in January. In any case I knew them in P.E.
- J.F. I'm sorry, I don't know the geography - is Lovedale right at Fort Hare or is it just close?
- B.P. Lovedale is just next door to Fort Hare.
- J.F. O.K.....
- B.P. I mean Fort Hare is the other side of the river, Lovedale is this side of the river.
- J.F. And when you were anti starting an SRC did you ever think of starting ASA again or?
- B.P. No - no - when I got to Fort Hare in '66 there was then an underground NUSAS branch on campus which was meeting....
- J.F. Why was it underground?

B.P. Because NUSAS was banned on campus - the university wouldn't allow the National Union of South African Students because the National Union of South African Students had vowed to campaign against the present dispensation at Fort Hare of pontification, so it was not allowed - so some students continued to become members of NUSAS underground, and although I myself never really became a member of NUSAS but I attended most - I sort of - you used to be sort of invited to become a member (Laugh) of NUSAS and no-one was supposed to know if some-one sort of approached you - and I know these chaps used to meet in secret and used to certain days be flicked off by some friends from Rhodes and would go off to Rhodes University to NUSAS meetings and places like that -

And I kept attending some of these meetings which they had asked me to go to, and I soon felt that this was theatrical - this was really quite nonsense - because it seemed to me that you don't have any effect on anybody at all, so I never really became part of the NUSAS clique.

J.F. And so - why don't you tell me about the lead up to SASO then - you were anti SRC, you saw the futility of NUSAS - what then?

B.P. That's right - and I - that's - and I felt, I think some people did share this, that the campus had to operate very much above-board as a great challenge to the college and to the university, and two things were sort of coming together at this time - I went to several conferences of the Anglican Students Federation and later the University Christian Movement and I got involved in that, and through that we began working through the various Christian organisations on campus, and in a event that led up to a major campus mission, as it were, and it was out of that that we began to see the need - I, to relate to the other universities which were in a similar position than we were, at the same time for us as students to relate more to our environment to the people who work on the campus to challenge the university about its policies, and that was the sort of beginnings of a contextual political commitment that we felt -

And it was through the student, the campus community, that we felt we could do that - we didn't think we could do that as some sort of underground and private affair and concern. And so in the end, in 1968 then the 1968 strike came into being out of that challenge to academic freedom - that struggle for academic freedom, which was campus based, and at the same time we were by then very much in link with the other campuses - other black campuses -

And so that was, for me, the beginning of - of the sort of need to look beyond the confines of just being a student and also just being a student at Fort Hare, and that is the sort of fertile ground for SASO.

J.F. And when you say the needs of just being a student but it was still just students and intellectuals that were.....

B.P. Of course it was - I mean that's - that's obvious - I don't think one can deny that - but it was students, not just concerned about matters of students qua (?) students - it was - it seemed to me uniquely as students concerned about the place of black people in South Africa - about justice - about liberation - not concerned about, you know, whether we have good food or bad food, or whether our grants arrived or not, or whether our results or

B.P. what we were taught - not even academic freedom in that way, because I think it's fair to say that most of the struggles that were - most campuses were engaged in at that time were very much academic issues - and now we were beginning to talk about a need for students to see their place in the struggle for liberation - in the total struggle for liberation -

That in itself may not have been new because, as I said, us and others participated differently, but it was new in that time, because by this time most people - it's very easy when things get very hostile round about for people to begin to put their heads down - students to begin to put their heads down and make the best of what is about probably the only thing they feel they can do - becoming students - becoming better students - and beginning to excel at being good students.

J.F. O.K. - can you tell me about the actual founding of SASO because I'm confused about whether there was indeed a walk out from NUSAS or whether it was - from reading this - the memo that Steve sent around to various organisations it seemed less - it seems he was just letting them know about the founding of it.

B.P. Oh, that was - well, before that - what actually did happen in 1967, Steve went to a conference at Rhodes representing the medical school, and the black students were put in the black area and the white students were at the university.

In fact, that for Steve was the formative thing, because he then organised or worked with others to say that this just can't go on - we can't accept this - so that - if there's any walkout at all that's the walkout he would have been referring to in NUSAS - this has nothing to do with me -

I was aware of it because Steve came to stay with us in my place in Port - my home in Port Elizabeth after that conference, and we talked about that and the implications, you know, for the future but not - I don't think at that stage, although he probably was beginning to think through a kind of black alliance - black students alliance of some description at that time, but he was in a different position because they were at the medical school in Natal which was a different foundation from any of ours, because ours were in a sense bantu education institutions, and they had more freedoms than we had -

They had SRC's, we didn't have - they had more money, we didn't have.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

J.F. So we were getting to the establishment of SASO - maybe you'd rather than me....

B.P. Well, that was one - one angle - I mean Steve certainly did feel after Rhodes, but as I say, the medical school was different from our bantu education universities. And then in 1968 we then went to the conference of the University Christian Movement in Stuterheim (?) I do think that, although I'm not aware of, at this time, Steve or some people from medical school had begun to

B.P. make soundings among some campuses about the possibility of a meeting of black students, so one approach at the USAM (?) conference was to call a caucus of all the black delegates, which had never been done before, so there was a major discussion with people who were very much onto the liberal track found it very difficult - I actually found it very difficult as well....

J.F. Why.

B.P. if I remember very well - I remember speaking against that at that conference - because it seemed, if you remember what I said about negative things - It seemed to me then to be very much against everything that I - that one had stood for - that it seemed totally unnecessary.

It seemed that if we had anything to say at all there was no reason why we didn't say it there. It seemed unnecessary to go to a caucus as blacks for that, but two other - one thing happened was that after 72 hours (?) we then - the blacks had to go out in order to satisfy the pass law requirements, and it was, for me, as a result of that that I felt that it was necessary for us to meet in order to find a way of opposing that (..... 'phone)

J.F. Where was that that you had to go after 72 hours?

B.P. In Stuterheim.

J.F. What did they do - just leave down and come back again?

B.P. That's right, yes, and that's to satisfy the pass law requirements - and I did then go to this black caucus, as a result of which it was decided that we had to be opposed to this thing...

J.F. It was decided but you still feeling not good enough?

B.P. Well, we all decided - I was - I felt good about the decision - I wasn't sure that it was necessary for us to meet as blacks in order for that decision to be conveyed (Laugh) - In other words, the decision itself was right, because I believed it was wrong if we felt totally committed to opposing injustice and apartheid, it was wrong for black people to accede to this silly law.

J.F. So the decision was?

B.P. The decision was that we should be - we should do two things - either get opposed and refuse to go on this walk and if we are arrested then that's it, or the whole conference, black and white, has to go on this walk and if we are confronted by police we all confront the police, so in the end that's what happened - we all sort of walked out of the magisterial district and came back again in order to satisfy the 72 hour requirement.

J.F. O.K. - so that was the kind of turning point for you or?

B.P. I did that with - I mean whole-heartedly, I think - and then in December that year....

J.F. This is '6....

B.P. '8 - in December that year, by this time we had been expelled from university - I was expelled as well....

J.F. Why?

B.P. Because there was a strike in August at Fort Hare and 15 of us were sent down.

J.F. What was the strike about?

B.P. This is what I was saying - I said in the strike of '68 at Fort Hare, which came out of the university mission that we organised, and the students formulated some demands rejecting the way in which the university was run and asking for accountability about the welfare - wellbeing of the black workers on the campus, and their working conditions, as we felt that that was a proper Christian response, and also we made demands about the academic orientation of the campus, and so there was a strike then as a result, and it ended when the police invaded the campus and we were all arrested, and at the end of that other students were allowed back and 15 of us were not allowed back.

And then Steve then called a - a sort of ad-hoc conference in December, 1968 to just begin to talk in Meranhill (?) to begin to talk about what possible responses the future and all that, which I didn't go to although I'd been invited, and it's difficult (?) to say why I didn't go - I didn't feel any particular enthusiasm for it and -

And then the first conference the following year was at Terfloeb, which again I didn't go to, but I went - I went - I was then asked to talk about B.C. in the context of my work that I was doing for UCM in the Eastern Cape, which I did, but it - I was never entirely - there were things about it that were right, there were things that were not right, so it took me some time to actually move into a total commitment with the B.C. strategy -

I can't - I don't know what it - I think part of it was just probably my own loyalty and commitment to Steve - I think that had a lot to do with it.

J.F. To you moving into it?

B.P. That's right, mmm....

J.F. What made.....

B.P. In the first instance, I think.

J.F. And you're saying once you got in then the commitment came.....

B.P. Of course - yes - yes - mmm.

J.F. And by '69 you were SASO president?

B.P. No, '70 - '70.

J.F. And had you had a religious upbringing at home?

B.P. Yes, mmm.

J.F. And had - was Steve also in UCM?

B.P. Yes.

J.F. When did you first get into UCM?

- B.P. When it was founded in '67.
- J.F. And during all this time in the early days of SASO was there ever a mention of the A.N.C. or the P.A.C. or how SASO would fit into a larger liberation strategy, or....
- B.P. Oh, yes - oh, yes - there was always - that had never been lost sight of - and what was paramount was that there was a job that needed to be done now and that the liberation isn't just an activity of the so-called A.N.C. or a so-called P.A.C. but was a task of all the people in South Africa, and so B.C. never - and certainly we never saw ourselves as substitutive leaders or even substituting A.N.C. or P.A.C., but we saw ourselves as meeting a need of the time, in a sense perhaps unrelated to A.N.C. or P.A.C. -

In other words, A.N.C. and P.A.C. could continue but we could complement what they were doing, and we felt that we were carrying on with the ideals of liberation and what they stood for, but we were doing that in a unitary way whereas they themselves, by the time of the bannings, black people were - had become very divided people - they were P.A.C. they were that they were that - so we were seeking a forum that would enable people from whatever side of the political spectrum they came from, to enable them to participate freely, and so -

And so B.C. whilst recognising the leadership of the liberation organisations was not any of them, and that had to be very, very clear. I mean you could find people say, like myself, who, it was known, had a very clear commitment to A.N.C., and that was never in doubt for me at all, and there were people like Steve, who had a commitment, I think, to P.A.C. and felt that it was necessary, and that there was no point reviving ASA and ASUSA and SOUA (?) in 1968 any more.

- J.F. He did have a commitment to the P.A.C., Steve?
- B.P. I presume - he would have had some family commitment, certainly, because of his brother - yes, he would have. He would have had some attraction to P.A.C. but I don't think he ever was, shall I say, a member of P.A.C.
- J.F. And would that attraction have continued throughout his life?
- B.P. I think so, yes.
- J.F. How does that kind of square with the kind of line - the statement that's been made these days that he in fact had sought alliances with the A.N.C.
- B.P. That doesn't change that picture at all - I don't think - whatever alliance he sought with the A.N.C. it was not an exclusive alliance - Steve wouldn't - in fact Steve, I think, would have found it very difficult to be a member of A.N.C. - I think.
- What I know was quite obvious by 1976, and it was that there was a great concern - there was a feeling abroad that the liberation movements had failed the people at home - that was a strong feeling.
- J.F. Among blacks in South Africa?
- B.P. Among blacks - activists in South Africa - and secondly, and it was thought that part of the reason for that was that they were

B.P. still so totally divided and that the divisions within A.N.C. and P.A.C. had destroyed what could be made of our struggle, but what was also evident was that realistically P.A.C. no longer was any great force either abroad or within South Africa -

And it was also obvious by '76 that many members of B.C. who by then were beginning to say where is this B.C. taking us to, had rightly felt that when they left the country they would become members of MK or A.N.C., and others, without thinking these things through, found themselves, for convenience, members of A.N.C. or MK, so it was quite obvious to us in South Africa that A.N.C. had a very, very fundamental role to play -

And so the moves that Steve and I and others were making in '77 towards A.N.C. were not definitive - they were really the beginnings of a wider process or seeking alliances, which we hadn't actually worked out very carefully, between the ongoing struggle at home, which we saw ourselves as part of, and how the resources and the expertise and the infiltration from overseas were to work with that, so I don't actually think that Steve would ever have joined A.N.C. as such, but would have enabled A.N.C. MK to operate with B.C.

J.F. But not P.A.C.?

B.P. I think that if things changed, and his was a very pragmatic approach, I don't think he ever - I think it can be said that he discounted the possibility of P.A.C. being offered the same kind of resource with the home based movement.

J.F. He discounted that?

B.P. He wouldn't - he didn't discount that.

J.F. He thought that it also could help?

B.P. It could happen if the P.A.C. had become a viable possible partner in that process.

J.F. Ja, because he says at one point in We Blacks - no, in one of the things later he says that he'd like to see a joining together of the A.N.C. and the P.A.C. where he mentions that, which seemed a bit kind of naive or ahistorical - there didn't seem any possibility, if one looks at it just purely as history, of that happening.

B.P. Oh, I don't think that is as naive as it seems - I mean if you take my scenario that if you have a very strong and vibrant liberation movement back home that is fed and continues to interact with both P.A.C. and A.N.C. that would be in effect a kind of unity of purpose, an activity that would be vital, and that, I think, would either allow room for the resources of the stronger ones to be strengthened even further by the other, either human or other resources, from others, so that was not as far fetched as it seemed.

It may be that it was very idealistic, but in the way in which people were thinking back home it was not impossible to think that - I don't think that he would have meant seriously a kind of organisation of the unity - I doubt that that would have been a matter of any relevance to him -

I don't think it was a matter of there must be, you know, one

- B.P. organisation and these gone (?) and that sort of thing - I don't think so. I think much more was where it matters on the ground where A.N.C. and P.A.C. were seen to be working together for liberation.
- J.F. You mean that was the proper perception?
- B.P. That's right - that's right.
- J.F. Yet when you began making moves they weren't to the P.A.C. in '77.
- B.P. They couldn't be - why should they be to the P.A.C. - because, as I say, two things - one was that many of - this is what actually caused this move in the first place - many of our chaps were going to join A.N.C., not P.A.C. - many of our chaps who left the country in '75/'76 didn't join P.A.C. - at that stage they went to join A.N.C., so that was - within A.N.C. there were many people who were in B.C. who were beginning to find a different way of working, with a commitment to coming back home - there was a link there -
- But the second thing anyway is that A.N.C. was demonstrably, visibly the more viable of the two organisations. It seemed to be the one with whom anyone who was serious about liberation would talk to.
- J.F. When would you say that?
- B.P. '76.
- J.F. '76 - only '76 - before that would you not have made that statement?
- B.P. We wouldn't know - we couldn't - I mean I don't think anyone could have made that statement until then, because really from the time both organisations were banned in 1964 they both made claims about their strengths - respective strengths - and what they were doing -
- And then there was a time when they were all in exile, and there wasn't much to judge by.
- J.F. So you say our guys went to join A.N.C.....
- B.P. By and large.
- J.F. Was there discussion - if you say in '75 and '76 - was there discussion in the early '70's by people to say maybe we should leave the country and join MK?
- B.P. Oh, yes - oh, yes - in '70 already - already as long ago as 1972 - 1972 - that's when first time chaps from SASO left the country and joined A.N.C. - that was as a result of a great debate that was going on in the student movement then about where do we go from here - it was as early as that.
- J.F. As early as?
- B.P. That's right - in 1972 - where do we go from here - are we going to continue with this programme of conscientisation - where is this going to lead us - how do we concretise this - are we going to continue with these development programmes and education and conscientisation - and some of the chaps felt that for them that was the end of the road and they were ready to take on - to get

B.P. onto the armed struggle, and then people were saying that we ought to abandon the B.C. ideal - not B.C. ideal as such, but that manner of doing liberation and commit ourselves totally to say, armed struggle or something like that - so that discussion was an ongoing discussion, I think, all the time from 1972, and after that the system pounced on us and a whole lot of us were banned in 1973 -

And after the bannings the debate again heightened about where do we go from here, and how can we make the best of this - have we not outlived the era of B.C.

J.F. That's interesting because I had a lot of questions about whether there had been a critique of its need to concretise its lack of B.C. and even the black community programmes lack of connection with an ongoing programme or a strategy for liberation, but you're saying that it actually was being discussed all along.

B.P. That's right - all the time from 1972 that was a major - in fact in 1976 guys were sent to Robben Island, and in large measure the evidence that was drawn against them was actually drawn from this debate that was an ongoing debate, and that's where the system appears to have got the idea that they were engaged, or preparing to be engaged in subversive activity, and that the free FRELIMO - viva FRELIMO rallies - were the first step in this major campaign that was about to be launched.

As it happened that was premature because actually it was just a discussion, an internal discussion - debate - at that time - there was no - I don't think there was any big plans.

J.F. But weren't there two side of it - the way you're saying it it seems like a clear movement, but if you look at Sas Cooper and (.....) and all of the (.....) the people in AZAPO today a national forum where they're so clearly anti A.N.C. - do you think that's something that they just kind of have gotten onto later or do you think there was a line of an anti A.N.C. and anti concretising it in that way - line?

B.P. No, no - I mean - several things have to be said - I think the first one is that I'm not saying that there was any oneness of mind about this - all I'm saying is that these were matters that were under discussion and obviously people were taking different positions about them.

Neither do I say that the only possibility in terms of the future was an alliance with the A.N.C. exclusively - I haven't said that at all. A.N.C. was one factor in the porbable way forward but it wasn't the only one, and I think that actually even more so people like Sats Cooper and Muntu and others - one must see their real hostility - in fact I don't think there was any great hostility to A.N.C. before '76 - I think stems from their time in Robben Island.

I think their present hostility comes directly from having been in Robben Island with alleged A.N.C. people. There was obviously during the time of B.C. very strong debates about whether the liberation organisations were serving our people properly - there was a critique of the liberation organisations, and there were people who did feel that they were not doing anything and they were just useless and they were not - their strategy for liberation wasn't worth anything - obviously there would have been people who felt that way, but it would be wrong equally to

- B.P. say that the movement, if one can talk about that, the movement as such felt that way, because the movement clearly wanted to be open to becoming an organisation that actually steers clear from trying to choose an organisation for the people of South Africa - that was never the intention.
- J.F. All this time did you have any contact with whites - was there anything that factor - I think that in the interview we haven't discussed - I haven't asked you specifically about the non racialism aspect - I'm just wondering if there were debates about that - did anyone during these debates say oh, we're anti A.N.C. because they're with whites?
- B.P. Well, I - quite honestly I - I think I did say that I never thought that was such a major thing myself - I never - I still don't think that you can construct a viable political policy on (Laugh) non racialism or multiracialism - I don't think even within B.C. there was any great thinking of a sort of so-called non racial kind, but there was a critique of what the involvement of white people in the liberation struggle means and does, and that is where B.C. comes from, is to say what is the place of black people, what is the place of white people in the liberation struggle, and our commitment was that primarily it is the oppressed people themselves who must participate in their struggle -
- They must call the tune, set the initiatives, strategise, and that there was a feeling that for too long black people had been sidelined, had been put in the touch lines in pursuit of their own liberation, so the primary thing was a strategy for participation by the oppressed people themselves in the struggle for liberation, so non racialism then I doubt that would have been a very great issue, but there would have been -
- I mean I think B.C. never, and I think deliberately, sought to decide a platform or a policy for a new South Africa because it was felt that that was not our task, because ours was an interim task, and that the liberation organisations had set out their respective programmes, and we never felt that - because if we began to do that then suddenly we might find ourselves in that fraught (?) divisive plane which we wanted to avoid -
- We were, I think, radically an interim organisation - a here and now organisation - we were not about a non racial policy for South Africa.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

- B.P. That's right - and that one you will actually see as a very unsubstantiated thing about a place for all people in the rendezvous of victory, for instance.
- J.F. Is that what you think I'm going to ask about?
- B.P. Mmmm.
- J.F. Actually I was going to ask about our strategy for liberation - we don't have sufficient groups who can form coalitions with blacks - various groups of whites at the present moment - the

- J.F. more such groups which come up the better to minimise the conflict - he's seeming to say that if whites can get it together in a way that isn't liberal and suspect some day in the future as we're building towards liberation maybe they should - that would be good if they could join in.
- B.P. No, I mean I wouldn't interpret - I doubt if that would be what Steve is saying there.....
- J.F. What was he saying there?
- B.P. I think what he's more likely to be saying is that there is a problem in South Africa and that problem is for all the people of South Africa - if you are all South Africans then we all have the problem because we want a different South Africa that would be amenable for all of us to live in, and we have a strategy where we take the initiatives - we have a vision for South Africa and we want to participate in that but we don't want our participation, which flows out of our experience and our context, for which whites, or some of the whites, are partly responsible -
- We don't want that to be affected by white views and white attitudes - at the same time the same process takes place of examining how best a new and a different South Africa can be formed, and these two, however radical they may be, ways, at some point are working towards a common aim - a common result of a new South Africa - and if there are any alliances at all I doubt that Steve would have felt that they are alliances of black and white people working together politically, because I think that would, however radical they may be - because I think that would in the end undermine the very purpose for which we stand -
- And so there was a need for more radical white people - certainly there was then - there's some - lots of radical white people at the moment - but I don't think that that in itself meant that whites and blacks, however radical, were soon (?) going to be in the struggle together.
- J.F. And how does that square with the situation today where there are whites involved with the UDF - to say....
- B.P. I myself - I myself believe very - I'm in two minds about that - part of me says that where there are sufficiently radical white people involved and committed and understanding very clearly a need to affirm and to participate in the struggle as the majority black oppressed people see it, and enabling and facilitating that struggle to happen, seems to me to be right and good -
- But I'm also wary lest that seems that indicates that there is no longer - that they - because when that happens more often than not then suddenly lots of these radical whites begin to think that racism no longer matters - is no longer an issue - the thing that matters is class and that sort of thing, and fail to focus on class and race as a fundamental twin problems of South Africa, however much one accounts for the other -
- And very, very many white radicals, I'm afraid, want to wish racism away as if it's something that doesn't matter - I know they're radical (.....) and that worries me, and I actually take the view that as long as apartheid in this present form exists there will always be a need for B.C., but B.C. on the other hand has to recognise that the way in which it is articulated must take account of the responses of the system to the political development and orientation of black people themselves, and it does need to begin to analyse the social and the economic factors ,

- B.P. and has got to be quite aware of what the class questions are saying and are implications for the ongoing struggle they are - neither can they go on as if class doesn't matter - is an irrelevant because it's not irrelevant - and so when there are whites then operating I do fear, and I have - there are some indications of this - that they do tend to want to take over the struggle, and there are indications in the trade unions that many of the white left have assumed the struggle out of the hands of black people, and that is always a danger, and that's what we were talking about.
- J.F. Just tell me about your leaving the country because I want to make sure that I have that - that I understand what happened - when, under what circumstances did you leave?
- B.P. That's (....) - I had been in - detained for twelve months in '77/'78 and was released in August, '78 and a week later I left.
- J.F. Had you heard that Steve had died when you were inside?
- B.P. Ja.
- J.F. And so you just moved out as soon as you got released.
- B.P. That's right, mmm.
- J.F. And did you go immediately to Britain?
- B.P. No, I went to Lesotho.
- J.F. And then after that how long before you - when did you arrive in Britain?
- B.P. In September - I was in Lesotho for four weeks, I think.
- J.F. Were you with Father (?) (.....) (You're a bit faint)
- B.P. That'r right, mmm.
- J.F. And you arrived in Britain in September, '78?
- B.P. That's right.
- J.F. And just tell me about the founding of BCMSA - I remember I was in South Africa in '79 and everyone was asking - even asking people like me if I knew about what this was and it was just such a - among black people concerned about what it represented, and it seemed - maybe I'm a bit hazy because I was in South Africa and the regime's kind of manipulation of it - the media that we got inside - so I really don't know the story of that.
- B.P. No, the BCM was calling together all the people who were abroad who were actively engaged in and committed to the B.C. movement and ideals, and some of them had - in fact SASO and BPC had asked some people to represent them abroad, and it is out of those people who had been representing by 1979 organisations that had by then been banned but felt that there was a need to hold onto this ideal and actively work in discussion with other South Africans and other organisations and strengthen the political resolve of those who felt an allegiance to B.C. -
- And so these people kept meeting, and this was really working towards a major conference which I was involved in planning for -

- B.P. a major conference which would help articulate where these B.C. people abroad saw their future and how they saw B.C. proceeding, and that was what the conference of 1980 or whatever - '81 was about.
- J.F. What year was it?
- B.P. I think '80, '81, I'm not sure now.
- J.F. So was - did the conference take place?
- B.P. '81 - '81 - it did take place in London.
- J.F. And you participated in it?
- B.P. Mmmm.
- J.F. I'm sure it must have been '80 and not '81 - because it was quite early, I understand.
- B.P. It was - I think it was '81, April.....
- J.F. with Tengy Ntinslo (?) and there was some rumour that you were supposed to be coming to Lesotho and there was going to be a conference.
- B.P. No - no, that wasn't....
- J.F. That was December, '79.
- B.P. That wasn't the conference - that was December, 1980, not '79 - couldn't have been '79 - that was December, 1980 and some of us had had a meeting with A.N.C. in Lusaka, and we were hoping to proceed to Lesotho and brief people about possible moves and discussions that had taken place with A.N.C. - that was December, 1980.
- J.F. And was that when Nkondo got taken?
- B.P. That's right - and we were going to travel with Nkondo and for some reason we decided against proceeding - I can't remember what happened.
- J.F. So that was the very first time that there was some getting together with the A.N.C. B.C. people?
- B.P. That's right.
- J.F. And had that been a long road for you to get to - to decide to actually formally have contact with the A.N.C.?
- B.P. That's right - that's right - well, I had - I'm sure I had a total alliance and commitment to BCM but I've always felt that it was not an exclusive alliance and commitment and it - I wasn't BCM because I had rejected A.N.C., if you see what I mean, and it seemed to me, and that for me was consistent with what we were talking about, that it was possible for one to be B.C. and to be A.N.C. -
- But I had a total commitment to B.C. and I desired that we find a way, a vision, of enabling B.C. people to work with A.N.C., or even from A.N.C. and still be B.C., and so it seemed that there were possible ways forward that the various - that the two

- B.P. organisations, if ever they were organisations - because at this time BCM was not an organisation as such - it was - we were just working out certain lines for the future, so we had a - what I thought was an excellent meeting with A.N.C., and we were extremely well received, very well - and A.N.C., in the way that I knew, outlined very clearly what their position was towards BCM, and I -
- I - I mean that had never been any problem for me at all - but going back in '81 to this conference to report this to people I felt an amazing and unacceptable level of hostility, which seemed to me had gone beyond anything that I'd ever thought of and envisaged - a kind of hostility to A.N.C. as such, which I felt was totally unacceptable (Laugh) and because it seemed to me it was totally irrational, it was emotional, and it seemed to me that several people who called themselves BCM had moved beyond everything and had had political ideals that I wasn't part of any more.
- J.F. That was a part of concern (?)
- B.P. And so that's when I - I - I, as it were, left BCM and said I wouldn't have any more to do with it.
- J.F. You felt that it was just unacceptable to be opposed to the A.N.C. at that juncture?
- B.P. That's right - I mean I felt it was unacceptable to be opposed to the A.N.C. for the sake of it.
- J.F. O.K. - can I just ask you about the non racialism because as I say, I say to people that I'm not trying to push a line - I want to know what people think of it - but I think that I've got to have a comment from you on it because you're such a keen historical person because - on it precisely because if you look at COSATU - they actually didn't have the unity and they rejected AZACTU and the Nation Forum of Affiliated Unions because they said we believe in non racialism - they could have had 700,000 instead of 500,000 and that was the sticking point, and if you talk to UDF and all that they can be just as vehement about useless white liberals as your - making your point about it I understand that, and about not glossing over race - in fact, even for me to do this book it's almost like saying, wait a minute, race is important, let's go back and see how it figured as a factor over the years to make for of the most of the people in the country who say we believe in a non racial future - so I just want to not be able to understand what your view of the non racialism factor itself is - as I'm saying, it seems to be an actual tenant of the A.N.C. and of UDF - are you saying that there can be someone like yourself who would say, I'm B.C. - I support A.N.C. but I don't think non racialism is important, or I don't believe in it - I'm not clear.
- B.P. No, I don't say I don't believe in it - I just don't think it's an issue - I don't think - I mean I don't honestly think that - that one can - for instance, where I think that some of the B.C. people today, the sort of AZAPO lot, they have gone totally overboard, is that they have lost their analytical power or tool in actually analysing in the way that I believe Steve and others were doing - analysing the most effective way of pursuing a liberation struggle -
- On the other hand sort of UDF, it seems to me - this is why I

B.P. support the UDF programme only insofar as it shows and it indicates that there are, especially because of the way in which it is enabling organisations to remain what they are, because it says that it is possible for different organisations which pursue their tasks of liberation to have a common aim and a common purpose, and so - and that is also the weakness of the UDF, because instead of having individual affiliations they have organisations all over which have got their own character, and therefore I think that the UDF strategy of sort of unity in action, as they would say, is vital and is important -

But it seems to me that if it - if it says that the only way in which our struggle can be executed is by organisations being mixed black and white because they have got an ideological non racialism, and I would say : Wait a minute (Laugh) - what are we about, because it doesn't mean - if that is the commitment then it must also say that Botha's tricameral parliament is a kind of a non racialism because you will see there some blacks and some whites in parliament, although the subtleties of that I would accept, but you are in danger of actually receding to that kind of platform (?) so I think that behind there may be a banner of non racialism - behind that there must be much more hard policy initiatives that must underlie it -

So I'm very suspicious of slogans like non racialism because I don't think they say much, and I think that at the same time - and this is where for me the sticking point for A.N.C. conference (?) - at the same time morally the value of the A.N.C. position, which says that South Africa belongs to all who live in it - and if morally A.N.C. are seeing themselves as the alternative government of South Africa they do need to appeal to all the people of South Africa, and because they need to appeal to all they need to reassure all the people of South Africa about their policies, about their programme of government, and about what they do, and so they would argue, in my view, forcefully, that because we have that total commitment we must also be able to draw everybody we appeal to and give them a place and a role and a possibility and the opportunity to participate in the conception of that ideal, so morally I can see the point of that, but strategically whether it actually works that way (Laugh) -

I mean I think the B.C. position is a strategic one - is not - is not a programme in itself - is not final in itself - and it was made very clear all along it is a strategic position because it met head on a very particular problem of the time.

J.F. Did you - you had the meeting in January, '81 in which you encountered the hostility, then you quit B.C.M.?

B.P. That's right.

J.F. And then did you join A.N.C.?

B.P. No - well, I didn't join A.N.C. because I never - I felt I never unjoined A.N.C. - I never left A.N.C., strictly speaking, really. I'd always been, from the time I came here - from the time I was in Lesotho I'd always been in touch and contact and participating in the work of A.N.C. - it did never seem to me to be an issue at all, so - but I did all along, as I was talking and wanting to find out the future, I was in touch with A.N.C. - I'd been in discussion with A.N.C., and people in B.C. knew that - I mean it was never any hidden thing for me, because I felt that I was doing this and involved in this openly because it was a matter

B.P. of debate that we had to work through and we - and I think A.N.C., in my view, had to allow us to work that through for the sake of the struggle of South Africa, and I don't think A.N.C., and to their credit, ever wanted to badger everybody to become A.N.C. but they wanted, and they felt that it was possible for those who felt that that was the way for them to find a working relationship, and that to their credit -

What actually annoyed me and that I couldn't accept is for people to think that that was not acceptable (Laugh) because it seemed to me that sooner or later we seemed to have lost focus about who our enemies were and well, quite honestly for me A.N.C. was never my enemy, and I couldn't accept anybody viewing -

I never thought P.A.C. was my enemy, incidentally - I've never belonged to P.A.C., but I can't - I couldn't accept that things could have gone so far that we could even suddenly think that another organisation because it's different from ours can be treated like an enemy - couldn't - I can't do that -

So I left and told them that I won't have anything to do with it.

J.F. With BCM?

B.P. Mmmm.

J.F. Had you founded a BCMSA abroad?

B.P. No, no, no, I - I wouldn't accept that I founded - that's not true. What actually happened is that there had been people who were working in different parts of the world - in the United States, in Canada, in Africa, in Holland - being BCM people and meeting regularly - that's something that had been continuing all along.

There had been abroad people whom SASO, BPC, had actually commissioned to be their external representatives, and I wasn't commissioned for that at all - and what I did coming overseas was to keep in touch with all those people and to begin to set in motion the whole - the whole debate about where are we going to, because I felt that this can't - we can't continue like this - we can't go on like this -

So I felt that there was a need for people to have a platform, to have a forum for them to look at their future, to look at their role in the unfolding struggle, and I didn't think that it was just sufficient for groups of people who liked each other to meet in Holland or anywhere -

So my first task then was to get in touch with people and sort of link with people and just get them talking together, and culminating in that conference which I organised in March, 1981, following the meeting we had in Lusaka with the A.N.C., and that seemed to be the right point for me for all these reasons, and until then I would not - not have continued to participate in B.C., partly because I believed that people did have something to offer and they just needed to find a context within which to offer it, and there were all sorts of possibilities and they had to be worked through.

- J.F. And then - you said you never officially joined, but if someone says to you, are you a member of the A.N.C.....
- B.P. I am.
- J.F. You are?
- B.P. Mmmm.
- J.F. Because I remember reading an article that said that you made this important decision by joining the A.N.C. in January of 1982....
- B.P. No, no, I - I mean I don't think there's anything like as - like that - as formal as that, but I - let me just go back a bit. After I left B.C. I decided that I did not want - I certainly did not want to sort of form another organisation or a corps of so-called followers.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

- B.P. take a whole lot of people to another organisation because they have a kind of loyalty to me, so I spent time, as it were, getting on with my life and without feeling any reason to take any active part in any formal political thing in South Africa, and that was really the reason - that was because I didn't want anybody to feel that they wanted to come along with me wherever I went - I just wanted to (Laugh) be myself and let people come to their own decisions at their own time - I didn't want to influence anybody outside myself -

So I did not want to make a big issue, No. 1. of having left B.C. - I didn't go to the press, I didn't make statements, I didn't say anything - I just quietly stopped literally and that was because I didn't think that one needed to sensationalise political differences because it wasn't worth it -

And I do know that following, I think, the raid on Maputo it just seemed to me (Laugh) totally unacceptable to sit back and not get involved, so - so that's the sort of trend.

- J.F. So who was it who went to Lusaka to see the A.N.C. about reading (?) that you thought were so good - was it yourself....
- B.P. I (it) was myself and Benny Hwapa and Mhubi Ramose - no, no, no - and Jack Baqo (?)
- J.F. Are any of them in the A.N.C. now?
- B.P. I don't think so - I don't know.
- J.F. And the thing I also haven't let you speak about is that there is - some people understood African B.C. to mean Africans and what - can you tell me something about the role of Coloureds and Indians - I notice that if you're reading the Stubbs book in the very early speeches non whites and blacks is used interchangeably - then there is the total rejection of non white as a term but there's a use of African, and then it seemed that it

J.F. was kind of a process whereby Coloureds and Indians were also incorporated.

B.P. Ja, I think Coloureds and Indians were involved in B.C. from the beginning - from the very beginning - in fact some chap called Grey, an Indian chap, was - was with Steve at the beginning both at the NUSAS conference and leading the black caucus - I forget his name - so that has always been the case there - and the term black was always understood to be an inclusive term for black, Coloureds and Indians, from the beginning, and where necessary - where it was necessary to differentiate one would always say African, Coloureds and Indians -

If you wanted to differentiate Africans from Coloureds and Africans from Indians you'd use those terms in special circumstances. The word non white - I mean I won't even vouch of any consistency in this, but the word non white would normally be used to express or use a dominant - the term of the dominant society - and very often with a view to explaining its inadequacies, or as a lift or quoting or showing ways in which people are thinking - I think on the whole it would have been used that way -

I'm sure (sorry) it wouldn't appear but it would appear as a referent (?) term - so I don't think there was any process at all, because I think, as it were, the unity with Africans and with Coloureds and Indians were there from the beginning - of course there was an ongoing debate about that - whether really and deeply Coloureds and Indians felt one with Africans -

And there were some people who were much more Africanist in style and were very suspicious of the involvement of Coloureds and Indians - for them was no different from the alleged involvement of whites - so within B.C. there were all sorts of shades - within the African component of B.C. there were all kinds of shades.

J.F. How do you yourself kind of sum it up in terms of your future views.....('phone) - if you could just sum up for me - where that leads us, where that leads you, again viz-a-viz whites and non racialism - you've gone through this - you've explained your relationship with the A.N.C. - can you make a statement about how you see the future of South Africa and what your views are in terms of the different race groups in the country.

B.P. I actually quite honestly don't - I mean I mean this with the bottom of my - from the bottom of my heart, that in the end for me it wouldn't matter ultimately actually - I think that what I'm hoping for for South Africa is that we will have a just and an egalitarian society, and I'm hoping that men and women will have opportunities to make their contributions, and that there will be no privilege either on the basis of race or class, and that seems to me to be very, very consistent with the platform of the A.N.C. -

But I'm just hoping that we will have in South Africa a very truly socialist society because I believe that that would be right for our country, and so - and I will be very sorry to see, and I can see the possibilities of that - being a sort of less than perfect solution to South Africa - I'll be very sad to see South Africa becoming a society where certain white privileges are retained for them in certain situations, and I would want to see resources and wealth and land much more productively

B.P. and economically available to all the people of South Africa - so as for me I think that is a factor because we must work against racism - there may be some kinds of racism, but we must work against that - we must work against tribalism of any kind - and yet it must be an affirmative, not a negative - an affirmative principle that is based on justice.

J.F. Do you think you've changed since the early days of B.C.?

B.P. No, no - no, I haven't because I think that B.C. would say the same thing, except that B.C. would say that the interim - the process of actually struggling for liberation must be such that the interest and the aspirations and the needs and the participation of the oppressed people must be affirmed -

In other words, the oppressed people themselves must have a role in liberation and not be sidelined and fought for and done for - I mean that's what B.C. was saying, isn't it - and that hasn't changed for me - I still say that.

J.F. I guess the thing that's different from you is your emphasis - it doesn't seem that there's any danger right now that blacks are being fought for or acted for - the one example you picked of whites in the trade unions is one area that's so opposed by the UDF - they're very marginal (?) like the kind of the old FOSATU whites - that doesn't have anything to do with the current situation in South Africa - if you look at just the UDF, A.N.C. ambit I wouldn't think anyone would be worrying about white hegemony - there are a few whites in the UDF and I think one or two on various executives in the country, but basically it's - it seems that those questions haven't been resolved as much as they've just been acted out - whites have a position but blacks are the ones who are in the forefront - would you not agree with that?

B.P. Of course I do - I never said that I disagreed or discounted that at all - I mean I think that that would still be right, except that I also say that if that is a genuine way in which blacks see themselves participating - and that incidentally I think is really only possible because of the way in which UDF is operating as a federal group - if that is genuinely where the people are - I mean I don't really know how deeply it is but I'm very suspicious of ('phone)

J.F. You're very suspicious of?

B.P. And so I think that.....

J.F. What are you suspicious of?

B.P. Can't remember (Laugh) - and all I want to say - I've forgotten what I was going to say now - but all I want to say now is that I don't really know if that has been acted out and what the real current situation is back home, but I still think that it would be folly to think that the race issue is out of the way because it's not and has got to be challenged, and there is a temptation for people to say that it is - it is out of the way -

On the other hand I'm dying for a strategy and an approach to the struggle that is very, very fundamentally principle policy oriented because in the end it's the kind of South Africa that we want - although I accept that the way in which we actually

- B.P. do, the liberation struggle at the moment has something to do with it, but I think that in the end we need to keep that focus very clear in our own minds.
- J.F. Your position in B.C. organisations then, you were president and secretary general of SASO?
- B.P. Mmm.
- J.F. And anything else?
- B.P. That's all.
- J.F. And what is your position now?
- B.P. I've no position.
- J.F. No, but I mean just in life - your...
- B.P. I'm a parish priest here.
- J.F. Of the what church?
- B.P. Emmanuel Parish Church.
- J.F. It's an Anglican church?
- B.P. Mmm.
- J.F. And would you say that - this is just a few loose ends - everyone else writes about B.C. - you get it (.....) you get it from you - about all these different influences like Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X and Stokley Carmichael and Franz (.....) and James Khan - who would you say were the influences in terms of books and....
- B.P. I think all of them - I think all of them in different ways, yes - I think Franz Vernon (?) and the African presence (?) you know, school on Franz, Africanist - the African presence were people - the artists and the cultural people and the writers who were writing - Sengal (?) and people like that would be important, and I think that the American Black Power Movement has got a lot of influence -
- I mean America - black America has had lots of influence on black political life in South Africa - had a lot of influence on the foundation of A.N.C. - yes, those - those - I think all of those - I mean as far as black theology is concerned James Cohen, when it began to be a factor James Cohen was the person who was writing at the time.
- J.F. Have you got any others that I haven't mentioned?
- B.P. Well, what - those we haven't mentioned are people like Mandela and Sebukwe and people from South Africa itself - and Kadali - Clements Kadali - you haven't mentioned those.
- J.F. I'm saying those of what one reads - what about Marx?
- B.P. No, I don't think Marx had a great influence on our thinking - I don't even think most of us would have known much about Marx, realistically speaking - no - no, just a passing interest but not much - I don't think it was a matter of great interest either....

J.F. So why.....

B.P. Nyerere, incidental(ly) was also....

J.F. Nyerere?

B.P. Nyerere.

J.F. Why the influence - the emphasis on socialism - you mentioned that you were very keen that the future South Africa be socialist.

B.P. Oh, that has nothing to do with Marx - certainly didn't have anything to do with Marx for me because I knew very little or nothing about Marx, if one can tell the truth, and I don't think that the only source of socialism is Marx - I don't think so, and I think there was - there was a great idea that it is possible for people to find justice in the light of the concepts and philosophy and way of life of Africa, and that was one overriding thing, and it was this whole thing about a new understanding of culture and of history of the people seen in a positive and liberatory light, and so that's why those things were important -

I think equally if we had not been able to think that through except through some major ideology it would also be totally inadequate - I mean as a politics graduate I did dome Marx but it was within the context of South Africa which wasn't terribly liberating -

And now that I know and I read and I study a lot of Marx I don't think my position has changed - my view hasn't changed - my commitment hasn't changed.

J.F. Would you say that you're in any - let me compare you with people inside South Africa - would you be closer to Terror Lekota than Sax Cooper?

B.P. I don't know - I don't know - I mean you're talking about people that I last saw, closely certainly, in 1973...

J.F. No, in reading - you can read some of.....

B.P. Well - well - well, not much - not much at all - no, I can't make that straight choice, I don't think so - there are certain things that do alarm me, on the whole, about - certainly I can think of some things that Sets Cooper that I saw had said which alarmed me but I just don't know how true those were - but on the other hand I am generally alarmed by the great divide and I am sad about the apparent division between some chaps who were working together, and I just don't see what the point of it is.

I am sad about the division between Terror and his other colleagues.

J.F. What - you mean...

B.P. In the way in which they pillory each other and make statements, you know, attacking one another, and it's just terrible - what I've seen anyway - and I can't - I don't want to sit from here and judge that, but the whole thing is - I don't think ought to be encouraged.

J.F. You left the country - you were expelled from Fort Hare?

B.P. Mmm.

J.F. In what year again?

B.P. '68.

J.F. And then did you do studies after that?

B.P. I finished, yes, in South Africa.

J.F. Through?

B.P. The University of South Africa.

J.F. Oh, through UNISA - and then got a BA?

B.P. Uhuh.

J.F. And then - you didn't study any more until you came to Britain?

B.P. No, I then did law.

J.F. Oh - also UNISA?

B.P. Mmm.

J.F. From home?

B.P. Mmm.

J.F. From being banned?

B.P. That's right, mmm.

J.F. And were you also house arrested?

B.P. Mmm.

J.F. For what period?

B.P. '73 to '78.

J.F. So you were banned and house arrested in '73/'78?

B.P. Mmm.

J.F. And then when you got to Britain did you immediately start studying again?

B.P. I went - I came to college when I came here.

J.F. Came up to...

B.P. To London - King's College.

J.F. And did theology?

B.P. Mmm.

J.F. I see - and then you finished that - and when did you start here?

B.P. I've been here one year - I spent three years in Milton Keynes
sorry, four years. *yes*