

- J.F. Have you been back to the Freestate - do you go back since you came to Durban?
- L.T. Ja, I do go back, not as often as I'd like to because of the organisational commitments around.
- J.F. And when you go back, do you find that the place is more or less political than when you were growing up?
- L.T. Oh, no, certainly there has been a number of developments, and in fact, through - and some of the people who are organisationally involved that I knew before, and through the - for instance, at the national conference - at the national conference of the UDF early this year, we had quite a number of people from the Freestate who were there - the UDF scene (670- and some of the people that are actively involved would be people that I know quite closely, and so there has been a number of developments in the area, although of course, organisation there is still at its beginnings, and with time, of course, it will be - they'll grow.

The current problem that is faced by people there would be resources and - particularly because they are out of their so-called main centres, where it is relative and comparatively speaking easy to get resources from ...

- J.F. But on a concrete level - again I'm looking more for examples and anecdotes - is there anything that you experienced that you think shows these people are moving?
- L.T. Yes, certainly - like, for example, in Bloemfontein, what you have there - some of the people that I knew have - are organising in the trade union sectors, like the Commercial and Catering workers union, they have employed one person that I knew.

I had mentioned him to one of them and they have employed him, and their response to organisation, for instance, of only one shop let to a : Correction : led to a massive response from other people who were working at other shops who came to hear about the union organising there, and they responded quite positively there, and for example, you have a MANOW (687) youth congress in Bloemfontein.

It's relatively small in membership, but I think it is because people are concentrating on focusing their attention. For instance, at the moment, they were organising around - trying to organise workers, more than focusing on organising the youth per se as a whole, because they felt they still needed to equip themselves, first with the skills of organising, and they thought maybe with the minimum that they had they could concentrate on the main area which they thought was going to play a very important role.

For example, I know that my brother is involved in organising the youth as well. That is my other brother - the last born, at home. He's an organiser for a youth group in the area where we are staying in Bloemfontein. My elder brother in Kroenstaad is also a key figure in the UDF, organising in that area - in Kroenstaad.

- J.F. When you go back, do you ever hear - would you ever hear in a place like Bloemfontein or Beaufontein (698) of people who'd left the country, or does that not happen?

L.T. Oh, it has happened all over. All those areas - there's Bloemfontein, Welkom, Kroenstaad, Virginia - places around the Goldfeit (701) and many other areas, you - for example, one of the friends that I used to work with at the (.....) (701) as a result of the 1977 school boycotts, he was detained, then released, and then banned, and he finally left the country.

He was a reporter. That's just one concrete example that I remember, of a person who crossed the country, for example. There has been a number of such incidences. I think it basically says that you - what is happening, perhaps, with a little higher intensity in other areas - it does happen there, but low key in some ways.

J.F. Are people at all afraid to talk about the A.N.C., or has that all come out in the open down there - the congress traditions.

L.T. Ja, no - it depends at what levels, you see - like, for example, I haven't found - it's not easy, for instance, for people to talk, and depending on what you are talking about here (him) (712) but you find people who would talk about it, illustrating the (.....) (713) or the history and so forth, and - but that is - that will be mostly amongst people who are keen on developments that are taking place and so on, but also you do find talk about that as things are hotting up and so on, especially because what is happening is that, because of the state in a number of ways - the way in which it has thrust the question of the A.N.C. in almost every community (719) that you are seeing who have been A.N.C. or communists and so on.

That in itself has forced people who - those kind of reports on TV, on radio and often in the newspapers being quoted - that in itself has forced people to engage in those kind of discussions by way of looking at what is happening in their area, and whether or not the position of the A.N.C. would be the correct one or not.

You do have those kind of discussions taking place, but one can't - these are things that you would pick up as you go around.

J.F. Are the Government making the people communist - are you saying that doesn't scare them away from communism?

L.T. I don't think it has - it does work that way really. This is the way in which one sees things around here - like the typical response which I'm sure you'll be aware of, like the response of the - I remember (729) of Bayers Naude, when he was - they were trying to accuse them of having marched behind the banner of the communist flag and so on, and his point was that he was not aware that there was going to be that flag, or that it was there in the first place, but even if he knew, he doesn't see why that would make him not participate in a funeral of that nature, which inevitably would include everybody else, and he doesn't see how he would exercise his office if he was going to choose and be selective and that kind of thing.

L.T. I'm trying to point out that you have had reactions of people, for instance, saying that if this - my opposition to this means I'm that, then I'm O.K. - then that's O.K.

J.F. Say that again.

L.T. If opposition to apartheid means we are A.N.C. or we are communist, that's O.K. That's the kind of response that we have had. In other words, they have actually succeeded in hardening people in the way in which they have - I remember one - you spoke to Mrs. Lutule the other day.

One of the things that Mrs. Lutule has often said is the - he would attribute to God the fact that those people in the community, for example, who are not actively involved in the community struggles and so on, often find themselves being the victims of police harassment, and he says it's an indication that - it's an indication of how, in fact, the brutal activities of the police - how it is actually contributing towards radicalising those who are already involved, but also forcing those who have not been involved to get involved, because they, too, are not immune from their activities.

One classical example - I remember seeing one sister - one nurse being hit by a teargas cannister. She was standing outside her home, and what was interesting was that she was the kind of person who was very haughty and generally arrogant, and wouldn't hear a thing about getting involved in community struggles or anything like that, and her attitude was generally negative.

She was known like that in the community, but what was interesting was her response to being hit by a teargas cannister during that day. She promptly went into her home to - I think to get buckets of water and started giving the guys in the street, who were engaged in stone throwing incidences with the police - he was giving them water to protect themselves against teargas (Laugh) and that was an immediate kind of response to the situation, so I'm saying you - which does not necessarily mean that we can't make too many conclusions about that, but it indicates how the state's responses to the situation has been so - it has not necessarily affected those people, for instance, who are actively involved, but the way they - like the throwing of teargas.

I know of an old man whose granddaughter died of teargas fumes - very young kid. That old man does not forget the fact that, for example, community organisations in the area rallied around that family, and put as much pressure as possible on the authorities in a number of ways, although finally what came through was that the police denied that that kid died of teargas fumes and so on.

The report suggested that, no, it was of natural - it was a natural death, but that experience for that family was enough to change their perceptions altogether. Right up till now he's one of the most sympathetic persons in the community towards the struggle.

Not only sympathetic also, but he's also prepared to do anything to support any activity that is taking place in the area in regard to the community, so, whereas the

L.T. intention of, for instance, the consistent labelling of activists in the areas as being A.N.C. and communist is intended to create a bogey (779) of those organisations.

The effect, I think, is the other way round - it's the other way round. This is what one has seen around generally.

J.F. And is there any fear - you're talking about the A.N.C. - the way you would have had, say in the '60's and the early '70's, when even in the later mid '70's that it just means that you could get detained - stay away from it, you'll be in trouble - does it still really scare people - that you can think of getting involved or talking about it even - do you think that it's..

L.T. Certainly amongst the elderly - the more - amongst the elderly population the element of fear is very strong, especially because what has happened in the township, there has been a growth of, or rather a high infiltration of police informers, and people in that position are more or less very fearful of jeopardising their position, but what we have seen in a number of public meetings, for instance, that we have held around here, people have come out far more strongly in a number of ways, defiant of those kind of fears in a number of ways.

Songs about the A.N.C. and the works are almost becoming the order of the day, but in those contexts, in those situations, and also in other places in the community, but it's not something that is very easy to locate, except in situations where there are big mass rallies and things like those, where it comes through, militant but to the left (803) from the youth and so on. That's where it's even more widespread.

For example, amongst the students and the youth ranks there's much more bravado at that level than has ever been the case, for instance, in the past four, five years. You've never seen such a thing before.

J.F. Do you think that-the Government said in 1984 when they signed the Nkomati accord and then they attacked Botswana - they've told Lesotho to get rid of the A.N.C. - the ex-Swaziland is finished and all that - do you think people feel that this was a terrible defeat, that the Frontline states have let them down, that there is no hope of infiltrating any more or - how do you think people have felt about that?

L.T. That's a difficult question because - definitely amongst activists and suchlike people all over the place, certainly people felt that Machel had sold out and so forth. There was that feeling - a very strong feeling amongst a number of people all over.

Of course, you see, people do not - we must make a distinction between the way in which political activists would pursue : Correction : perceive things, and the way people generally perceive things, and people generally would regard, for instance, those kind of acts like the subsequent events after the signing of the Nkomati accord led to the massive taking out of A.N.C. people from Mozambique and so forth.

What people look at is that, in the first place - this is

L.T. how people - these people have gone out of the country, and what - the effect of this is, for them, that they get pursued even across that, - that thing in itself promotes - in itself has got - it sort of promotes sympathy with those who are under those circumstances.

Obviously, of course, there is no doubt that amongst political activists, people felt very disappointed with Mozambique in particular. There was a hell of a strong feeling against that sort of activity. That feeling couldn't be missed anywhere, in the black community in particular.

J.F. But even - say, not last year but now, do people think : Well, it's finished - the infiltration aspect is over - we're going to have to do it ourselves, or the A.N.C. is in a bad way - it's not going to be able to do (hero) (835) activity or - is there any feeling that things are bad for the A.N.C.?

L.T. No, I don't think - I don't necessarily think so. That disappointment was merely about the situation there in Mozambique - that in the overall this is bad. I don't think it - it reflected/a concern that the A.N.C. would no longer be able to do that. /for instance.

That presupposes, in a sense, that - you see, there is still that feeling of distance - of distance, as a result of the law and so forth, in the country. In other words, which says that the activities of the A.N.C., as seen by others within the country, that the disappointment is the way in which people in exile would be treated.

There is a distinction between perceiving what they are doing with the oppressives (851) there - what they are doing. There's that difference of looking at them. It would be a question of looking at it in terms of how are we going to respond to that situation, as it has happened in Mozambique. In other words, very concretely, what does it mean for us here in South Africa?

That would mean trying to go beyond the legal restrictions that if you say : This is bad; we are not going to be able to continue the struggle and so on, you're already seeing yourself as one, and which is not often an easy thing for anybody to do anywhere for the possible consequences, because where that has happened, you see, you have those kind of things springing up all over, and that is what it would make difficult for people to express themselves in those terms.

J.F. And, when I interviewed people a year or two ago (you say again 863) they always talked about leaving the country, and knowing peoples' brothers and friends had left the country - do people talk at all about staying in - about - there's just been a lot of stuff in the paper about local training (867 - lots of noise!) do you think that people still talk about so-and-so left the country, or is there a feeling that local training is the future?

L.T. No, both - it's happening that there is both. You do have people leaving, you do have people staying, and you do have those situations.

J.F. Do you think that having the whole escalation - I want to get back to the topic of non racialism - when you went back to the Freestate, and when you do go back, do you think people are more or less non racial than they were in the past?

L.T. The problem with the Freestate is that the - I remember, this was in discussion with some of the activists there. They were saying that it was difficult there, in the context, to talk about - it was one approach that they were talking about - that they felt that it was more going to be peoples' experience that is going to persuade them of the correctness of non racialism, but given the reality of the Freestate, that it was going to be difficult to have that as a subject, but the majority of the activists that I knew there would be people who are generally non racial.

If you are asking about the level of - most of the activities that are taking place there - organisational activities, I know them as being of those who are non racial in their approach, and again it goes back to what we said earlier on, that on the field, really, practitioners there would be people who are non racial in their approach, but ..

J.F. That's the activists?

L.T. Ja, ja - would be people who believe very strongly in non racialism, but now if - for people there on the ground, this is why - giving their experiences, or the reality there - that is not an issue.

You see, the - that becomes - the question of non racialism, for instance, would be far more sharper here, for example, in Durban, and say, in Cape Town than it would in some of the places in the Freestate, because there you've got a larger proportion of different races.

I mean, I don't know of any progressive white from Bloemfontein (Laugh) for example, so talking about that, you are really dreaming. To people who have not had that experience, you - it looks like it's in the realm of theory or history if you do that.

J.F. But is it still acceptance, or do they just say : Look, get out of here - I think B.C. is the way forward - I don't know what you're talking about?

L.T. No, no, no - as I said, the question of B.C. in the Freestate, as far as I know, in the areas where I have - there would be pockets of such characters, but they're few, and they are merely that - activists.

They don't have - they are not - it's unlike organisational. People in the unions there, in the Freestate, the only union activity in the Freestate, and people who are in the youth organising there, the majority of them, as I said, would be people who are non racial. That's my experience - I haven't ...

J.F. That's the activists that are non racial, but I'm saying just ..

L.T. In terms of the people.

J.F. In terms of the people, what does it mean to them - that it's a theory that they accept - that they heard of Joe Slovan - what does it mean?

- L.T. It's - no - it's not an issue - that's what I'm saying ...
- J.F. Just now has been discussed (918) (You're both talking together - can't make it out clearly!)
- L.T. It's not an issue for them at that point, you see, like - and they don't talk in terms of be - what they are confronting with there - questions of rent, questions of transport. Those would be questions around which you are discussing, so the question of non racialism would never really come into the picture there - into the picture of things, unless it becomes a political thing.

The fact that, for example, the UDF has the kind of support it has in the Freestate amongst the people, even beyond activists themselves, is an indication that people have got no problems with non racialism.

If it means those people are supporting the UDF because of the work that has been done by the activists, not necessarily because they, perhaps have discussed and accepted the principles per se, such as non racialism, then it means that, as I said earlier on, /for them, what is important at that point is the resolution of their problems, or alleviation of the problems they are confronting there, in one way or another. /that.

It is going to be when, politically, the question comes up - is thrust upon them, that they are going to see that - in our experience, you see, it is going to be out of that experience that that question will come up, and one wouldn't anticipate problems at that level, because the people with whom they are working are non racial in any way, and it - that would permeate through discussion and other ways, because in terms of experience, you see, for example, here, that question would be an issue if we are to meet say, another organisation around, say to discuss, let's say, the consumer boycott, and this organisation has got white members in it, that would - for an organisation that believes in B.C., or for people who are B.C. in the organisation, for them that would create an issue, and it would force that organisation to discuss it, but you wouldn't have that situation in the Freestate, because there aren't such situations where you have whites who are progressive who would find themselves creating those situations that may require a discussion of those things by the people themselves.

- J.F. Does it at all - is it at all relevant - is it at all a factor that their non racialism would have to do with not being B.C., but being a progressive philosophy that would be more economically based, or socialist or whatever - would they - the one way of understanding non racialism is that B.C. tends to be bourgeois and not dealing with - that's what some people say - that B.C. doesn't deal with an economic policy, like Diliza Mji, when I interviewed him yesterday, was saying that was the big problem - it was just capitalism with a black face - is that at all an issue - for them would they be progressive and the non racial wouldn't come into it because there are no whites and no Indians etc., or is that not true - are they....

- L.T. Ja, I think that would be more the problem, you see, because the very question of non racialism - the way it comes into the picture is who - what is the root cause of the problem, ...

L.T. and if, in the struggles that people have gone through, they have come to understand the root problem, not as being the white person or the person's race and so on, it is going to be difficult for that person to accept anybody who comes and tells them : No, the problem is the white person, you see, when, throughout his union activity, even against management, the lessons that he came to learn through his involvement in the organisation was that : No, the root problem is the relationships - the way in which only a few of these guys are distributing the wealth, and the way in which they are not - those in power are, again, question of distributing resources of the country unfairly.

That is the political lessons that they're going to come to grips with, and for them, I think, and this is not just from the head, this is experience - just people would never come - would never agree to propositions that : No, the problem is that we are black and they are white, because that's where - this is how, often, B.C. comes across, and this is how it has been expressed, in fact.

Their slogan says that : Black men, you are on your own, you see, but one people's experiences, like union - for example, the question of unions. Those people there go to - will go to conferences. This is where they are going to get the experience about having white people who are engaged in the struggle, who are strongly opposed to apartheid as they are going to be, because that is there - that is for - on a day to day basis, this is how we - not some intellectual question up there about why it's incorrect to only think that, as blacks, we are going to be the ones who will solve the problems without participation of whites and so forth.

It becomes intellectual in a sense, if it does not reflect itself in practice. If in practice, however, people begin to come to grips with the root cause of the problem, that is what literally removes the rug under B.C. perceptions, and - so this is why we are saying that it's - even if at the mo(ment) it might not be an issue per se, but it is going to be the kind of lessons that people pick up in their organisational activity as to what the root cause of the problem is - that it will be difficult for them to accept the narrow B.C.

J.F. O.K. - and do you think at all, that non-racialism on the ground in the Freestate or in a rural area has to do with seeing black police informers, and seeing that black doesn't mean good?

L.T. Ja, you see, even there - you see, what often happens is that those kind of instances illustrate the falsity of blaming the sort of ^{all the} problems on all whites, when the reverse, you see, is equally valid in a number of ways, and it is those instances of black informers, policemen, and community councillors themselves, is a problem that - within our own ranks we've got the same kind of problems, and what one is saying is that you - what you are doing there - the lessons that you begin to grapple with, that within the community itself you've got monkeys who, in the final - and you're going to have to deal with to resolve your problems. ~~All the~~

J.F. You've got what?

Monkeys (Laugh)

J.F. What do you mean?

- L.T. No, that's just what some people would refer to these community councillors, informers or whatever - people who unco-operate (031) basically.
- J.F. When did the harshness of the response to the community councillors start coming up - I think a lot of people have been taken by surprise in this country - even ~~TUMahole~~ (035) having unrest, ~~and to somebody it was like : Correction :~~ and suddenly it was like, where - you have to find the map - you probably could say : I knew there was rents, I knew there was COSAS (037) da-da-da, but the idea that community councillors would actually be killed, the idea that people would be burned and attacked - did you see that coming - do you think - where do you think that harshness is coming from?
- L.T. You see, you look at the 1976 experience, when the - in a number of places, the then urban bantu councils were attacked as being useless, and those guys were asked to resign, and some of them did resign, and in there - in that place, the Government came up with the community councils, which structures, in essence, were almost the same, and I think when the - when this reality dawned that, in fact, these are the same kind of thing, and coupled with the intensifying - with the economic problems that became exacerbated, say from '79 - '79 onwards there was the - I think economically this is when the Government began to withdraw subsidies for housing in a number of areas, and began to increase rentals - shooting up rents and so on, so that, whereas - I think it is a combination of those factors - the increase in the extent of the suffering, so to say, which led to radicalising communities, in dealing with those within the community who co-operate with the state, even despite the increasing bans (072) on the community, and I think that that is one area to which we can attribute the reason for the harshness with which they were treated, because - and not only there.

You see, it was not merely the increase in the - the way in which most of this - people in the structures began to enrich themselves amidst the poverty otherwise in the community, and I think that would have contributed towards the growing - the harshness which actually became the order of the day...

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- L.T. and I think it was - ja, even before I went to teach, ja, already political influences began to play their way out, in the sense that - that was around '76/'77, one had influences of B.C. which was current then - which was current then in universities and in schools.
- J.F. But where did you get the B.C. - why - while you were teaching?
- L.T. No, even just before that, already there were those kind of influences as well.

- J.F. Even in Biltfontein? (Repeat)
- L.T. Ja, I think that that was my first initiation (initiation) (011) *any political experience was through hearing some of the guys who had been to university and so forth, sort of expressing their - analysing the situation as being the one - the problem being whites and blacks. That's the sort of first political interpretation of the situation that I ever came to. *New sentence.
- J.F. Did that make sense to you? (Repeat)
- L.T. I think then one did not necessarily - it was not an intense sort of thing, and even when the - it made sense only to an extent then - in my understanding it was saying it is important for us to develop the, what they then called pride - it is important for us to begin to exert ourselves and - politically and so forth, so that what one is saying is that even when I later joined - I think after that year I joined - I started writing as a journalist for a paper in Bloemfontein, The Friend, and through some of the journalists who were working for it, who were involved then in the UBJ - Union of Black Journalists, those would be the kind of people who started, I think, in some ways, have some influence in my political understanding.
- I hadn't had, really, any other political experience other than that by then, to talk about.
- J.F. Growing up in the Freestate, had you ever heard of the A.N.C. or any of those historical developments in this country?
- L.T. Ja, I think - but it was vague. One used to hear about that, but it was vague. If you talking about the principles and so forth that it stood for, I was really vague about those, but one used to hear about those kind of things, and in a - what I do remember, for instance, was that some of the people, like in Bloemfontein, I remember, especially when I started doing my writing for that newspaper.
- One of the things that one planned to write about was the history of Bloemfontein. What struck me as interesting was that Bloemfontein was where, for instance, the A.N.C. was formed. I had come to know about that, and that a number of the streets in Bloemfontein were named after former A.N.C. leaders, like, the very first one Pixley KaSeme (042) there's a street named after him.
- There Hobosana...
- J.F. In white Bloemfontein? (Repeat)
- L.T. No, no, no - in the township, and ...
- J.F. In the township - what's the township of Bloemfontein?
- L.T. It's now called Mangawu (045) ja.
- J.F. So when you were growing up, you didn't know what ~~same~~ (046) Street was, but then you learned this is A.N.C. people?
- L.T. Ja, I later came to learn about - in fact, when I was still at school, when I somehow got to hear about the history

L.T. of the A.N.C. somewhat, I came to know that this is where it was formed and in fact, I recognised those names as being names of people who had been there, then on checking found that to be so (050) so, even as I came into contact with the B.C. kind of thinking, I was already aware of that, and - there was no way at that point, to me, to find anything in conflict with that, because I hadn't heard much more than what I knew the, for instance, about the A.N.C. - about it being a political organisation that was banned, which has gone underground, which is waging an armed struggle and so on, but in terms of the principles, really, one had no idea at all.

One never had any intense information about that sort of thing. One had bits and pieces of that information.

J.F. So then you were involved with UBJ or there were UBJ people?

L.T. No, no, I - UBJ - I think UBJ and other organisations were banned in 1977, and subsequently - I remember at some stage I was - this is one of the very interesting contradictions.

Around that time, I was also - I got interested in writing, in poetry generally, and one of the poets was - who struck me as very interesting, in fact, who now I still find very interesting. I haven't read him for a long time - is Denis Brutas (067)

I think he's staying in America now - he's in exile. His kind of poetry had a hell of a lot of impact on me in a number of ways, but I got interested in that sort of thing, and I came to know about Staff Writer (Rider) (071) - that's a guy.

Staff Writer is produced in Bramfontein there, so I made contact with those guys and started selling Staff Writer, and I also - when I was teaching, for instance, I organised some of the students to write poetry, and sort of - I used to, what you would call syndicate that sort of - get a number of guys to write poetry, put it together, send it through for publication, and myself, I must have written about two or so poems.

I wrote quite a number of others which I never sent through for publication, and - then I - and through that I attended a, I remember, a 1979 - '79, ja, a meeting of PEN - Poets, Essayists and Novelists -

J.F. At Wits?

L.T. At Wits.

J.F. I was there.

L.T. Were you there? With Nadine Godimer (082) - with Mafika - was there and - were you there - 1979?

J.F. Yes.

L.T. I don't remember you. (Laugh)

J.F. I was very new, but I had actually gone to Cape Town with the poets and writers who went to/Cape Town Arts Festival

/a

- J.F. with Mafiga and (.....)
- L.T. That's (.....) Matsimalawana (086) ja.
- J.F. Anyway - so how was that conference for you.
- L.T. And interesting - one of the things that I remember there, about that particular conference, was firstly that, here we were, by then, like this ideas of B.C. were there by then, and we were meeting there with Nadine Godima, Andre Brink and other people.

I remember Mafiga taking on Nadine Godima in some writing of hers, and he was actually saying to Nadina that : No, you are hesitant - you do not want to come out clearly that the analysis you are using is Marxist. Now, I mean like that, I didn't quite follow through that - and - in other words, what it amounted to me - my understanding then was that it sounded like this guy was accusing her of not being militant enough - that it's trying to cushion things, but - now, you see, one of the things that I couldn't reconcile, even then, in my mind, was I couldn't reconcile the fact that we should be meeting like that, discussing things like that, and at the same time, being of this sort of background, basically..

J.F. B.C.?

L.T. B.C. background, ja, because in a sense I didn't have any problems, for instance, with sitting in that sort of forum and discussing - sitting in that sort of forum and discussing issues.

As I say, again, through my being a member of - writing, having contacts with UBJ (.....)(108) I was, as a result, a founder member of MWASA, I think. Me - I mean no - Writers' Association of South Africa.

J.F. WASA?

L.T. It later became WASA, and I think that's - then I came here. It was the end of 1979, came to Durban.

J.F. Sorry, let me just understand - at that conference, what was the confusing part - the fact that you thought it was O.K. to be with these whites, and here was this black guy criticising the whites - what was the contradiction - what ...

L.T. No, what I couldn't reconcile is, how do these guys who proclaim B.C. reconcile their being in the same organisation, PEN, which included whites like Andre Brink and Nadina Gonima - how do they reconcile that with the fact that they are B.C., and I remember that later, in fact, I think - I don't know whether it was the same sort of debate or a later debate at a later conference, that they, in fact, had decided, with the support of Andre Brink and Nadina Godima, that perhaps if guys went on their own, and that PEN disband, that might be a useful sort of thing.

I've heard, I think, Sheena Duncan expressing that view as well, about B.C., saying that what is important is black unity. There's no reason why people should be squabbling and fighting each other about the participation of whites.

- L.T. What should happen is that they should try and build unity amongst themselves first, and thus they wouldn't exert themselves - their position per se. In other words, they wouldn't go out of their way to defend non racialism. This is what it amounted to me, too, as far as I was concerned.
- J.F. You thought that was good - you agreed with that?
- L.T. No, no, no - what I was saying is that I couldn't agree with that - there wasn't persuading - there was no persuasive arguments for me, to continue to maintain that position.
- I found it ridiculous actually, but it was hard for me to express. I couldn't articulate, for instance, one's objection to disbanding of PEN on the basis of creating a black sort of thing, even as a B.C. person.
- I'm trying to say that, what was happening in my mind, even as I was - because of my relatively little experience, and my having had contact with people who were B.C., and, in a sense, perhaps myself, also expressing myself in that sort of way, but there were a number of contradictions that I began to see, like my failure to understand how they could reconcile working together like they did, for instance, in PEN.
- J.F. So you thought they should disband?
- L.T. No, no, no - I was saying how - all along, how were they explaining that?
- J.F. That they stayed together?
- L.T. Ja.
- J.F. But you're saying you thought that the blacks should pull out at that time?
- L.T. I would have thought that, in practice, that is what it would mean, if you're a B.C. exponent.
- J.F. That you should pull out?
- L.T. That you wouldn't have that kind of thing - that was my (Laugh) view of looking at things then.
- J.F. So if they had taken a vote at that meeting, would you have said : Let's pull out - blacks should pull out?
- L.T. I don't know which way I would have voted, because there were a number of problematic areas then. I can't recall them and pin them down specifically now, but I do think - I could have easily have voted with them, because I think there is not - I mean not (156) out of persuasion per se, but out of thinking that, maybe because of political*infl(uence) (159) there was no way in which I could sustain the opposing view....
- J.F. Of non racialism?
- L.T. Of non racialism, even if I - because I hadn't - I had no experience of that.

J.F. Of non racialism?

L.T. No, no, no. *(159 - really)

J.F. You just knew whites were bad news?

L.T. Bad news straight (164) (Laugh)

J.F. Does that mean ...

L.T. Although differently - bad news, politically. One could identify a number of things that I could say : This is absolute nonsense, and - but in terms of now relating when - like/the way in which one related to some of the people that we worked for, for instance, we washed their cars there and so on, was - from my side (sight) (170- it wasn't - it was more of trying to come across as an equal per se. /I think.

Where one didn't have to deal with absolute racists the relationship were quite O.K., and, for me, that was no contradiction. I felt it was quite normal, apart from what I knew about whites generally, but I think the turning point came here, when I came to Durban. (Interruption)

J.F. So the turning point came...

L.T. When I came here and I made some friends. I came into contact with some guys, and - who were, in some ways, involved in community work, organising. Now, you see, the - for instance, my reason for - the other reason for - I looked at poetry for me as a vehicle for expressing political discontent - political aspirations.

I looked at it as one vehicle through which - even when I came here, I used to talk to people about the possibility of us coming together and doing something about opening a group - poetry group, which would come together - write poetry and, if necessary, plays and so on, but then I think what began to happen is that the people I met, themselves, were beginning to move towards/emphasis on working in the community. /an

In other words, the concept of saying : No, we've got to go out there and organise people about the problems that they are faced with. It is the moment we started that, and the moment we started getting into contact with other people who were similarly involved in that kind of work, that I think - even as I was staying here, I came here - because I had met some of the MWASA members at conferences and so on before, I became disillusioned, number one, with MWASA as an organisation.

*This was after it became a media workers association, the resolution was made that we should now begin to organise workers in the media industry, and I was working at Bona (207) Magazine as a journalist there, and I developed very useful relationship with people there and promised them that : No, we are involved in this kind of trade union and maybe you would be useful, and I - in some ways, I was not able to satisfy those people because of the problems here. *You see(205)

There we were sitting here as a group of people who intellectualise generally about things, and when it came to

L.T. doing the graph (216) there was nothing happening ...

J.F. Doing the what?

L.T. Doing work - like organising workers and so on - like right up till now - at that time I became disillusioned with that sort of situation - just come there together, have a meeting. After a meeting we go and have drinks and so forth.

Meanwhile, I had developed this relationship with these people. They were expecting to come back, sign them on in the union and (like work to 222) so when I found it was not quite working well through, I gradually withdrew from MWASA and started concentrating on organising in the area.

We started a youth group in Lamontville, where I'm staying, and through that, I came into contact with other people who were involved, for example, and, for me it was no problem really, in moving towards a question of non racialism.

I think one of the most persuasive arguments that I still think I hadn't come across, was Rick Turner's - was it - Rick Turner, ja. I think it's a book written by Rick Turner.

J.F. Eye of the Needle?

L.T. Eye of the Needle, ja, and there's a chapter there (that) talks about the importance of Utopian thinking. One chapter titled that, and its analysis of what the real problem is - the root so forth.

I think that was very persuasive - it moved me - firmly - I had no doubt about that. I agreed firmly with this guy (Laugh) and - so really it was no problem when - as a result of that. That was around those '80's - around '80 - ja, '79/80 - so - and, as a result of that - through that organisation we - there were a number of events to which we responded to, and came into contact with other people, and I - my move to non racialism - I'm trying to find any particular area that could have been much more significant than that, but I think already I was - by then I was - logically speaking, I had no problems with that aspect following that meeting, and of course, the moment one began to understand what is going to make people move and change their situation in life, it was clear that there was no way in which we could exclude the reality that we are all human beings, and secondly, even in terms of trying to alter the position in South Africa, that we are not necessarily going to be successful, even if we have to use, what one could call straight logic.

When you are young boys and you are fighting, almost what is second nature to you is that you want to - if a guy beats you, you want to go and organise more - more people to come on your side, and that's the kind of logic that would be there, though why it doesn't apply the other way round I don't - couldn't follow that through - that, in the same sort of spirit, it is necessary. We are all human beings, and we've got one problem we are facing here. What is the bloody problem with us coming together and sorting it out altogether? If you've got serious weaknesses - if any one of us have serious weaknesses or shortcomings,....

L.T. then we can find them in all of us, basically, and non racialism, for example, is not a denial of what these people often have said of the prominence of - that, of necessity, it's going to come inevitably, but it - also it has to be worked on consciously, of African leadership.

In other words, what was vaguely expressed and not deep enough in B.C., has much more meaning if we look at it from a non racial perspective, which says that your commitment, firstly, is to the wrong of the system, if one may put it that way, and therefore, what you need to do away with that particular system is, you maximise support and co-operation among all those who agree on the need to do that, and I think that when we went to the - our - to the Undicide (300) conference which - where we form*ours - attended the founding conference of the UDF. *I was (301)

I was actually in the commission that looked at the feasibility of the formation of the UDF as a front, and (I remember we discussed the question of AZA - B.C. organisations there, and even before that I remember when here, in Durban, people were organising anti side (309) - anti SAIC, the - I remember at a meeting we - at a MWASA meeting that we had had then, people were saying : No, we can't go to that meeting because there are going to be whites there and that kind of thing - participating in the discussion, and some of us argued that : No, we should go there, even if it means as observers - that's a very significant political issue in which, if we actually put on our effort as well, it's going to be useful, and of course, we did go there, but I don't think we ended up participating, for the reason that I said earlier on, that MWASA did not have a constituency, really, to talk about, and this is why - because of those political hang-ups about the participation of whites, it was an inhibition for some of the people to get involved, and I think, even by then, I already had relationships with quite lots of people who were non racial in their overall approach, and some of them were former SASO members as well.

They had a longer B.C. experience than myself and so on, so, in a sense, - as when I said, one has not found the experiences that we, as Africans, has gone through under white rule, as being sufficient grounds to then politically exclude every white - it's illogical - it doesn't make sense at all, and....

J.F. Did part of this come because of particular whites you encountered, or was it purely a theoretical understanding....

L.T. I think it was a combination of theoretical conviction, confirmed by practice. By that I mean through experience with whites - with working with whites. One was able, firstly, to identify the weaknesses that people had talked about, about the participation of whites, but also the strong points about that, in fact, are confirmed the position that : No, it was this position's correct.

- L.T. Like, it was a combination of those sort of factors.
- J.F. Why did you go to Durban, and when was that?
- L.T. To Durban - I was unemployed then because
- J.F. You lost your job at The Friend?
- L.T. The - no, no, I was working at The Friend there. I was still writing for The Friend, when a friend of my father's came to Durban, visiting his other friend, and he heard that there was a post at a magazine here. They wanted a translator, and ..
- J.F. (Can't hear 374)
- L.T. Ja, and I had wanted to get out of the place, basically - out of Bloemfontein. I was bored. I wanted to go out and meet people, and I think I did that (Laugh)
- J.F. So when did you leave Bloemfontein?
- L.T. I came here in October.
- J.F. Which year?
- L.T. 1979.
- J.F. And how long did you work - when did you start working at The Friend.
- L.T. No, I only worked for that - I started working there for that year, basically.
- J.F. Just '79?
- L.T. Ja - at some stage I worked for - after - I'm trying to find - '77 I was - no - '77 I was working as a general labourer at a wholesale ~~Fraser's~~ Fraser's Wholesalers in Bloemfontein, in their mens outfitting departments there. I was packing, shelving, and some part clerical job there, as well. ~~Fraser's~~
- They chucked me out, as well, there. They suspected I was agitating people there (Laugh) against the work committees and things there - '78, and that's how - that was '77, and I think, after that I went to teach in 1978, and after '78 I then joined The Friend towards the end of the year. I then joined Bona in Durban here.
- J.F. O.K. - and when you came to Durban, did you easily get to live in Lamontville - get a house and everything?
- L.T. No, no, no, I stayed - the person I came to stay with made the condition was very clear - I'm going to stay with him only.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

- L.T. Ja, on the fourth month, I then left that place where I was staying in Lamontville, to go and stay with a friend of mine from Lamontville who was teaching at Amanzintoti - teacher training college in Adams Mission, but while staying there I found a place in Lamontville again, where I'm still staying up to now.
- J.F. So then you were in Lamontville from '79?
- L.T. Yes, and then I - no, before I found a place there again I went to stay in Claremont for about a month. Some guy came from Johannesburg - from Pinoville (426) He was - some directed some agents - he had built himself a house in Claremont, and he was surprised by his builders.
- He had come for a holiday here, and they gave him the keys to his house, and he hadn't prepared - he hadn't organised someone to stay there, so it was quite a coincidence because he came to Bona there, and I happened to.....
- J.F. O.K. just for time, I shall just ask you how you got involved politically from there - had you really, other than the WASA experience, not been involved politically in the Freestate at all - not in any organisations?
- L.T. No, no, no, not in any organisations really, ja.
- J.F. You've never been detained or anything?
- L.T. No.
- J.F. So you came to Durban, and did you feel at all like Freestate boy and big city, or was it easy for you, or was there not much difference - was it quite a difference from the Freestate - Durban.
- L.T. Well, the - the difference was there, but I don't think it was a problem for me per se, because, even as I stayed there in Bloemfontein, I had travelled around a bit, to Cape Town, to Johannesburg, and it wasn't like a big - it wasn't a shocking experience ...
- J.F. But what about just the level of political activity - living in a...
- L.T. Sorry.
- J.F. The level of political activity, living in...
- L.T. Ja, that's qualitatively - that was the major sort of difference that - I think here - and then I just came here and, after some time, got stepped in heavy political activity, like I'd never done before in my life, basically, but that would be the major sort of difference, that I hadn't been involved politically before to the extent to which, for instance, I came to be here.
- J.F. And why was that, do you think?
- L.T. I think it must have been because of a number of - I can't single out any one particular reason, but I think it could have been because of, not only my own - when you begin to get to grips with the issues of the day, and the preparedness to do something about it is something that

- L.T. may not necessarily come about through your theoretical understanding or so, but I think there could have been a number of experiences that one had heard about, had seen, and had influenced one in the direction of being ready to begin to do something about the situation, and I think one is very sensitive to suffering that one sees around oneself, and that we have played one of the strong roles.
- Like, around '79 one of the things that struck me about this place, Durban, was that - I don't know - it had, in it, somehow, the, what I had recognised in my father - the coming together of two - what one could call two separate worlds. The part rural and the part urban, if one may call it so.
- For urban you'd identify education and those kind of things. For the rural you'd identify the heavy tradition, customs and those on that kind of thing.
- That coming together of those two worlds have always struck me as the mysticism that goes along with tradition and customs, for me has always been a serious problem, and also the realisation of the extent to which that has been used against our people.
- I think when one began to appreciate that more fully, I think it urged, as well, the need for one to want to get involved headlong and try, and in some ways alter that situation.
- J.F. So what organisations, just briefly, and for an overview, what organisations did you get involved with?
- L.T. As I say, I was a founder member of the youth organisation in Lamontville - it's called Malayo - it's short for Masimboni (something 478) Lamontville Youth Organisation.
- J.F. What's the first word?
- L.T. Masimbonishane (479) (I'm still not sure!) - it means Let's discuss issues - let's - ja, let's share ideas ...
- J.F. In Zulu?
- L.T. Ja, in Zulu - and from there on, through my involvement in MALIYO, we also, as I said, I was a founder member. I attended the founding conference of the UDF, and subsequently - that was around - I think it must have been '83, was also a founder member of the Joint Rand Action Committee, which became very - which spearheaded the rent campaigns of those years, around Durban here, and I think we - one also played some role in the discussions that led to the transformation of this paper - WUSA into a community paper.
- Of course, it's in problems now - one also played some role in that, and ja. By the way, I also worked for Dyconia for a while - research agency, as their communications organiser, but I didn't stay long there. They didn't employ any permanent, and the reason was that I wasn't doing my job sufficiently, because I was concentrating on organising outside the bloody communications job (Laugh) paper were loss (497)
- Literally, I do nothing else, really, apart from

- L.T. working on our organisational grounds (499)...
- J.F. Organisation...?
- L.T. Organisational work.
- J.F. What's this word - you say it?
- L.T. Graph - (gruff)
- J.F. How do you spell it?
- L.T. G r a p h - graph - meaning work.
- J.F. And so what jobs did you have - you went, from Durban - in Durban you went to Bona, and then what did you do?
- L.T. Subsequently I left them - I resigned there.
- J.F. Why?
- L.T. It was a shit magazine (Laugh) - I couldn't take its conservatism (506) any more, and ...
- J.F. Not exactly a non racial magazine (Repeat)
- L.T. Ja, it's very tribal. It's more - it's fashioned literally in the pattern of the S.A.B.C. - S.A.B.C. and TV as well - you've got black channel, you've got - no, not black channel - you've got Zulu, you've got Xosa, you've got that and that kind of thing, and it was very difficult to, within the constraints.

Like, one is not saying - merely dismissing, for instance, that kind of media altogether. You do often find opportunity to put through very progressive stuff, and you would be in a position to reach quite a number of people through it, because it was - by then, for instance, it was the largest selling magazine in South Africa, and if you could put through that stuff, progressive material in it on a regular basis, it could do a lot of work, but then I gradually became disillusioned because, even that was very difficult, and I felt I wasn't using my time fruitfully and I felt I must get out and do something much more progressive than that, and I subsequently came to do part time work here, and then I joined Dyconia, ja, and during my stay here I think I got quite involved.

I even went to Cape Town for a while with grassroots people there. That's where I got my experience of work with the alternative (522) media, and was very fascinating for me, and I think, as a result of that, we were able to contribute, as well, to Busa, as well, and in the number of workshops, promoting the idea of the alternative media, and actually setting up structures in the areas for its distribution and so forth - ja, but that's the kind of activity (528) ja.

- J.F. So have you had any paying jobs recently?
- L.T. Paid..

J.F. Jobs that you've been paid for.

- L.T. No, really, apart from - my - I live from whatever little I get from here - ja (Laugh)
- J.F. Do you have a family?
- L.T. Ja, it's a recent business, but (Laugh) just got married and a baby boy, ja.
- J.F. Is your wife working?
- L.T. Ja, she's a staff nurse.
- J.F. So does she kind of support the family?
- L.T. Well, ja, she does.
- J.F. How does she feel - is she involved politically at all?
- L.T. She's not, but she's got a healthy attitude - she's got no hassles.
- J.F. And are you on any specific committee of UDF or anything?
- L.T. I am the publicity secretary of the UDF.
- J.F. For Durban region?
- L.T. Natal region, yes.
- J.F. And then in CHARA (540) what position do you hold.
- L.T. I was playing more an organising role there than anything else - playing an organising role, but of course, also handling their publicity and research as well.

Like the formation for JORDAC itself happened through our contacts, for instance, with NIC organisers and so forth. That was one of the - our experiences of organisation, by then, was limited.

The NIC, by then, had - organisationally, was far advanced than we were, and I think we picked up quite a lot from our relationship, organisationally.

- J.F. We at?
- L.T. Sorry?
- J.F. Who picked up from who?

- L.T. No, I'm saying, for instance, myself, as a member of JORAC (JORDAC 553) and MALIYO as well. Quite a lot of our organisational experience we also drew from our relationship with the Natal Indian Congress organisers who we came into contact with on a number of issues and they shared with us quite a lot of their experience, organisationally.

Like the community research unit. They put us through the community research unit, which is a progressive unit in Durban at the moment, in that relationship, which has its overall thrust as being organisational - progressive organisational support base, so we picked up quite a lot in terms of organisational experience there.

- J.F. And have you ever been detained?
- L.T. No, really, I haven't been detained. There was only a couple of hours questioning, that was all. That was in Bloemfontein some time ago.
- J.F. And nothing here?
- L.T. Nothing here. They have always tried to come here - they haven't found - it's for a long time.
- J.F. O.K., now can I just go back and ask you a few things - when you felt that MWASA wasn't doing its work and you were pissed off about going back to the people and there was no real worker or intention (573 - having to guess a bit - you're not very clear) was that anti MWASA because that was a bunch of journalists and upper class, or was it anti B.C.?
- L.T. I was really concerned with doing some work, and by then, already I had developed very strong reservations about MWASA, particularly its outlook, and the problem became compounded by the work that was not being done, basically.
- There wasn't any work being done, and if one looks back slightly, you see, historically, to this movement itself - the B.C. movement around, it has always been superficial, and I think that is what contributed to my moving ...
- J.F. (Moving) what (587)
- L.T. That is what contributed finally to my moving that : No, no, no, I think there is something very seriously wrong with this - I had no doubt about that, so it wasn't necessarily - it was - I had told others : Correction : I had told - others said I had already developed ideological problems with that position, but also there was a problem of work as well.
- J.F. And can you spell your name for me?
- L.T. L e c h e s a T s e n o l i .
- J.F. Is that a Tsutu name?
- L.T. Mmmm.
- J.F. So did you grow up with your father being kind of traditional, or just : I'll just change

END OF TAPE.