

J.F. Can you just start by telling me where you were born and when and what your background was like and how you kind of see - explain how you got to be politically involved?

S.T. I was born on the 12th. November, 1938 in Springs in the Transvaal - how I got to be born there is another perhaps interesting question if one takes into account the question of migrant labour in South Africa - my father happened to have been working in the mines, and my mother went up from the Eastern Cape - that's where the family household was in - on the outskirts of King Williamstown, and she went up to and took up residence in Springs as a domestic worker, and that's how I got to be born in Springs.

Very early in life she had to go down to King Williamstown to the small village on the outskirts of King Williamstown, which is called Peelson - a small village called Peelson - that is on your way from King Williamstown to Queenstown, and that's where the - this place is situated - so I grew up there, I did my primary education there, and then after I had passed Standard Six I proceeded to King Williamstown proper, where I did my junior certificate at the Forbes Grant Secondary School, and that was between '56, '57 and '59, and it was a - a very important period for my political life because it was then that I came into physical contact with the ANC through my principal, Mr. Harry Mjamba, who....

J.F. Mjamba?

S.T. M j a m b a, who was the headmaster - I don't know what attracted his attention, but he called me one day into his office and introduced me to the ANC, that he would like me to be associated with this organisation. I was head prefect at the school, and some people of course attributed that venture, you know, to an article that I wrote in one school magazine on the question of African unity at a student - there was a student magazine, so I just wrote that article on the necessity for African unity, and the article itself and its content was not inspired by political consciousness as such, you know, more than I was worried about what I was witnessing, you know, in the township - people attacking each other and robberies and all that sort of rough life that one meets time and again in the township - this worried me even at that age, and I felt that there was something wrong in our entire way of life, that there were forces that were propelling in particular the African people to behave in the manner they were behaving, because I even argued in that small article that if you happen to be stranded at night and you meet a white person, you don't feel much, you know, in danger as it would be if you - you were meeting a black man at night, you know - wouldn't be very much prone to - to attack you or to rob you and all that sort of thing, so some people say that perhaps this is the article that, you know, prompted Harry Mjamba to approach me.

But all the same, I was following, you know, in the media the proceedings of the treason trial, and I was enamoured, you know, to such personalities as Chief Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela and the rest of the...  
(Interruption)

J.F. What your reaction was - what was - in '59 he called you?

S.T. Yes.

J.F. The organisation wasn't banned....

S.T. The organisation wasn't banned.

J.F. On the other hand was it a feeling that he wants you to get involved in politics and this could in any way destabilise your academic career - what was your response - what was the - or were you - was it - were you proud or were you a bit nervous or how did you feel when he brought this up - was it a surprise or was it expected?

S.T. Well, I - I was quite proud really because, you know, although I could not explain what was wrong, but I could feel even at the - at the time I was doing primary education, you know, I mean from my own personal experience, for instance, you know - there were days when I would go to school without having eaten in the morning, and then would go back home and find absolutely nothing to eat, and I would look around, you know, and look at my mother and helpless as she was, and compare my situation in my infantile mind, you know, with the situation of our kids, you know, in a white family, which was running a small shop around there - that they had everything, they were driven to school, and they had their meals - three meals a day - but I would go to school without having eaten, and even the - the - the clothes I wore - I never had a uniform - the clothes I wore - I never had shoes, I never had - I never had shoes until I went to - to - to - to secondary educ - to secondary school - even then only one pair of shoe - I never had underpants, I never had even a vest, you know, and I could feel that somehow there's something wrong somewhere, you know, and why should this be my lot and the lot of other kids, because I was not the only person, you know, who was experiencing this type of life, you know - somehow, but I couldn't explain it, but I felt that, you know, there was something wrong with the political set-up in the country, though I would not be in a position to define it articulately, as I subsequently did, you know, in - in - in following years, but this sense, you know, that the society was a bit - I mean was abnormal, you know, in which I was growing up, that there was this disparity between white and black in the country.

I could even feel it, and not out of being politicised but out of my sheer experience, you know, of life, you know, you see.

J.F. Was it a sense that the whites were oppressing you, was it - would you have seen it as whites were the negative force at that stage?

S.T. I saw it simply, you know, in the sense of whites being oppressors and being a privileged group, having everything that they wanted - that's the feeling - I mean that's the sense I had even at that time - I mean even I remember at one time there was a - a topic in a - at school, you know, among Standard Six students, you know - what would have been the position in South Africa today had Jan van Riebeeck not landed in Cape Town in 1652 - would we....

J.F. Who (?)

S.T. Had Jan van Riebeeck not landed at Cape Town in 1652 - would we have been where we are right now - was it to the benefit of the African people that the - the whites landed and settled in South Africa - and I always held - I held the view I mean that I - I could not see it as something positive, because where are we right now - we are calling them baases, we - we - we - we have no land, we have no motor cars - look at the classrooms we - where we are being taught and compare them with their class - such basic things were classrooms and whatnot, and the way they treat us, for instance, when you go to the shop - you get first to the shop, you want to buy something, and then a white person cuts in, and then he stops everything and attends to the white man - somehow there was, you know, even at that very early age in my life this feeling that South Africa is an abnormal society, but I - I had no - I could not explain it, you know, and - to anybody - I was a rural boy initially - I mean essentially, and not acquainted with - with the politics of the ANC - I don't know.

J.F. So when he spoke to you about the ANC, had you not had contact before of the ANC - what had the image of the ANC been to you - was this an organisation that was going to get rid of the whites or what - did you have any sense - when he said : I want you to get involved - what did you know about it before, what did you think he meant at that stage?

S.T. I mean what brought me to know about the existence of the ANC was the treason trial, and I was reading about it, you know, from a Xhosa newspaper, Imvo - Imvo Zabantsundu, which was giving extensive coverage of the treason trial and....

J.F. Imvo- what's the rest of it?

S.T. Imvo Zabantsundu, which is (?) African Opinion - this magazine - this newspaper which was founded in the - about 1857 by Prof. (.....) you know - ja, so it was a popular paper at that time amongst the rural community, you know, the rural people....

J.F. Just say that other part of African Opinion, Imvo....

S.T. Imvo - that is opinion - Zabantsundu - Z a b a n t s u n d u - that is...

J.F. African Opinion.

S.T. Ja, the views of the - literally the views of the African people - so....

J.F. So you'd been following that treason trial - you knew there were whites in the ANC, because there were people like Slovo and Helen Joseph in the treason trial, or did that escape your attention....

S.T. It never escaped my attention at all, and I - I had read, you know, previously because I - I - I - I liked even at that age, you know, to read...

J.F. I guess what I'm trying to get at is what the perception was of the ANC before this teacher brought it to you - I don't want to draw exclusively on the race issue - what I hope emerges is understandings of race and class - I don't think this book is supposed to get all involved in what do white people mean, because it's also the fact there were Indians in the treason trial and Coloureds - it wasn't just an African National Congress - it involved the Congress Alliance and all that - but from your perspective of someone down in the Eastern Cape in a deprived background who didn't - just read about it in Imvo - just interested in what your perception was about this organisation - was it an organisation that was out to kill whites or get rid of whites and install blacks or how did these Indians and whites that were in it fit in and - can you just speak a bit about what the perception was on the ground for you before you actually joined the ANC, and then as you got involved?

S.T. I was influenced by a lot of factors about (?) my perception (.....) whites (?) who - whites and Africans and whatnot, that you - I mean even at that early age, you know, I believed that one can never talk in terms of any homogeneous racial entity in South Africa - you could not see whites as a homogeneity - as a homogeneous entity, totally bad as a group, much as you - you would not see blacks in that category.

I was influenced by my favourite, you know, African writer, Mahayi, you know - when I read his short stories exactly on this - on this very issue - how an African, you know, was caught without a pass by a white policeman, and he explained what had happened and what - how he happened not to be in possession of his - his pass, and then the white man said : Next time you must make sure that you carry your pass along - and then the - the black policeman insisted that : No, baas, that's - I know these are my people - he's telling lies about his having forgotten his pass and having lost it, let's lock him up, you know, so -

S.T. And Mahayi's conclusion of course in the book was that, you know, whites you know, must not be seen as a - a group that is condemned to - to - to - to evil as a group as such, much as blacks cannot be seen, you know, as a people that is angelic, humane and whatnot, all - with all the good attributes that one can give to - to any person, you know - so this had influenced me, and in my daily interaction with - with the shopkeepers' children and whatnot I came to realise I - I've seen even at that age, you know, bad black people and good whites, you know - had seen bad whites and good whites, good blacks and bad blacks, you know, so I grew up, you know, under such an understanding of things.

So when I was reading about the - the - the - the composite nature, you know, of the treason trialists themselves, you know, the - the - that never struck any strange note in me, and I admired those people who were there, those white people who were arrested, you know, for having identified themselves with my cause, my suffering, for having said this is bad, we must try to correct it, you know, and lead a better life than this one, that this is terrible (Interruption)

J.F. How do you spell that name Mahayi - M q?

S.T. M q h a y i.

J.F. What's his first name?

S.T. Shanwell - S e k - he's now popularly known as S.E.K. Mqhayi - he's a popular writer.

J.F. Which you read in Xhosa?

S.T. In Xhosa.

J.F. And were - there was actually a story - was it one story that you read that referred to this black and white policeman or was he generally putting across that line, or was it one particular story?

S.T. It's not one particular story - the title of the book is - what is the title of the - short stories but on this theme, you know, because he wrote the book round about 1936, you know, when he wrote the book and he - he was trying to influence, you know, African opinion generally, you know, that we in - in - in our anti-colonial struggle we must expect to find allies even within the white group, the white community, much as we should expect to find enemies to our cause within the black group itself, which might align itself - I mean sections of it which might align them - themselves with the - with the - with the - with the colonialists themselves that - the white settler community in South Africa - it's a series of stories - I don't want to take much of your time (?) but there are many more interesting ones, you know, along the same theme because - I wonder if I should tell you - should I carry on telling the stories - the title of the book is Donjadu - that is the escapades of this fictitious character, Donjadu - he's a rural - he's a peasant fellow and all - he met all these problems, you know - it's very, very much interesting, you know.

Now one - this is one other story in it - the other story is one of the same fellow who met this policeman, this - and the white and black policemen and the white policeman pleading (?) that O.K., you can go, but next time be careful, and the black policeman said : No, we shouldn't (?) I know them - these are my people, you shouldn't treat them like that - they are very cunning - let's lock him up.

S.T. And then ultimately the white policeman prevailed and this fellow went away, you know, with this feeling that I - at one time I thought that, you know, all whites are satanic, but today I've learned a lesson - and then as he was proceeding he - he - he - he - he met two ostriches fighting - you know, he was - he - he was a peasant fellow - he - he's going out to the white areas to look for work - now he's meeting all these experiences on the way to - he's a migrant, you know - he's trying to find his way to Cape Town to - to find a job, you know, and then he's been lost and there's no way of surviving in the countryside - one has to go to the white man's place, as they called it in those days, you know - that is the cities, you know.

So he's walking on foot and there's no transport available for him - he's traversing farms belonging to white farmers, and he meets now - from this particular experience he meets two ostriches which are fighting, and these ostriches (.....) feathers in blood, you know - two bull ostriches fighting, and then immediately he approaches and then they stop the fighting and confront him and they chase him - he runs away, and as he runs and he meets a - a fence, you know, which is separating one farm from another, and then he jumps over this - over - over this fence and then the ostriches couldn't jump and they just stood around there and gazing at him, but quite furious, and then as he - he was quite tired and he was lying there tired really, he was saying to himself : Good me (?) if only our own people could realise the importance of forgetting about our petty squabbles in the face of a public enemy as we are facing right now - that is Hertzog - this was the era of disenfranchisement, the era of the notorious Hertzog bills, you know, the so-called - you know the Hertzog bills 1935, '36, all those things - you know about those things - and these are the bills that had occasioned the - the - the all African convention in 1936 in Bloemfontein - remember that?

Now he was making a comment about that because even in the African leadership there were petty squabbles, and even at the convention itself there were problems, divisions and all that sort of thing - now he was commenting on that now in this particular short story in this - in this book, Donjadu, you know - this is what Donjadu comments now when he sees that even ostriches - this is our - if our own leaders could copy the example of these two ostriches, who are able to forget about their trouble and their quarrels when they see a stranger - a stranger and an enemy and forget about their fight - if only we could do that and sink (?) all our petty differences and behave like these two ostriches behaved, you know - that's what he was putting across, and from there now, you know, because he jumped over that fence and he was jumping now onto somebody's - a white farmer's farm - and he proceeded, tired and a bit hungry and all that sort of thing, you know, and inadvertently he approached the - the farmstead, and as he was approaching it two huge bulldogs came down rushing on him, you know, and he ran for his dear life, you know, and they were chasing him, these two dogs, you know, and as one was just about to catch up with him, you know, the - the - the owner, you know - he's a white man, you know - felt that no, the - there was nothing he could do to restrain - otherwise (?) they were going to maul him, you know - so the best thing was that he must shoot the dog in front which was about to catch with him, and he shot his dog - other (?) dog - his own dog to save him from being mauled by - by the bulldogs - and then after that of course he took him to the farmstead and gave him milk and bread - sour milk and bread to eat, you see, and then again the point was driven home in his mind, that all along the line I have been under the impression (?) that these white people are bad but it's not - you know, not all of them are bad, you see, from this this is the lesson that I am drawing from this particular experience.

S.T. So this book really, you know - I mean even when I was teaching, you know, I used to refer a lot to - to it to my kids, you know, in school that this is a book worth reading and it's a very good book - it was true to life - very much scientific (?) realistic and all that sort of thing - that was the position.

J.F. And was this author Mqhayi - was he political himself?

S.T. Mqhayi, he's a - he has a - you know, the - the (.....) national anthem - the national anthem, Nkosi Sikelela Africa, was composed by Sontonga, but Mqhayi put on the - the - the last verses of the - of the national anthem - he was quite a very good fellow, but he was never a member of the ANC but he was a, you know - a - an artist, you know, who portrayed the - the - the feelings of his people and who - who tried to portray, you know, the struggle as it advanced in the '30s and '40s - so he was very much influential to a very large extent in shaping my own understanding of the situation of white and black in South Africa - and then of course I read about what was in the (?) - in - in - in - in the treason trial itself, you know - that was my - my sort of, could I call it perhaps remote control, you know, now with - with the politics of the ANC, because I had not at that particular moment met any - any leader of the ANC until I got to Forbes Grant Secondary School, where I met my headmaster, who was a member of the ANC, to whom I'm very greatly indebted, because this is the fellow who said to me that you have a right to life - this is your country - and you have an organisation now which is spearheading the struggle for a better life in South Africa for democracy and non-racialism in - in - in your country.

J.F. Did he say non-racialism?

S.T. He said multiracial society in South Africa - that was the concept that was prevalent at that time, you know, in the '50s - and that there was a difference between me and the - the - the white students at Dale (?) School - the Dale was our counterpart, a white counterpart in King Williamstown - it was Forbes Grant for Africans and there was - there was Dale College, which was a white school - he said there was - there's no difference - anybody who tells you that there's a difference between you and a white person is misleading you - and he would relate how at one time they used to conduct classes - you know, multiracial classes at the technical college in King Williamstown for both black and white, and how black students acquitted themselves quite beautifully, you know - so he - he was a - that type of man, you know, who would take his time to explain in minute detail concretely the (.....) concrete examples, you know - live (?) there, Dale College, here Forbes Grant, and both of you - you students here have two legs, students at that have two legs, and the question of - of pigmentation of one's skin is not the issue - so he called upon me to - to join the ANC, and he gave me a lot of literature which opened my way to where I am today....

J.F. What kind of literature?

S.T. Books for - I mean literature, ANC literature like New Age - he used to buy it for me - I couldn't afford to buy New Age - and Fighting Talk, which was edited by Ruth First - and in the main these were the two publications, you know, that he was - he was buying for me, and I would always look forward, you know, to a Thursday, when I would get a copy of a New Age from him and he would come to me and say : Read and acquire knowledge - that was he used to say - read and acquire knowledge - and I was a prefect at the school at the time, and just about that period, you know, the PAC broke away from the ANC and there was one friend of mine who was a - who - who was a - a.....

J.F. You were saying that this guy fell in love with the philosophy of Africa for the Africans.

S.T. Africa for Africans, Europe for Europeans, India for Indians, and I remember we had - we had gone to school, you know, and we - we were preparing for our monthly test, you know, when we got to a point where we could no longer continue - everybody - and it was at night, you know, evening classes - we could not go on with our academic work - we - we wrangled and we - we quarrelled and - you know, on this issue - nobody could carry on at all and everybody became involved - I was arguing very much, you know, strenuously that PAC had no reason to break the only African organisation in the country now which was spearheading the struggle for democracy in our country, and that the concept of Africa for Africans was an illusion - that the whites in South Africa are no longer - can no longer be seen to be - to be having their home in - in Holland, as he was alleging - that the Netherlands will have to - to call them back to where they originally came from - that is the Dutch people - I said that was absurd, it's impossible, it can't happen - of course I did not have at that time, you know, a strong political argument but I was arguing merely from the ordinary common sense that I mean Holland - I mean Netherlands cannot - it's not in a position to - and these people have been here from - for more than 300 years, and whatever ills, you know, they are meting (?) are against us - those ills are meted out by people who are South Africans - we shall have to live together with them in South Africa - what we have to correct is their outlook, their racial approach to - to the whole South African situation - that what is wrong with them, but as white people personally I have nothing - I don't see anything wrong with them, much as I don't see anything wrong with my being black and we - we can live together in South Africa, black and white on - on equal basis, and I was pointing out the example of outstanding people like the Slovos, the Helen Josephs, the - and even the Father Huddleston, who was awarded Isandhlwana (?) by the - at the - at the congress of the people in 1955, because by that time I already knew that there was the Kliptown congress of the people in which Father Huddleston was decorated with the highest honours by the African people themselves, not the ANC - that's how I understood - it was not the ANC that bestowed the honour on him, but the people of South Africa.

So we broke friendship with that - we were very close - we were staying in the same - in - in - in the same dormitory with him, you know, but from that day right up to the present moment I never (.....)

J.F. That was when you were still at high school?

S.T. That was at secondary school.

J.F. At Grant Forbes Grant?

S.T. At Forbes Grant Secondary School - so Mjamba kept me company politically (?) and until I passed my GEC - I went for my matric in East London now at the Welch High School in East London - that's where I did my matric, and I was still in touch with the movement, and when I completed my matric in 1961 the ANC was a banned organisation - it became very difficult for me to locate the ANC underground - I was very much - nobody knew me in East London, you know, and I lost contact with Harry Mjamba, my principal, and I did not know the leadership of the ANC in East London - the only person that was publicly known to me at that time that we knew as an editor in the Eastern Cape of New Age was Govan Mbeki, so as a small group of young fellows in 1961 after I had matriculated, you know, we tried to make contact with him in PE until we were referred to some comrades who were operating underground who were installing the ANC underground in - in - in the border region - we - they -

S.T. We - we were directed from PE, you know, to contact those people, and I contacted them and I - I was never recruited into the underground of the movement - I searched for it - I had to find it, you know, because I was convinced that I had to do something about the whole thing - as a student, you know, at Welch, you know, in East London - East London was one of the cities in South Africa which was terribly insofar as the implementation of the pass laws was concerned - this endorsing out of people, you know, irrespective of whether somebody has a family or not, and the question of people queueing up at the pass office from four o'clock in the morning - the office - the pass office opens at eight o'clock, but if you want to be quite well ahead you had to be around that place at about four o'clock, winter, summer or not - raining or not - you had to be there.

As I was going to school now I had that habit of our going for early morning studies four o'clock - school was not far away from home and I will go and study, because it was impossible to study in a small shack where I was living - myself, my father, my sister, my younger brother in a one roomed - smaller from there to here, you know, at the back yard of a stand in Duncan Village (?) in East London - it was terrible and I knew this is bad - that this is not how whites live in the country, and that we could live better - we could have a more decent house, you know, in a more democratic South Africa - in a South Africa where we are free, you see, and from there it was difficult for me to study there - I would not study.

So I had at four o'clock in the morning to wake up to go straight to - to - to school, and I would meet these people queueing up at that time, and at seven o'clock I would go back home, you know, to go and wash for the regular classes in the morning, and I would - I would see, you know - I would see these people there, you know, organi - even when I come back and my - my heart would bleed when I - when I - when I see these people - at that time, you know, I had my idols - Chief Albert Lutuli, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu - these were my idols, you know, in the - in the ANC - I had no time for Sobukwe and the rest of the gang in the PAC even at that stage - but these were my idols - so I resolved to look for the ANC - to find it and to be a component element of its underground contingent, until I did find it and I served at a very - I was 24 years when I was appointed now to the regional command because after 1960 when we were (?) underground the country was its own (?) - not provincially as it was before the ban of the ANC, you remember, but now it was regionalised - it was the border region, which stretched from Pedi to the Transkei - there was the Eastern Cape region and so on and so forth (.....) throughout the country - so I served in the regional command of the border region of the ANC underground - that was from 1962 - and then in 1963 I was arrested in June on the eve of - on the 24th. June on the eve of June 26th., and I was detained for three months under the 90 day law, which had become operational at that time, and it was a - a very sad experience - I thought that I would not be arrested that early, you know, in my membership with the ANC underground, and I was working like a Trojan knight, you know, for the stay-away on the June 26th. and which was coinciding - you know, June 26th. was going to be stay-away (.....) it was the case from 1950, remember - that June 26th. not ordinary - it was not just a question of observing June 26th., but it was a day of action - we stay at home on June 26th. - that's the way we used to observe it, you know - so I personally wanted to see it a success in East London, you know, and it was coinciding with the official opening of the ANC office in Algeria in 1963, and we were distributing a leaflet on the 24th. only for the stay-away - a leaflet entitled Let's die a little - that inspired me - that is - the - the ANC title of that leaflet was a quotation from Ben Bella's speech - he was the president of Algeria at that time - Let us die a little, referring to South Africa, you know - Let us die a little - so we....

J.F. Let us (?) sacrifice?



S.T. Ja, sacrifice - and (.....) before on the 24th., you know, and I'd just come from the distribution of the same leaflet myself - I was in the regional committee - I was not supposed to have done that job myself, but I did go out and carried leaflets - supposed to have been done by the various volunteer corps in the township,,but I made a point that I had my - my own particular areas where this leaflet is going to be distrib - and I chose the city - East London city - leaflets were - the leaflet was essentially calling for a stay at home, but I felt even then that this leaflet must reach the white community and I - I agitated against its translation into Xhosa, you know, that the whites must also hear what the message of the ANC is, and it was in simple language - so I took it to town myself....

J.F. In English?

S.T. In English - I distributed it in - in the white suburbs of East London for the whites to know - I felt that the white people must know and they must stay at home too with us - that was my feeling....

J.F. But did you have any hope that any whites would stay home....

S.T. I had no hope, but I wanted them to understand that the struggle going on in the country - I wanted them to - to - I - I wanted - I believed that we could have even in a conservative white city like East London, you know, at the time, you know, the Helen Josephs, we could have them too in East London - if we could have them in Pretoria, Jo'burg and elsewhere - why democrats (?) throughout the country - why can't we have them in East London and - and if we don't have them then I - I believed the - the failure was with the movement in East London and I - I believe that not - that it's not that perhaps we can't win some whites over to our side - that was my outlook - so that's what I went, but I was arrested when I came back as I - I was going home to sleep at half past twelve I was arrested.

J.F. So had they known you'd distributed those pamphlets?

S.T. They did not know me to have distributed the pamphlets, but they knew me to have been a member of the regional committee, the regional high command from....

J.F. With MK (?)

S.T. That - that was ANC - the MK was operating apparently (.....) regional commander - there was the ANC regional command.

J.F. So it was the parallel?

S.T. Parallel structure - and it happened that there was a snooper within the ranks of the high command who told them who is who in the regional command - otherwise there was no way in which they could have known that I was a member now because I was young (?) and - and more of a sportsperson than anything else - I liked rugby and - I liked my rugby and, you know - so I believed that they would go away with the impression that no, that's a - purely a ruggerrite and not a politician as such - that was the impression I had....

J.F. Purely what?

S.T. A ruggerrite - a rugby player, you know, but I was arrested - for three months I was detained in Cambridge in East London, and instructions at that time for any underground operative was that if you are caught you give the police your proper name, your proper address and your proper place of employment and you stop there - you don't answer any further questions - and that gave us hell, you know.

S.T. What is your name - I'm Stephen Tshwete - where do you stay - No. 2 Martin Street, Duncan Village, East London - where do you work - I'm working at A.J. North & Co., Westbank, East London - do you know ANC underground structures - I'm not prepared to answer any further questions - those were strict instructions, you know, that we had, you know, when we went underground with the ANC, and I would not deviate from them - they gave me hell, tortured and - until ultimately they transferred me from East London to Bongco (?) a small town, you know - you know South Africa - a small town just before you get to Queenstown - it's a farm town - so that's where I was - I spent most of my three months in detention alone - that's where I lost my hair - I don't know what happened, you know, my hair gone - I was starved there, deliberately starved, you know - my - I lost my hair, I lost, you know, weight and I was locked up for two and a half months without - in a - in a single cell without seeing the sun for those two month - two and a half months - no sun - the other half month I spent in East London (.....) so three months (.....) in detention, solitary confinement - and in October I was formally charged with furthering the aims of the ANC and 16 counts of sabotage - 13 counts of sabotage and three counts on furthering the aims of the ANC - and I remained - have been (?) awaiting trial two years (?) now from that time up to February, 1964 when I appeared in the Supreme Court of South Africa and our trial - we were five of us - the - the trial took four weeks in Queenstown, and when we are supposed to - to go for our verdict in Grahamstown, you know - we are tried in Queenstown, but we are going to go for our verdict in - in - in Grahamstown.

On our way to Grahamstown we capsized with a police van - two policemen died in that accident and I survived without a - a single injury - one of our people broke his back but he - he did not die - and then we had to go back - we could not stand - I mean we could not return to court because of this injury, so we had to go back again to Queenstown after two weeks, and then it was in Queenstown that we were sentenced - one of our - of my co-accused was sentenced to death - that was (?) Washington Mpumelolo Bongco, sentenced to death.

J.F. Tell me his name, Washington?

S.T. Mpumelolo - M p u m e l e l o - B o n g c o - he was sentenced to death.

J.F. Sabotage?

S.T. Sabotage - he was found guilty on all 16 counts - I was found not guilty on 13 counts and convicted on the three remaining counts - five years, five years, five years each, so I had to serve 15 years on Robben Island.

J.F. That was from '64 by then?

S.T. '64 to '79.

J.F. And did Bongco get hanged?

S.T. He got hanged with Mini - you must have read about Mini.

J.F. Was Mini with your trial?

S.T. No, Mini - we were tried simultaneously but separately - Mini - Mini and (.....) were in the - in - in the Eastern Province high command, PE - we were in the East London high command - they were tried in Aliwal North, just a city in the next town from where we were being tried - we were tried in Queenstown and they were tried in Aliwal North, almost about the same time.

J.F. And tell me that small town near Queenstown - I didn't get the name of that again.

S.T. Aliwal North.

J.F. No, the one you were in - the small one Gom....

S.T. Komha - K o m g h a - that's where I was detained.

J.F. Just before we go on to talking about the Island - can you tell me why do you think it was that the PAC point of view held no attraction for you - if people said : Look, we'll get further on our own or the whites are trying to manipulate the struggle you - why do you think it didn't sway you?

S.T. It was based on hatred, and falsely so too, because I mean they saw the white people as a - a block that is condemned to hell, and the black people as a block that was consigned to heaven, you know, and from practical experience, just common sense, it's not like that, even before I (.....) even deeper, you know, I knew, you know, as I was saying, from my own practical life, you know, I don't know if I could cite some of these things, you know - you know, I'm coming from a very poor family - very poor family - even how I got to school it's a miracle - at times I - I wonder, you know, how I - I afforded it, you know - I couldn't afford classes at an early age - I should have had classes quite early in life - I could not - that's why today I'm wearing these heavy lenses, you know, you know - and we had no cattle - I - I'm from a - a - my father was a man of the two world (?) you know, peace and - peasant worker.....

J.F. Was what?

S.T. A peasant worker - he worked, you know, and then the same time he had a small piece of land, four acres, where he was ploughing and supplementing his wages - very meagre wages and family of five - I'm the eldest....

J.F. But he initially had been a migrant worker, you said.

S.T. He came back - he came back from - from - from the Reef to - and then worked in East London, you know, at the - he worked in East London in a factory which was manufacturing cans and spoons and tanks, you know - these storage tanks - and he was getting only two pounds a week, supporting a family of five - we wouldn't have survived (?)

J.F. Which were you in the - were you the eldest or....

S.T. I'm the eldest, you know, and so he had to - he - I - he had to sacrifice (.....) so they had no - that no, O.K., let's (.....) him to go to school, and then when he finishes if he's successful and then he can get a good job as a clerk or a - perhaps if he - we are lucky enough he could even be a teacher, and then he will assist now in the education of the other four mem - siblings (?) - that was the strategy of the old man - it never worked out, because when I matriculated I was already involved in politics, you know - I remember I was offered a job as a clerk at the Native Affairs Department in East London - I declined the job on the grounds that at (?) the Native Affairs Department was responsible for the persecution of our people in the country - it was responsible for, you know, the bantustans of the country to a certain extent to (?) bantustans - I mean they were the bant - the - the - this Native Affairs Department was a very instrumental weapon in the hands of the apartheid regime.

I have talked against the Native Affairs Department - I could not see myself just for the benefit of getting wages from there, working in that department - I quarrelled with my family - at one time I was even chased away from home because my mother in particular (?) saw me as very much unco-operative, and after so much sacrifice, you know, sending me to school, after I had matriculated now I was refusing to go and work, and for some -

- S.T. I was not working at all after I had matriculated because I - I - I - I worked for A.J. North after matriculation.
- J.F. Doing what?
- S.T. After I had matriculated.....
- J.F. Doing - what did you do for A.J. North?
- S.T. I was doing dispatch work in the firm - it's a cosmetics firm doing these things - nail polish and cosmetics and all that sort of thing - working in the dispatch as a clerk (?) - but as I was working there I was (?) - my principal was a white man, van Heerden, at Welch High School - I was a head prefect too there, you know - he called me to take the job of a clerk at the school, so the job appealed to me - it would save me transport cost, you know - every day I - I would travel long distance to work, but this was nearby my place so I accepted the job - I worked as a clerk there, but after six months I was fired - I don't know if I have to explain what happened to my getting fired - should I?
- J.F. If it's - if you think it's important.
- S.T. Ja - what happened was that the department of Bantu Administration and Development, as it was known then, took our only playground (.....) Park in East London, which was named after the founding member of the ANC, Dr. (.....) who happened to have been coming from the border region - he was a founder member of the ANC - so they came with a piece of legislation to the effect that (.....) Park will no longer be open to other racial groups other than Africans - Indians must find their own ground, and no club with a mixed membership will be allowed to play at (.....) Park - and they dissolved a progressive East London sports board, which we had created ourselves, and in its place instituted, you know, what they called the East London Bantu Sports Board - I was a delegate of my club, the (.....) Football Club to the union, you know, which is a - an overall board for all clubs - I argued against the constitution which was being introduced at the instance of de wet Nel, who was the minister of Bantu Administration and (?) Development, and I said that playing rugby for me it does not mean playing rugby even under these horrible conditions - this new constitution that they're coming up with now which is regulating our sport on racial grounds is in line with the general policy of the country and I am not going to be part and parcel of that, and so I am going to pull out my club from the (.....) Rugby Union if this union endorses this constitution, and we were defeated by one vote and the constitution was adopted and I withdrew my club.
- J.F. It was called Gombura?
- S.T. G o m b o Rugby Union.
- J.F. So did - you said you taught at one stage - was that before you went?
- S.T. No, that was later - no, that was after I had come from prison.
- J.F. So at that stage you hadn't - you just worked at North then you were fired from?
- S.T. Mmm - so my people were not happy about all these things, you know - that I was bringing trouble into the family and my father was telling me that for all the years he'd lived he has never seen a prison cell but I will - I'm going to be the first member of the family who's going to get into a prison cell there - no policeman has ever entered his yard and I'm bringing all trouble, and so the family will have nothing to do with me at all - I'm not of any help to them.

S.T. I matriculated - I'm not working because I was expelled now after this - after I had moved out the club, for having challenged de wet Nel - as a civil servant I was not supposed to have done that - so I was expelled from Welch - I had no job - and it was terrible in the family - I had to stay with friends - I was scared even to see my parents - I felt that in a sense they were just - I should have done at least something for them, but this call, you know, for national liberation, for sacrifice, was better - I believed that perhaps one day they would a bit (.....) and say we are very proud to have had a son like him, you know, when ultimately liberation comes - that is the feeling that I had at that point - so that is what even - that forced me (?) you know, not to relent, not to give in - I could see their misery and I could see their hopes shattered, you know, and I was the first matriculant in the family - very first matriculant in the family, and they were quite proud of it and they thought that at least they would be able now, you know, to - it was a (.....) for an African family to have a matriculant, you know - you get a good job, a clerk and something round about five pounds a week, you know, and you'll be able to do a great deal, you know, by way of - of supplementing the meagre resources of the family, but I just could not take it - I would rather die, you know, and even lose the love of a family, which I did until I was arrested - but when I was arrested my mother was a force behind me - he rallied fully behind me, you know, when I was arrested - he attend - she attended my trial in Queenstown, and even when I was in Robben Island she visited me from 1964 up to 1971, when she passed away out of heart attack in 1971, eight years before my release - it was the saddest moment of my life when she died.

END OF SIDE TWO.

J.F. .... saying your father didn't support in the same way.

S.T. As my mother - no - mother - mothers generally - that was my experience even in prison - you know, mothers and sisters, you know, are stronger.

J.F. And when they were so upset with you for not using your education did they know you were involved politically or did they think you were just a layabout?

S.T. They knew I was involved and they told me that I must get off politics and if I wanted to get involved in politics I have to work first, build a decent house, educate my other - my other siblings, and get married and rear a stable family, then I can get involved - I argued that that's a postponement of the struggle - if mother (?) every family would do like that, then it would mean that there would be no struggle - if we had to meet our own family chores, meet our social demands first before we think in terms of the struggle, then that's what the oppressors really want is a postponement of the struggle - what do we mean by sacrificing for our own (?) - and then they would tell me that - my mother at times would compromise and say : I know, my son, that this is the situation, but you must not be in the forefront - that's what she used to say to me - don't be in the forefront, you know - there are other people there, and right now I can see that you are in the forefront of this whole thing.

J.F. When you got to the Island in '64 - was that a time when there were lots of PAC people as well, because there had been lots of trials so you would have the two camps on the Island - I'm just wondering if you can tell me a bit about the ideological debates that went on in terms of the race and class issue specifically on Robben Island - were there discussions about - with PAC with Unity Movement people?

- S.T. We did not have much problems with Unity people at the early stages of our stay on Robben Island - we had a lot of problems with the PAC - they were an ill-organised group even underground, and they were arrested in very huge numbers, and they were the first to get to Robben Island, and at that time there was a general discontent even in the countryside and the people were resisting the imposition of the Bantu Authorities Act, and in places like Transkei there were other problems like the question of stock theft and peasants in the Transkei had even organised themselves, you know, into groups like Makhuluspan, which was fighting against stock thieves in Transkei, and these people the - I mean the clashes - their clashes with the thieves were often violent - their clashes with the henchmen of Matanzima and other bantustan leaders were all - were - were - were - were often violent, and this led to their incarceration, their conviction too, and their being sent to Robben Island, and without in any way being associated with the PAC and charges that were preferred at any rate against them were along the lines that they were advancing the aims of the PAC Poqo, and when they got to the Island they found PAC idealogues who converted them in the absence of anybody else or any organisation into PAC - so when we got there in 1964 we were overwhelmingly, you know, surpassed in terms of numbers by the PAC - we were hardly - when we got there in 1964 we are hardly 30 ANCs in a total population of about 1,800 prisoners.
- J.F. You were hardly how many?
- S.T. Hardly 30 ANCs people - ANC people - because it was difficult for the authorities - not easy for them to root us out as they did with the PAC, which was an ill-organised assortment, you know - but with us they took time (?) - they had to pass this - this 90 day law, the notorious 90 day law to uproot us from underground - so the relations were very much strained between us - they - in fact they wanted even to kill us, you know, the PACs, and they (?) were every day, you know, every hour of the day at work in the cells harassing us and calling us traitorous and....
- J.F. Calling you what?
- S.T. Traitorous - we have - we had sold out the struggle, you know, because they'd been enticed by Jewish girls, as they put it, and referring of course to the Congress of Democrats and the white comrades, you know, in the ANC, that we are seeing - we were seeing South Africa as a prostitute in the Freedom Charter when we said - when the Freedom Charter in the preamble says that South Africa belongs to all who lives in it, irrespective of race or colour, that we are prostituting their country, and that when we say that our people have been robbed of their birth-right to land and liberty we - we - that was a clear instance of selling out, because the whites are not robbed, you know, of any land and liberty - instead they have robbed us - and that in the South Africa of the PAC there was no room for the white people - they had to go - they were (?) to go once PAC takes power - the white people go back to Europe - they will be repatriated - the Indian community - Ngandani used to put it this way - that is their shadow foreign minister who's a big sell-out now - he's a man of - of - of the regime in South Africa and the bantustan of Transkei - that is Ngandani, Selby Ngandani - he would say that if we take over - I mean when we take over at 12 o'clock, at five past 12 we kill all the communists in a mass grave, which was already dug by - by Dr..Xuma in 1949 - and at five past 12 - I mean ten past 12 we - a big boat will be leaving the boat the - the - the port of Natal, painted in red, to Bombay, carrying all the Indians back to India, where they belong.

S.T. They used to harangue our Indian comrades, directly approaching them : What do you want here in prison, you keolie - they call them koelies, never Indians - that's a swear word like a kaffir, which is used by the racists in South Africa to the Indian people - and that : What do you want here - your country's free, India - you have no business to be fighting here - you should go back home to India, and at any rate we are going to repatriate you when we take over - and that sort of thing that was going on - it was a terrible time - it was PAC this side and they are saying that we had to - they say that the ANC's talking of a two-pronged struggle, that they're fighting other class (?) - the national and the class struggle - that we're oppressed as a nation, we're oppressed as a class of - as workers - and insofar as we are concerned there is no class struggle, and there are no workers amongst the African people, and we are the Africans and we subscribe to the ideology of African socialism - and the communists in the ANC who have helped together with the Jews to hijack the struggle now have to be consigned to their proper place - that is the mass grave - because it's they who are coming with these strange concepts of class struggle - we - we do not subscribe to (?) the idea of an African working class - there's no working class in Africa - that's what they used to say - no working class - and they would - if you - by mistake you - you called one comrade, and then you picked up trouble - they would want to beat you to death for calling you a comrade - the term comrade to them signified communism - I'm surprised today Mlambo talks of comrade so-and-so, comrades and all that sort of thing - he'll not - he would not dare, you know, say anything like that concept, you know, in - in prison - so that was the position....

J.F. So there was no debates going on....

S.T. No debates - we - we - we - we - no debates that went on - from 1963, 1964, 1965 - now when our numbers improved in 1955 - 1965 we approached our leadership, Nelson Mandela and others, Rivonia trial people, who were referred to as Rivonia Robots by the PAC - they called them the Rivonia Robots - they - you know the ANC salute, Amandla Ngawethu - and then the PAC would ridicule that saying that Amandla Ngawethu ingqondo ya ka Slovo - that is power to us, power is ours and the brains are Slovo's - do you see the racial tinge there - that is the ANC slogan of Amandla - sees the African as just a push and pull thing and the brain, the think tanks are the whites - these are the people who are formulating the tactics and strategies of the ANC, the ideology, the outlook - even the Freedom Charter itself is a product of communists, white communists in the ANC, so hence their slogan Amandla - that is the power - and then that is (?) the power, push and pull and all those things, and brains, Slovo's.

J.F. And what was it - Amandla Ngawethu - and what was the last part?

S.T. Ingqondo ya ka Slovo - I n g q o n d o ya ka, belongs - that is ye ka Slovo - that is brains belong to Slovo, by which of course they meant that the whites are (.....) us and the Africans are just the, you know - the - the push and pull thing sort of - that - that racist thing - highly racist, you know, in no way different - and we appealed to the ANC leadership that O.K., could they give us a chance - because we are separated - the - the Rivonia comrades were - you know what they said about them when they were still on trial in the Rivonia group (?) - every day they were conducting prayers in the - in the - in - in the cells - that we pray that Vorster should hang the Rivonia Robots - openly praying that Vorster should hang the Rivonia Robots - and at any rate, if he spares them, our own minister of justice, Mothopeng - this political mediate (?) now who's ailing in - on Robben Island - now would not spare them - he would hang them, all the Rivonia Robots, you see.

S.T. So this - this - this - those were the issues - that we are surrogates of Moscow, and so far as I was concerned they were - were subscribing to the ideals of Nkrumah - that is Africa for Africans and African socialism, which they defined as the humaneness of the African - if for instance, you know, in - you slaughter a beast, you know, at your place, and then all the people in the neighbourhood would come and partake without necessarily being invited to eat - that is the African socialism - and then if you brew some liquor here to propitiate your ancestors, and then everybody will come around and drink with you here - that is African socialism - don't have to be taught about by - by Marx and Engels and all strange ideas from foreign - these foreign ideologies about - about how we should go about doing our own things - we've got our own way of doing things - let them sing (?) their - their Sam Levys and their - and their Sammy Davis and their Frank Sinatras and we shall sing our (.....) with the African beat, with the African rhythm and the African (.....) - that is the type of poetry that we found in the PAC circles, the type of poetry that you still find in their circles today - the type of poetry that you found in forming the BC grouping in the country - black man, you're on your own - such like things, you know.

But we - we were convinced even at that stage that this is not going to take them anywhere - it's unscientific and it's just poetic and it does not answer, you know, the basic questions of the daily struggle in - in the country - how workers confront the - the bosses in the factories - how people relate, you know, to each other at the mass struggle level, you know, against bus fares increases, against this and that - township rents and all that sort of thing - how people are finding each other in the process of their daily struggle, you know - how black and white, Indian and Coloured come together, you know - you know, in the heat of popular resistance, all that sort of thing, and how they come, you know, to - to - to - to - to have confidence in one another as a result, you know, not of just theoretical expressions but of actual experience in the trench, you know, against apartheid, you see - that is the sort of thing - and we fought in prison against the prison conditions, which were horrible, you know - no food, no medication and no constructive work, and daily deaths and all that sort of thing - and PAC was never involved in all those things, and they would tell their people that no, don't worry, we'll fight our struggle outside - we're not going to engage in porridge (?) struggle - they - they - they called it pup (?) struggle - pup is Afrikaans for porridge - you know, p a p - pap struggle - that the ANC's fighting pap struggle in jail here, when we're fighting for the improvement of conditions in prison - we felt terrible, you know, in that period, that sort of situation.

And they engaged in all sorts of anti-social activity - in sodomy, in selling out - when you smuggle a paper you had to hide it from the warders and from the PAC people, because they will inform you - against you - on you to the - to the prison warders - so that's the type of life that we led with these guys on the Island, very bad - and they justified sodomy in terms of the - of what they called Robben Island being in a - a closed institution, and that in any closed institution one cannot escape, you know, this sort of practice, and we challenged them that you are supposed to be a factor of change, but for you to condescend to the level, you know, of even not only indulging in - in - in sodomy - that is homosexuality - but actually defending it in the manner you're doing, you know, and quoting, you know, all these sociologies in justifying this sort of thing, you know - you are - are surrendering your responsibility in the liberation movement so far as we are concerned - at any rate, we don't see you as a liberation movement - that's the position we put in 1965 when we ultimately replied to them....

J.F. So you did reply in '65?



S.T. We did reply in 1965, and then we - we dismissed them and all their five points, African socialism, that the African - there's nothing like African - socialism in other African or Asian or European or what - African socialism is a - I mean socialism is socialism, pure and simple - at any rate we as the ANC, you know, are not derogating to ourselves that responsibility of ushering (?) a socialist democracy (?) in South Africa - we are a national liberation movement and....

J.F. Say that again.

S.T. We are not derogating to ourselves responsibility of ushering a socialist society in South Africa as ANC, you know - we are a - a national liberation movement - we are fighting for national democracy - socialism is the responsibility of working class party - the Communist Party in this particular instance, for instance, is there - that is the custodian (?) of socialism and they would dismiss the - the existence of the social - of the Communist Party - that there's no necessity for a Communist Party at all - even a national liberation movement, so far as we are concerned, could fight for socialism and - and actually gain it - and such were the, you know, erroneous (?) positions that they were adopting from time to time.

J.F. When you told me about how this master recruited you, he was talking about a multiracial society and kind of ideals, but how did you move from '59 to '63 to the point where obviously you're saying inside the Island you were aware of class struggle and those issues - how did that come into your political education?

S.T. Now I was being introduced now - I was reading a lot of ANC literature - I was reading, you know - I was reading Spark, I was reading the (.....) and I was reading the - the - the - the African Communist - I was reading - I was reading the - the Fighting Talk, and on Robben Island we are conducting elections (?) and I was studying philosophy too, and we got hold of Marx's literature....

J.F. On the Island?

S.T. Yes, I was prescribed, you know - you know, I was studying UNISA, University of South Africa, so some of the material was prescribed, so it broadened me and I got to understand, you know, not only our revolution and (.....) - not only about our revolution - we read about the Bolshevik revolution - we read about the Chinese revolution, the struggle in Vietnam, the struggle in Indonesia, the struggle in India, and one other book that I loved very much, you know, was the book entitled Glimses of World History by Jawaharlal Nehru, writing from prison - it's a compilation of letters from prison to his daughter, Indira, you know, Gandhi, where he - I admired that - we read about all the struggles, you know, imperialism and whatnot - was reading quite voraciously in prison, you know, and it improved my understanding, and contact of course with the leadership itself, you know - they would explain to us, you know, what is the difference between a political party and a national liberation movement, what the ANC is, what is the nature of our struggle, you know, the two-pronged nature of our struggle, what is working class struggle, what is the relationship between the ANC and the Communist Party, how did it come about and all that sort of thing, you know, the whole history of the ANC was very much illuminating, from 1912 right through, even from the - the - the colonial era - from the colonial era - this enlightened us, you know, because I was 25 when I got to Robben Island, so I was quite keen, you know, together with a lot of the young people, you know, to equip ourselves as much as we could, you know - you know, with the - the understanding of our struggle, you know, how it is similar to other struggles in other parts of the world and what lessons we can draw from other people's experiences elsewhere, and the sacredness of protecting the national character of our movement and how communists in the ANC behave and how they respect, you know, the ANC as a vanguard national liberation movement, the adoption of the Freedom Charter as their short term programme, what the Freedom Charter is....

S.T. .... the history of the Freedom Charter, why the Freedom Charter, for instance, is not a socialist document, why the Freedom Charter is not a bourgeois document, and why the Freedom Charter is a document of maximum and minimum demands, you know, minimum demands for the African bourgeoisie and any bourgeoisie for that matter in South Africa and - and that's the maximum demands for the bourgeoisie contained in the Free - the bourgeoisie cannot aspire beyond what is contained in the Freedom Charter, whereas the working class can still aspire beyond what is contained in the Freedom Charter - all these things were exposed to us, you know, that these are the historical limitations of a national liberation movement, and these are the potentialities of a - a working class party, and this is where you draw the line between the two, and this is where the two converge in the struggle that we are pursuing at the present moment, and the content at any rate remains this, that this national liberation of our struggle - the overlapping of the leadership, you know, members of the - leaders of the working class party becoming leaders of the ANC and ANC leaders becoming leaders of the - in the process of this whole long struggle.

I don't know - I was going to propose to you that we could stop for today and then we could continue tomorrow, because this period is very rich, you know, with a lot of things, you know, which I might need to - to - to detail, you know.

J.F. Maybe if you'd first just say what's the point of this conference - there've been a lot of conferences, been a lot of rhetoric on South Africa - why another conference - what's so special?

S.T. Well, the conference in the first instance has been occasioned by the - the Pretoria pressure, you know, in South Africa that has even drifted now into the arena of our children being incarcerated, and children incarcerated of course because of their political consciousness and their awareness of the - the - the cruelties, you know, that arise from national (?) tyranny, as we see today in South Africa - politicisation of our kids at that early - that early age is not something that could be ascribed to, as they say, agitators, but apartheid itself is the main agitator for action against itself, is the main organiser of even children joining into the struggle, like we did, for instance, with my own experience - I got involved, you know, in - in - in understanding of the gross brutality of apartheid at an early age from my own practical experience, though I did not have the - the experience of present day youth of being actually involved in - in - in - in - in combat at an early age with - with the system as such, but the situation has today developed to a point where now even kids have become politicised - their experience at school, bantu education and their - the - the sort of classrooms they find themselves in, the inadequacies at all levels of their education, their experience at home, you know, the experiences of a child, you know, coming back from school finding the parent detained or even killed, you know, in a strike action against the boers - now this is the sort of experience that is confronting our - our young people today in South Africa - the sort of experience that sends them into - into the trench against the - the - the system at that early age, even to the point where some of them decide to go and join, you know, Umkhonto we Sizwe at a very early age - even their insistence even at the camps that they don't want to go to school, that they want to - to fight - education tomorrow, freedom now, you see - how we have to plead with them that even in a post-apartheid South Africa we will need educated people, all that sort of thing - it's experience that's born, you know - I mean it's the sort of attitude that is born of experience in - in apartheid South Africa - how it has radicalised even kids at the age of eight years in South Africa.

S.T. They've seen their - the - the - the - their equals die, being shot, you know, shot at and being tortured to death in - in - in - in - in detention, being consigned to concentration camps across the country - that's the trend in South Africa, so it's that objective situation that has, you know, brought about this radicalisation of the youth in our country today, and this conference takes time at an appropriate moment, you know, when it has become more urgent than ever before to draw the attention of the international community, you know, to the brutalities of the apartheid regime - the focal point of course is not on just merely bearing witness or what is happening in South Africa to the kids today and all that sort of thing, but on the urgent question of the liquidation of a system that brutalises kids to this - to this extent.

END OF SIDE ONE.

J.F. So - I think you had spoken a lot about experiences on the Island, but what I wanted to ask you about was if you could tell me if you debated issues like non-racialism - when you came to the Island it was '64?

S.T. Mmm.

J.F. It was after Rivonia - there'd been so much activity in the '50s - this was a chance to perhaps assess things - where did you people stand on the issue of non-racialism - there had been the Africanist movement - you've expressed your views of the PAC, but was there any feeling that the people of South Africa had any affinity for an Africanist position or that the people of South Africa were worried about white involvement - was there any idea of moderating non-racialism or did you feel that that was an important issue or was it maybe not even an issue that came up?

S.T. Non-racialism - no, it was an important issue, much as it is still an important issue today, and it's difficult at times, you know, but I think - I mean to commend, you know, one's organisation, but I think it's one, you know, of the pillars, you know, that the ANC's strength today could be said to have been built on, you know, and the ANC structure it - even at the most provocative moment - you take, for instance, the - the 1976 uprising and the subsequent uprisings in the country in which the brutality of the white terror state was very much obvious - it was quite clear that it was the white policemen, the white soldier who was butchering the - the - the kids in Soweto and the kids all over the country - it was very clear - and those who would say the struggle is between the black and white and point out at these glaring examples, you know, could have gone, you know - got the leeway had it not been for our insistence, you know, on non-racial - non-racialism as a - a realistic approach, historical approach, you know, to the resolution of the South African situation - (.....) all that, you know - we - we - we were not tempted, you know, to - to - to - to - to water it down, and I mean even in the era of BC, you know, we - we - we believed that you know, there is quite a good poetry to say black man you're on your own and that the white man is part of the problem, can be (?) part of the solution, but on the ground the situation's quite different from practical experience, you know, even at mass level - personally I used, you know, when I was discussing with the youngsters in the BC movement, pointing out to them, you know, the errors of believing that the whites have no place - have no place in the struggle - I would just graphically take the case of Steve Biko, you know, the inquest in Pretoria, and Steve Biko was being defended by Kentridge, who's a white advocate - there are many black advocates - why did they pick on - on - on - on a white advocate, for that matter.

S.T. And secondly, after the - the - the judgment was pronounced, that there was nobody to be prosecuted, nobody to be blamed, you know, for the death of Steve Biko, the - the - the people, you know, who had told (?) the court were outraged, as it was the case with the rest of the democratic - democratic mankind throughout the world, you know, were outraged by the - the verdict that nobody was to - the police could not be blamed for the death of Steve Biko.

But what struck me and which was an - a powerful indication, you know, of the extent to which ANC non-racial position has been (.....) the - the whole black side in the country, was when they sunk, you know - they carried the candles (?) shoulder high after the verdict - they were - they were quite cross, but they took him and they carried him shoulder high and sang, you know, that - in Xhosa it says Kentridge ngawethu....

J.F. Is ours?

S.T. Ja, Kentridge is ours ngawethu - he's white, but they say he - he - he belongs to them, he belongs to the people, and Kentridge ngawethu, Steve Biko ngawethu, you know, and the magistrate, Prins, inja - is a dog, you know.

J.F. Prins?

S.T. Ja, Prins, the - the magistrate who presided over the inquest - you know, that is a very beautiful example, you know, of, you know, the - the - the understanding, you know, of our people, that the struggle in South Africa cannot be categorised in terms of race - that the passport to involvement in the struggle is not the pigmentation of ones skin - they know it from practical experience - they know it way back, you know, in the - in the early stages of the struggle in the teams (?) of the ANC, you know, in the 30s, in the '40s and in the '50s they have fought side by side with white democrats in South Africa, and at times against black reactionaries, you know, and they've suffered in the hands of Matanzima, you know, in the hands of Mphedu, in the hands of Gatsha Buthelezi, who are black, so the concept of black is beautiful is just good poetry, but when it comes now to politics, you know, it's now to be found to be holding in any given way, so that on the Island our responsibility, or the responsibility of the movement was to equip, you know, all members of the organisation so that wherever we might be, you know, we must not be found wanting on any single aspect of the policies of our movement, particularly non-racialism and the alliance between the South African Communist Party and the ANC - now this was - the - the membership had to understand this, because as a national liberation movement, you know, we are a - a coalition of various classes and social groups, and it becomes important therefore that the cadreship of the movement understands - understand - they understand how to relate, how to harmonise these relations, you know, and not to play one class interest against another class interest in the national liberation movement.

Now this is the policy - so our people had to understand - I mean the - the cadres who have (?) got to go to the people, organise the people around the ANC, you know, which is spearheading the struggle, and they had to understand now all these - these basic tenets in our policy - and more so in the light of the fact that I mean on the question of non-racialism we had an adversary like PAC, you know, who was coming out with these racist policies, which were policies which were - were very anti (?) you know, of what the Nationalist Party espouses, you know - at times we would even tell them that if some of the statements they are making here could be taped and broadcast in a - in the SABC they - the whites wouldn't believe that it's coming from a so-called liberation movement - they would think it's one of their propaganda agencies, you know, which is broadcasting.

S.T. So we had to do a lot of politicisation around this concept, and at the same time, you know, that non-racialism is an - is an entrenched, you know, outlook in - in the Freedom Charter, that in - in the preamble, the first line of the preamble, that (.....) all account and the world (?) to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it is part (?) of the colour creed (?) you know - that there can never be peace in our country un - until all those people live in it, black and white - it's emphasised black and white right through, you know - and we had to explain then what we mean by people, you know, because the word people, you know, is a, you know - pervades the whole Freedom Charter, you know - the people shall govern and land to the people, what-not and that, you know - that our people have been robbed of their birth-right - people become the key factor - I mean a key concept in a - in the Freedom Charter - what do we mean by people - we had to engage in intensive politicisation, you know - people, so far as we are concerned, you know, are all those classes, those social groups, irrespective of race, colour or creed, who are, you know, rallied around the - the banner of the ANC for a non-racial, united, democratic South Africa, irrespective of race or colour.

So once you are discussing the Freedom Charter you are invariable - in a real way you cannot avoid not talking about non-racialism, you see, and even the constitution, the 1958 ANC constitution, you know, the - the Tambo-Lutuli - the Lutuli-Tambo constitution of 1958, now which, you know, I mean the - the ANC had to revise the constitution in 1950 (?) after the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1956, and where the - it was indicated that the membership to the ANC would be open to - to all racial groups in the country, you see, and of course it was left to the national executive committee to implement that decision, to decide when it is convenient for that to be - to be implemented, you know - that particular clause in the 1958 constitution, opening membership of the ANC to - to all people of South Africa.

You remember before - I mean before that, you know, there was the Congress of Democrats, you know, which was an independent organisation national (?) - of white democrats - there was the Indian Congress, there was the Coloured People's and so forth, but in terms of the 1958 constitution that these could join - these individual - individuals from these organisations could join directly into the ANC....

J.F. That was in the constitution?

S.T. Ja, 1958 constitution, ja - after the adoption of the Freedom Charter - I mean the constitution had to be in line with the Freedom Charter - if you say that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, you know - so that had to be reflected somewhere in the constitution, that indeed we are prepared to open our membership, but it was decided by a resolution that it would be left now to the national executive committee to - to - to decide on the convenient moment for the introduction of that, so what happened in 1969 at the Morogoro conference, you know - you know, and subsequently in Kabwe in 1985, you know, you see, are build-ups, you know, from that 1958 constitution - it's a development of that constitution.

J.F. But why at Morogoro was it - were ranks not open to non-Africans?

S.T. The?

J.F. Why at Morogoro was it decided not to let non-Africans?

S.T. . No, it was the open membership.

J.F. But onto the NEC?

S.T. Onto the NEC - now the - the idea - I mean in 1969, you know, we - we were still new in the continent and we were still seeking to rally the continent behind us, and there was this strong view of the projection of the African image in the struggle, which of course was a correct position, and I mean in - in - in due course of course with (?) changed situation in the continent and with the development of the struggle, not only in South Africa but in the continent (?) itself now, where white democrats had become, you know, involved in popular struggles, you know, particularly in the Southern African region, you see, so our policies too in terms now of, you know, opening participation to all racial groups, democratic individuals, irrespective of race, was only becoming a feature in Angola, in Mozambique, you know, and even here for that - for that matter, in SWAPO, all over, you know, and that's the point - I mean even in independent African governments you found that there were white ministers, you know, all the black (?) so it was that thing.

So even up to the present moment I mean we say it's open membership right up to the ANC, you see....

J.F. From '85?

S.T. Ja, from '85, but we still insist on the projection, you know, of the African image in the struggle, because I mean the African is - is - is the backbone of that struggle, you know - that is by reason of his - of his numerical strength and by reason of the position he occupies in the racial pyramid in South Africa - he's the most revolutionary group in South Africa, the African - consistently revolutionary, you know, by reason, you see, the racial pyramid he's at the bottom - the Africans are at the bottom of that racial pyramid in South Africa, which makes them the most revolutionary group in the continent, so it is the most revolutionary group that must be at the spearhead of the struggle, is that not so, so that's the position - it's a mixed NEC but predominantly you can see it's Africans, you know, who - who - who are in - in the majority in that, you know, and I think personally it's a - it's quite a correct position, and our people accept it and our friends accept it and our allies accept it, and I'm talking about even the people inside South Africa, black and white - they accept the - the - the reality of that sort of arrangement that - I mean the correctness of that sort of arrangement, so there was no way in which we could forget about it and, as I was saying to you, that the question of non-racialism, there was no point in time where we - the ANC could feel that it must be jettisoned, you know, in favour, for instance, of say, a - the black man you're on your own, let's do it alone, all that sort of thing, you know - there was - there were no situation.

Even as far back as 1955 Father Huddleston was given the highest award, not by the ANC - this is very significant - Isitlandwana award - it was bestowed upon him by the Congress of the People, you know, a recognition of his leadership role, you know, you see - as I'm saying to you that, you know, bonds of fraternity, of solidarity, of comradeship, are built not in conference rooms and research centres but in the heat of popular struggle, that's where you come to know, you know, who is who, you know, in the heat of popular struggle, so we had to do a lot of spadework along these lines on the Island to upgrade our membership and to politically and to make them understand better, you know, the positions of the movement - we had all the time in the world to do that because I mean we were not engaged in a - in a practical struggle in the sense of our actual confrontation, you know, and planning strategies and all sorts of thing.

J.F. Let me ask you - you spoke about the need for maintaining and improving the African image of the struggle - that's colour - I thought that one of the motivations was working class hegemony, that it was a class question - which is it, or are they both factors, but which is more important - some people would say : Look, the issue is that it's the working class that has to be represented - the African community is mainly the working class in South Africa, so for that reason we have to have working class hegemony and that will be what will in a sense play along and will be another factor that will mitigate non-racialism - that it's all fine to say it's non-racial, we don't make a decision based on colour, but in fact we do happen to - as you've been talking about a cert (?) - but you put it in terms of African image because of the image in the continent etc., but the dialogue a lot today is working class hegemony - what was - how was that debated on the Island then - what - which one's important - why did you mention the African image, colour, and not the class?

S.T. . Ja, I mean the African image is not outside the class context I mean, you see - the ANC accepts and makes the point that the overwhelming majority of the oppressed people belong to the working class, and this of course is by reason, you know, even (?) to a point where we can even - we even said it, as a matter of fact, on the Island, that we do not have a - a bourgeoisie, a black bourgeoisie - you cannot talk in terms of a black bourgeoisie in South Africa - by reason of the nature of expropriation, you know, that we experience - we do not have landed gentry of the country but that (?) we found in North Africa, for instance, in - or in the Arab part of the continent, an entrenched landed gentry - there was wholesale expropriation in - in - in - in South Africa, you know, which reduced virtually everybody, you know, to a working class status in South Africa - that is why we always emphasised the importance, you know, the - the overall importance of the organisation of the working class into trade unions, and the organisation of the working class into key positions in the national liberation movement itself.

Now this insofar as we are concerned is very important, and we even - when we're talking about the Freedom Charter, we will explain that, for instance, the Freedom Charter is not a socialist document - it does not transfer power to the working class, nor is it - is it a bourgeois document - what therefore - what then is the Freedom Charter if it's neither of the two - and then the Freedom Charter would say it's a document of maximum demands for aspirant bourgeoisie and for a bourgeoisie, an aspirant bourgeoisie.

J.F. Maximum demands?

S.T. Maximum demands - they won't aspire beyond what is contained in the Freedom Charter, and at the same time we would say that it contains a - it does cater for the interests of the working class quite largely, no doubt about that, but the working class will still have scope to struggle beyond the Freedom Charter, you see, and - so that the Freedom Charter then insofar as the working class is concerned, becomes a stepping-stone, you know, to - for a - a transition, you know, into a socialist democracy.

But if we do experience, you know, such a transition, it will depend on the strength of the working class in this class coalition, you know, in this people's democracy in the Freedom Charter when - and once you talk of people's democracy (?) the - the - this class coalition then, you found all of them were part - participating in the struggle there - now if then in that class coalition the working class is weak, then we can find a situation of total recapitulation, you know, to pure and simple (.....) of production, you know....

J.F. Pure and simple?

S.T. Capitalist relations of production in South Africa - now that is if now the bourgeois class is stronger than the working class, you know, they might not even implement the Freedom Charter - do you get my point - but if the working class is strong, is stronger, then the prospects of a peaceful transition to a socialist democracy are there, no doubt about that, but what do we do with them - do we say to the working class : O.K., right now we have a role to play in the national democratic struggle and for present purposes we are going to forget about the working class content of the struggle and concentrate exclusively on the - on the national liberation struggle and nationalism - now that would be selling out, you know, the - the - the - the interests of the working people in the country.

They have to be taught, and we did teach them, that they have a historical mission to accomplish this national democracy, and that it's not the end of the story insofar as the working class is concerned - I mean as a national movement of our calibre, we never hide such facts, hard facts, that you could as working class, and you should understand your historical role, your historical mission, you know, that as the working class historical mission (?) the establishment of the leadership of the (.....) socialist democracy....

J.F. Say that?

S.T. The dictatorship of the proletariat, you know, you see, and is very important therefore that the working class consciousness should be heightened that they - they are better able to understand the relevance of the present struggle, you know, towards the achievement of their strategic - of the historical mission of the working class, you see - they must appreciate, you know, the importance of the role they must play right now in the struggle and the forefront position that they must occupy, and aligned with that, we would tell them that politics of the - of the colour - politics of colour, politics of the skin, you know, are a very much devastating instrument, you know, in the hands of imperialist countries on (?) all reactionaries to blunt working class consciousness.

Now we - as I've told you that PAC was saying there's no working class, you know, and even within the BC groupings, you know, for - for instance, now the - the - you know, the question of the internationalist character of the working class struggle, you know, something that is completely strange to them, you know - it's a - all their - they would like to do is just to rally around colour, which is very - very, very very, very elementary (?) politics, you know, now which is used by imperialism to destroy working class consciousness.

We would tell them that even though at the present moment, the white working class in South Africa is an accomplished, you know - he has been absorbed into the system - they see themselves as boss and all that sort of thing (?) but that does not mean that they do not belong to the working class, as the PACs would argue that they are not workers, they - they are bosses too, you see - they are workers, you know, and it's a historical given that they occupying the positions they are occupying, so we should not give up the fight of trying to wean, you know, their - the advanced sections of the white working class into our own ranks - and very much beautifully our position is vindicated by the attitude of COSATU today, you know - COSATU is non-racial, like SACTU was, you know, and membership is open to all, you see, now which is all the way, you know - you see how our non-racial positions are vindicated by developments right now up to present moment - UDF is another example, you know, of - of such vindication, you see - even when you have NUSAS and SANCOS, you know, working, you know - is (?) different two (?) organisations, but there's no racism involved there at all, you know.



S.T. What is there is a, you know - the idea of each concentrating, you know, on a particular section of the community by reason of the nature of the unique (?) politics of South Africa - we have to reach to the white students in - in - in - in Potchefstroom - conservative students in Potchefstroom, the students in - in Pretoria University, the students in other Afrikaaner universities in the country, but for a black student to go there, you know, to address a rally, to organise those students into a black student organisation, that is, you know, totally unrealistic and it cannot happen, you know, in the South African (?) situation, so it's better when a white student, you know, goes there and explains those things - exactly the same message that we are imparting to IDASA, that the focus of your mission is not in the black townships but in the - in the white community, you know - preach to them our own policies there, and adopt complementary strategies - I mean such strategies as will complement what we are doing, so that is the position - all this is operational work around the concept of non-racialism, which is deep-rooted in the South African scene.

Even this conference here - you can see that for yourself, you know, how - how - how this concept of non-racialism and the ideas of the ANC about it are vindicated in this very conference here - you get people from all colour lines in South Africa, so when we say therefore that, you know, the - the - the image of the African is very important in the struggle, we are - I mean we are - explain a historical reality, a historical necessity, you know, without - even if we are to work out (?) you know, by a simple, you know, basis of elimination, you know - you take, for instance, the Indian Congress in South Africa - the Indian Congress could not lead that struggle in South Africa.

You take - you take the COD at the time when it was there and ask the question could the - the Congress of Democrats lead the struggle in South Africa today - no, you know, because of the constituents - that is very important - so the black people, the ANC, it has to be the leader because it was a - an organisation of the biggest majority in the country, you see, and that biggest majority is the working class, so that's why I say you cannot I mean separate the two - we say our struggle is two-pronged, you know, is a two-pronged - we are oppressed as a class that is workers and we're oppressed as a nation, but it does not mean that one prong must rest, you know, while the other one, you know, goes in - it's like when you eat at table, your fork is four-pronged, but you - you - you thrust (?) the four of them onto the piece of meat there, and where you lay your emphasis now in the fork (?) both of - both four - four of them are gripping then, but there will be a tilt, you know, depending now on which chunk of the meat you - you want to chop first, you know, but prongs are working, all four of them - that's our concept.

When we say it's two-pronged, we are not thinking in terms of O.K., let's fight a purely national liberation struggle, nationalism, and then after that and then we go back to our working class, say : Hey, by the way, there is this other element that we did not tell you about some time back when we're still busy with this, the question of working class struggle - it will be too late then - they must know now - so the two concepts are not - that is working class content of our struggle and the - the - the - the projection of the African image of the struggle are not mutually exclusive - they are reinforcing in the context of the South African situation.

J.F. You've said a lot about theory - I'd like to ask you about practice - before I do that, where did you get all your theory from - did you read the classics of socialism - have you read all the volumes of Marx or have you - if you went from '64 to '79 not having, I presume, access to that kind of literature - had you read before or did you get it from discussions in prison or where did you get your class....

S.T. Well, I - I read a lot, you know, about national democratic politics in the ANC bulletins and in the speeches of the leadership and - that is bulletins like New Age and Spark and whatnot - I read a lot in Fighting Talk and the liberation movement bulletins, you know, not necessarily ANC - national liberation movement bulletins - and I read the AC.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

S.T. .... you know, which I usually got from an old man who was a - a - a provincial - in the provincial leadership of the ANC, that is the Cape Province (.....) and who - who had developed cold feet, you know, when the movement went underground and he was still being sent (?) you know - the AC - it was very interesting the way, once he gets it, he would send it away immediately to me, and I was very happy with that sort of thing because, you know, I got very much equipped, you know, from reading from those bulletin - but on Robben Island, it was there that I became even more open now to - to - to Marxist literature.

I read a lot about, you know - I mean from British magazine particular, you know, it - it was easy then for us to get their books onto the Island (.....) and (.....)....

J.F. What was that?

S.T. Maurice (.....) book on (.....) historical materialism, you know, the theory of knowledge, and we read a lot from other communist writers like - like Ernest Fischer, the erstwhile chairman of the Communist Party, the - the - of the Austrian Communist Party - his book, you know, on - on - on - entitled The Necessity of Art, a Marxist approach....

J.F. You got those on the Island?

S.T. Yes....

J.F. How did you get them on the Island?

S.T. I - we smuggled it into the Island - we smuggled a lot of things into the Island and were using, but this is confidential now, because there are still guys there, you know, and they might (?) still be doing these things - we - we - we - we talked to the warders, and I think I mean that, you know, we (?) can just leave out the question of them bringing things, but we did convert some of them to accept our positions - they were very brutal, they were very cruel, they were killing us and all sorts of thing, but even then in that situation, you know, perhaps we come back to our non-racialism - we preached to them that we are brothers - these are our countrymen (?) you know, and we have to fight for a non-racial democracy and we have to participate, you know.

I remember I had a - a friend of mine, you know, who was quite nasty at times, you know - he was a - he - he's a warder - you know, we - we used to steal imbazas, you know, these oysters - they didn't allow us to pick up those things - or we are pulling this seaweed, bamboo (?) from - from - from the sea.

S.T. They are crushing it and using it for fertilizer and whatnot - and then we cooked the imbazas, these oysters, you know - take an old drum there, you know, and then cook them, and then lunch hour they dish them out, and then he'll see us and they (?) will come - he's hungry too, you know - and then he (?) will come Kan ek een beekie, asseblief - can I have a little - and then we (?) say : O.K., sit down there - and then we'd use it (?) with him - from the same - from the same dirty thing, you know, you know, and this is cooked with sea water - there's no fresh water there, you know - just you take sea water, cook it - he would eat it with us, you know, from the same piece of iron zinc, you know - he'd eat from us.

One day I asked him : Look here - I don't want to call his name - there is a civil war going on in South Africa, on which side are you - he said : Wie - he said (?) Jy - you - and - you understand a bit of Afrikaans, Julie - and now he says : I'm standing on the fence - that's very interesting for a - a man in the prison service to say he's standing in the fence in the face of an ongoing struggle - that's very interesting - he says he's standing on the fence.

And then I say to him that : But we are going to shake that fence, we are going to shake it very hard, and in all probability it must fall, but make sure you fall on the right side - and then he says : Ek is nie dom ek nie - bury me (?) - he says : Ek is een Mandela ek....

J.F. Say that again.

S.T. Ek is een Mandela.

J.F. Choose (?) Mandela?

S.T. No, that is he is a Mandela....

J.F. Ek is een Mandela?

S.T. Ja, but what do you mean by that - well, look here, whilst things become bad, I know my organisa - what is your organisation - it's the ANC - but you can't be organisation ANC - hey, look here, when I - we go to the ANC, I will not be going to you - I'm not going to the - to the - to the black people there in the ANC - I'm going to my own brothers there, they - they are my own brothers in the ANC - they are no brothers of yours in the ANC - Bram Fischer is daar - or Slovo is daar - you know, he - he cites these - they are white men, they are there in the ANC - I'll go to them, I don't care for you - I'll just join the ANC and go to - to my own brothers in the ANC, you know - that simplistic approach of the Afrikaaner that, you know, that's why we believed, for instance, on the Island that, you know, when things really come to the push, you know, the Afrikaaner will turn out to be the most patriotic of all racial groups on the Island - that was our belief - they are very bad right now, but once they realise that there is no way out, you know, and they'll be the most patriotic - after all, their history, you know - they were peasants only in the last century, you know, and we're together, you know, in a communal life in the last century there, and they don't have, you know, a long history of involvement in capitalist morality and whatnot - they don't know those things, you know, you know - only in the last century, you know, so it's - they might be as brutal as they are right now, but in due course they will turn really patriotic, you know - they liked that when I was telling them about our views on the Island in - in Dakar - so that is the position, Julie, do you get my point - I don't know if your question is answered - is it?

J.F. I've got some questions - I guess what I wanted to know when I said where did you get your class politics is let's translate it into reality....

S.T. So ja, you see (?) on the question of this literature - so we read them - we got them there (?) - we - we - we got them - we got Marx, you know - it was difficult to get Marx, you know, because, you know, the - one thing they've (?) been told about, you know, of all communist writers, Karl Marx - they know Karl - Karl Marx and Revolution - it was difficult, you know - you know, in geography (?) there is this concept of the revolution of the earth, you know - there are some people who were studying - there were some people who were studying geography there and they get a textbook, Earth's Revolution, and then they will look at it as the (?) revolution - just (.....) - revolution - you want to - to preach revolution here - no, as a revolution (?) they don't understand that at all, you know - they think the revolution is a armed struggle, whatnot, all those things, you know, you see - they don't know the revolution of the earth - difficult to get Karl Marx.

But Engels it was easy to get Engels - any book by Engels, because you just look at the title, not even for those students (?) at university, you know, and studying there - Engels, he (?) says : Oh, English - and he pushes it (?) because Engels, you know, is English in (?) Afrikaans, you know (.....) and English textbook (.....) - so we - we - we were - we read very much voraciously - we studied the revolution in - in - in - in - in Indonesia from the last century, a - a Chinese revolution from the last century - the Russian revolution, the struggle in India, the struggle in Ireland, the struggle in Latin America, the struggle in Indonesia - what parallels there are between those struggles and our struggle here - what lessons can we draw - the Cuban revolutions, the Algerian revolution, the struggle in the continent of Africa, reconstruction of the decolonisation in Africa - the two-pronged formations, reconstruction and - and reconciliation with imperialism, you know, all those things, and the problems of the way you - why historically there must be those problems in the OAU and all, you know - we traversed, you know - there's no section, you know, of of - of political theory that we - we never touched on the Island, and the history of course of the national liberation movement dating as far back, you know, as 1652 - we'd even go to the extent of saying that even, you know, the first clashes in the Western Cape, you know, between Jan van Riebeeck and the Khoikhoi there were not based on colour - that was a non-racial conflict that, because when these people arrived there, you know, they said they wanted land, and the African conception of land was that well, land belonged to everybody - it was a primitive communal sort of - the primitive commune, you know, was there - and what actually happened it was a clash, you know, between, you know, a - a detachment of capitalism from Europe, you know, clashing now with the primitive commune in the Western Cape, you know - that's what actually happened there - it was not a racial issue, you know - you know, these guys just wanted land, and then the khoikhoi says (?) no, there's land, you can have land, you know - land belongs to all of us here, there's no problem - they never objected to them on grounds of colour - they said : No, you can have land - and if it were racial they would have (.....) the very own time they - they got onto the - on the African soil - they did not do that.

Clashes happened when now capitalist - that is nascent capitalism now in the form of the Dutch East India Co. - started fencing it in now, you know, pieces of land and calling them company lands - and the Khoikhois would go and hunt there because the fence was quite strange to their commune - they did not know about fencing in and privatisation of property - this is company property and all that sort of thing.

S.T. So they would get in there and graze their - their cattle there on the land (?) that is open there, you know - is open land - it's the property of everybody - and that's where trouble started, you see that - so we read a lot then, and then we did not confine ourselves to politics - we studied the family - the origins of the family, the origin of private property and the state, you know, and we studied even the present family, you know, the - in the bourgeois society, and we studied art, you know - we read the Ngugis, you know, the Soyinkas, their books, their travels (?) and the (.....) you know - we read Tolstoys, we read Chekovs, we read Gorkys, we read Shakespeare, we read, you know, all prominent writers - we read Steinburg, you know - his Grapes of Wrath, you know, was quite a popular one - we read Emil Zola, the French writer, you know, we read all these, and we analysed these, you know - what - Jack London's Iron Hill (?) you know, the - the White Fang (?) by Jack London, and then we - we - I would say (?) study this novel and then you bring - you - you present (?) a discussion on it, or other themes here - what - what is it putting across - is it revolutionary art, is it reactionary art, you know, and what are the shortcomings of this - that's all we did on the Island, you know - every - films (?) we'd go to - I mean when things improved and we were seeing films, so of course you - you - you watch the - the plot, and then Steve, you - you look at the themes, and then Victoria, you look at the - at the imagery he's using, and then assess is it progressive, is it the message - is it progressive, is it reactionary - painting, Picasos, whatnot, you know - we got all those impressionists, and I got to know about (.....) on the Island - impressionism, whatnot, reading about that, you know, you see, so....

J.F. Did you study on the Island, did you....

S.T. I studied on the Island that - I mean (.....) matric when I went to the Island, but I graduated from - got matric (?) on the Island,...

J.F. What did you get a degree in?

S.T. I got a degree - I majored in philosophy and - and English with the University of South Africa, and did two courses in sociology (?) - I wanted to major in sociology and - and history, but I had problems with my lecturer....

J.F. With your what?

S.T. My lecturers in the department of sociology - you know, I could not reconcile with there on a class analysis, you know, of the situation, and I would get very low marks and (.....) they're going to fail me because we are quarrelling, you know - for instance, their definition of class I could not accept it, that class is your lifestyle, it's a lifestyle and they don't see in turn (?) - class in terms of one's relationship to the means of production - they don't want to see that, for instance, today you win a jackpot and you open a big swimming pool here and your kids are playing with Dr. So-and-so's kids and - and then you adapt to a lifestyle and then you belong to that same class, even if you're a (.....) you just drop into a bank and steal some money and then you emulated the lifestyle, you know, at the back yard in the township there of Harry Oppenheimer, you know, in Houghton Park and all that sort of thing.

So I mean these are the problems I had, so I abandoned that course two level (?) - I left it and then did English and philosophy as my majors.

J.F. Let me just ask you - I wanted to ask the practicalities - what does all this mean in terms of the practical situation - why was it that it took till '85 for non-Africans to get on the NEC - in '69 you said the time wasn't right - you told me about the image in Africa and all that, but why in '85 - why did it take 16 years for that to happen?

- S.T. It was not an issue - I mean even if these people are not in the national executive committee, but they were playing a - quite decisive roles - you take J.A. Slovo for - J.S. Slovo - he was a member of the revolutionary council, you know, which was the council which was directly involved in planning out the revolution in South Africa - even before he had left the country, you know, the - the - the - look at the composition of the high command in Rivonia - it was not a burning issue, it was not something that is preoccupying everyone in - in - in - or all of us in the - I mean it's not something that we have slaved (?) this thing to do - nobody felt that no, I'm being underplayed because of this - I'm white or I'm - I'm Coloured or I'm Indian - nobody ever felt that - they were in par, they were consulting and all that sort of thing - the president would consult, you know, with everybody that - it was just a sheer formalisation of what - that is 1985 Kabwe decision, resolution - it was a mere formalisation of what had been happening right through the line, except that, you know, they were not formally there as members of the NEC.
- J.F. But I think it actually is important, that formality - I interviewed a young Coloured guy who testified here at the conference, and I said does it matter to you that James Stuart's on the NEC, and he said yes.
- S.T. No, he's - he's a young boy.
- J.F. No, but you yourself spoke of an image of African leadership - you said that image of African is important, so I'm saying....
- S.T. It's very important because it's quite realistic, you know, and without attaching any racist tinge to it, you know, and because of the facts that I - I've said really, you know - now who should be in the - I mean which....
- J.F. That's undisputed, but I'm saying the image of - you called it an image of African leadership in which you explained the working class aspect....
- S.T. No (now) the image of - of the African in the struggle as a - a leading role - you get that point?
- J.F. Absolutely, but all I'm saying is - what I'm venturing is that in '85 the formalising of the reality of the participation of other race groups, albeit at a much lower level - nobody said there should be more than two colours - nobody said there should be more than one white and one Indian, but the fact that in a very proportionate way you have a formalisation - it's as if you were to say - it's not an analogy really, but in South Africa nobody accepts if P.W. says yes, but I consult - the formalisation of the power by having a vote on the NEC I think was important, and a lot of people do speak about the fact that the ANC is truly non-racial and that Kabwe put it into practice (.....) but I'm saying why did it take from '69 to '85 - maybe the answer....
- S.T. Ja, because - I don't see it as a matter, you know, that demanded urgency, because in no way were - were they ever (.....) in terms of decision taking, you know - in terms of decision taking in no way, you know, were - were the - the - the other members, you know, were not in the NEC affected adversely, you know - there was full consultation and they were serving in very important bodies of the movement, and as for the one who told you that, you know, he's happy that Stuart is there, there's still an element of political (?) backwardness there, which of course means that we still have to do a lot of work by politicisation, because at any rate Stuart was not voted by the Coloured membership of the ANC, you know, into - which is very insignificant in terms of numbers, you know, but it was the African themselves, you know, the - who knew Stuart as a sincere fighter, you know, and much as it would be the case back at home, you know.

- S.T. I mean back at home Stuart would be voted, you know, into - into - into parliament or whatever, not say, by the Coloureds, by the people of South Africa who will know that Stuart is the man, you know, and we know him and he has a - he's a - his interests and ours are identical, you see, so this young comrade that you interviewed there, you know, he revealed a weakness to say that he's happy because Stuart - because he's a Coloured and Stuart is in - in the NEC, he's quite happy with that, you know - I mean because it would mean that even if Stuart were - were not competent enough to be there, he would not feel all right that he's not there, you see.
- J.F. I think on a practical tactical level what he's saying is - and he was the one who was saying to his own community he's reactionary and that if he's going to go organise the Coloured working class reactionary artisan, who'll say this African mass that he's giving, he'll say no, they have Africans, and in 1970s they'd say no, nonsense, I don't see them in structures, and if he said oh, they consult, he'd say well, why don't they trust him enough to put him in a structure - now he can say : Look, they have Coloureds, there you see it - it's nothing that can be taken away, you're on the NEC - that's all he's saying on a tactical level - he felt it was a useful thing - he's - I think you could say look at all the - the Africans who shout viva Slovo - I understand the level that it's what the person's merit is, it's not the colour, but I'm saying on a tactical level, for the same reason that the TIC is organised, because you use that ethnicity in a progressive way to invoke tradition etc. on that level he was saying it was useful - but anyway you've answered my question, it wasn't....
- S.T. I understand you - I....
- J.F. Let me just ask what is it going to mean in the future South Africa in terms of aren't there still issues of asserting working class and African hegemony - will you have to watch and have mechanisms to prevent domination by whites or maybe Indians say, in Natal - there's been nothing I would write about, but sometimes people hear a critique of domination of the articulate intellectuals, what happens to be Indians and whites - will the ANC have some kind of structures or awareness in the future South Africa to say : Hey, we can't just let all these wonderful white and Indian comrades or even Coloured, but non-African, non-working class people dominate - we actually have to push up - we have to help foster working class hegemony - or would you say : No, no, no, colour doesn't matter - because if you say colour doesn't matter you get what happens in the US, where you have the minorities which is blacks who never get anywhere because you haven't - it's not a direct analogy, but you've got a concept of affirmative action, of pushing those who haven't had an advantage - I'm just wondering in South Africa will there be any effort to actually ensure working class hegemony by saying : No, we must have African leadership - and actually to go to Natal perhaps and confer with the Indian leadership and say : Look, we want you to help even though so-and-so isn't as competent perhaps to foster it - just to use that example - is that going to happen or do you think that's wrong politics?
- S.T. I think it's wrong politics - we'll be fostering racism, don't you think so, you know - we - we'll be fighting against what we - we are preaching, that in - in - in a post-apartheid South Africa there won't be black and white - there will be South Africans - even Africans, for that matter, in the African continent - we - we're in the African continent - and so it's something which is in line with our rejection of the concept of minority rights, you know, that we - we don't subscribe to that - we subscribe to the concept of the protection of individual rights - we'll be individual South Africans.

S.T. We won't be seeing any - any - we won't (?) categorise the society, that the Indians are getting preponderance in a particular area or the - the (.....) because that - that will be straightforward black chauvinism - what we will do would be to promote everybody, create such structures as will make it possible for every person, you know, to - to display and come up with his best, and then it's your merit that will count - if, you know, the - the - the Indian working class in Natal, you know - the working class in Natal, you know, has a leadership of the - of the Indian population, you know, it will not be by design, you know - it will be by a historical (?) fact of their being politically advanced perhaps in that particular area, and we won't see them as an Indian leadership - we'll see them purely as South Africans, and it will be our responsibility to - it will be our responsibility really to - to - to - to create those structures which will - which will uplift, you know, the understanding, political understanding, the social and the - the social status of all racial groups in the country to make them, you know, to - to advance, you know, to - to - to higher levels, you know, but I can't imagine a situation where the ANC is going to say that now the Africans must be there - there - I mean for instance, even when it comes to - to the election of the president, you know, everybody'll be free, and if a white - a white comrade wins, it is by popular vote, you know.

I mean we take our degree of non-racial - I mean our understanding of non-racialism to that degree, that we are even prepared, you know, to be ruled, you know - to have a white president in South Africa - he won't be white - he'll be an African president popularly elected by - by - by the majority of our people in the country, black and white, and when - even when we say that we - majority rule - we want majority rule in South Africa, we don't want - we don't mean black majority rule - we don't mean black majority rule, we mean, you know, rule by the party that gets the majority of votes.

J.F. What I'm....

S.T. I don't know, it's quite - the party really - I can't see it that way, you know - I can't see it, you know, in terms of in a post-apartheid seeking, you know, to preserve, you know, the - the privileges and - or to bestow certain privileges on say, the African people, over and above..

J.F. I'm not saying bestow certain privileges - I'm trying to take concrete examples - say, the Weekly Mail - it's a terrific paper, it's very useful, it plays its role, but I think it's greatly improved since Tammy (.....) and (.....) and a few black reporters have written for it, and I think if people who are running newspapers would say they're just running on the so-called meritocracy, you probably wouldn't get that - you wouldn't get blacks needed just a bit more training - or if you had the two candidates and one was black and one was white, you might see a phenomenon where on the basis of skill level, because of historical - when you took the Natal you said the historical role of the Indians, but what about the historical role of blacks being the legacy of oppression there - I would think you would have to have some effort to accommodate and to just ensure Afri - working class hegemony, and I don't think that working class hegemony will arise if you just choose on merit - it won't change - it'll be like - there's Botswana and then there's Zimbabwe....

S.T. It will change because right now in South Africa the situation is a closed (.....) - certain skills are closed - certain forms, you know, of participation are denied, you know, Africans, but in a post-apartheid Africa Africans, you know, now will be open, you know, to all these facilities, you know.



- J.F. But they're limited places - what if you had to choose at a training school and there were two equally qualified artisans and one was white and one was black, and you knew that white artisans have always had such an advantage in the history of South Africa, wouldn't you choose the black one if they were equally qualified?
- S.T. No.
- J.F. How would you choose?
- S.T. On merit.
- J.F. No, but there - sometimes when people when you just - it's hard to choose between them - often....
- S.T. Because if - if you choose the black because he's black and because we want to accommodate certain things, and then we are teaching our people racism - we are going back to square one, you see, because you - the colour issue can't play in a post-apartheid in any given instance - it just can't....
- J.F. Even if the head of the training school was going to make an effort to look for more blacks so that there would be more black artisans?
- S.T. No, it will be the responsibility, you know, of - of the government and at all levels to see to it, you know, that the Africans, you know, are upgraded - we do need (?) - they're the majority in - in the country, you know....
- J.F. But they're going to have to be - maybe - won't they be upgraded at the expense of whites?
- S.T. No, not at the expense of anybody - they will have to be upgraded - for instance, we say that, you know, we - we - we are going to retain the skills, you know - I mean of the whites - we - we take, for instance, the land, but it's not going to (.....)
- J.F. It's not what?
- S.T. You know, nothing's going to be done (?) abruptly - there are experienced agronomists, experienced farmers, in the mines experienced geologists and administrators and all that sort of thing, you know - they might still be occupying key positions in those areas there, you know, until such time everybody else, you know - it will not be a question of we say : Oh, we're replacing them, you know, by blacks - it will be a question of blacks having been advanced to that stage where they can actually do these things - and that's why I said what is important, the key factor is opening avenues for everybody, and in a situation where all - where avenues are open, you know, the scope for development on the part of every single individual in the country, but we shall definitely discourage the idea, you know, of, you know, choosing on colour expediency, you know - that would be very, very dangerous, and it can be used, you know, even by the enemies of the revolution to show that in all they were saying about non-racialism was sheer prattle - now in the reality of the situation they are practicing now, you know, pure and simple racism - they will say that and it will be true, you know - so merit will be the issue, and that's what we are saying now, that the colour of the - of a person's skin must not matter - we said - we said this as far back as 1958 when there were (?) going to be elections - I remember at one time there (.....) there's Professor Matthews, you know - he can't vote, you know, but an ordinary train - locomotive driver is - is a voter in South Africa, he has a right to shapen the destiny of our country by reason just of his colour.

S.T. We can't allow that sort of thing, I know - you know, but even our people cannot accept it - they will have to - we'll have to create institutions, no doubt about that, which are going to make it possible for every one of us to advance, even for the whites, for that matter, for - even for them to think that they can retain positions because of their skin colour and the privileged positions - that is going to end....

END OF SIDE TWO.

J.F. I think you've made your point - maybe I can - if I want to ask anything I'll ask it off the record, just for time reasons, but you're still on Robben Island and I'd like to get you off it, so just tell me what else happened on the Island in terms of if I can ask a few more questions - how did you know about the era of BC - you didn't - did you - how did you get to hear about it - you didn't have newspapers in say, '69 when Biko broke away from SASO - were you aware of the whole rise of the BC organisation?

S.T. Ja, we got (.....) from - through papers we were smuggling into the prison, and from booklets that we were getting and from even people who were coming in, you know - people arrested and convicted.

J.F. And were you worried about it - how did you feel when you heard about it - did you think these guys are wrong or what was your feeling when you got to hear about the rise of BC?

S.T. No, we were not that much worried about it, you know, and we - we knew that in - in due course that they will have to graduate, you know, to non-racialism, and they played a very important role, you know, insofar as mass politicisation and mass, you know, mobilisation was concerned, which was a problem in the '60s, you know, because of historical (?) reasons, you know, and the ANC was not fully operational in the country, you know, after the experiences of the '62, '63 setbacks, you know - the mounting of our underground structures, the arrest at Rivonia and those things and the problems, you know, of waging the armed struggle - the whole region, only Zambia was free - you know, the whole region was still enmeshed in a national liberation struggle, so the - the - the rise of BC in South Africa was a positive effect (?) you know, although of course in a sense one could even say that it - the - the - the - the backward wing in it, you know, sought to negate the Congress of the People in 1955 when we (?) said - said that in a way it was a - I mean the Freedom Charter does express it, you know, in so many words that, you know, black and white democrats must come together for the democratic South Africa, do you get the point - you see, so we - we were not that much concerned, you know, about it, and we knew that it was the responsibility of the revolutionary movement to direct it now - to direct the BC movement into more progressive positions, and which we did, even on the Island.

J.F. So you saw it in fact good, this is important because there was the lull, but you weren't ever worried that it might have a negative - were there times when you thought these guys could be destroying the gains of the congress....

S.T. Ja, we knew about that, hence it became important for us now to get into them, you know, not to fight them, but to get into them, politicise them, you know, and direct them properly, and those who are quite honest and sincere in the struggle will see the way, you know.

- S.T. I mean once we - we - we certainly knew that it could give problems, you know, in the long run by reason of it being colour politics, you know - colour politics are dangerous because it's not as good as (?) a - I mean it's just (?) as bad as tribal politics, you know, you see - that's why we know, for instance, that the imperialist countries were very much interested in - in boosting, you know, the - the - the - the BC life (?) in the country and I had to (?) posit (?) it against the ANC and says (?) non-racialism, and of course knowing that colour of the skin - politics of the skin, you know, are going to plant (?) you know, the revolutionary drive of the working class in particular, you know, you see, and in particular the anti-imperialist nature of the struggle - you know, imperialist countries, you know, are always like, you know, to preach politics, you know, that divide either on race or on - on tribal lines - there are many examples in Africa where they would play one tribe against another, even if there are no differences as such, in their newspapers, in the radio, so and so - even they're trying to do that right now in the ANC, you know - they say that, you know, so-and-so is a Zulu, so-and-so's a Xhosa, so-and-so's a whatnot, you see.
- J.F. When did you actually get contact with them - when the '76 trial came or did you get earlier?
- S.T. Ja, we got contact with them 1976 - towards the end of 1976, '77 in big numbers, you know, but when it all happened in 1977, 26th. (?) of June - I mean on the 16th. June - we knew absolutely nothing until some time in August, you know, when we picked up an old (.....) magazine, you know.
- J.F. And that's when you heard about June 16th.?
- S.T. We knew that there was massive shooting, you know, otherwise we did not know anything - what was happening, you know, something that we did not know - I mean we could not explain what was happening - we would be called, you know - the spans (?) would go out in the morning at seven o'clock and then we were supposed to come back at four o'clock and - but at times we would find them, you know, taking us in to have our lunch inside in the prison and thereafter show us a film show - we wondered (?) what was happening - why are these (.....) showing us film shows mid-week, you know, and in the meantime they were busy shooting kids, you know, in Soweto and the rest of the country - we did not know what was happening....
- J.F. What did the film shows have to do with shooting kids?
- S.T. No, they were trying, you know, to give an impression that they are kind (?) - I don't know really because oh, they were trying to pull wool over our ears - our eyes, you know - they - they are killing people that side and here they're goodies, you know, showing us films even mid-week and all that sort of thing, and we were feeling very happy - things are good and nice, you know, in prison, situation is improving - in the meantime there's hell going on outside, you see, so in 1977 they poured in (?) in big numbers, and we talked to them - some were very stubborn - they told us point blank that we have (?) sold out the struggle and so far as they are concerned we (?) are sell-outs because we've got whites (?) and poor Jews (?), you are always, you know, the ones being burned (?) - you know, the Jews have hijacked the struggle and we have no time for them, and PAC was almost defunct then, you know, and then it was revived with the advent of these youngsters, and things became very bad because we went to them - there were many of them, and we felt that we can't leave these youngsters like this - we must bring them into the flow of the revolution and give them the correct politics.

S.T. And then we clashed with the leadership of the BC guy, you know, and they were saying that the ANC must not tamper with these boys and - because they belong to - they said that ANC cannot recruit from SASO, you know, and ANC cannot recruit from SASM, ANC cannot recruit from BAWU, the black allied workers union - ANC cannot recruit from NAYO, the national youth organisation - ANC cannot recruit even the township youth anywhere because that is within the ambit of the - of the BC movement, and then we asked them from where we must recruit.

J.F. You asked who, the....

S.T. Ja, ja, where do you think we must recruit, and what we are saying I mean is exactly what the imperialists want, to isolate the ANC from - from the masses of the people, and we are not going to honour that position - we are going to recruit these fellows here into the fold of the revolution - we are the fighting organisation in the country and we need manpower, we are going to recruit them - and things developed to a head, you know, when they formed a - an alliance against us, PAC and the BC people - they would not play soccer with us - we had soccer clubs and rugby clubs and all those things and tennis, and then ANC was isolated - nobody would play draughts, nobody would play anything, nobody would talk to ANC and all that sort of thing, at the instigation of the PAC, and they came together there and clubbed (?) and we told them that what we are - you are clubbing against the ANC just as SWANU and other reactionaries in Namibia clubbed against SWAPO, just like Sithole's ZANU - Sithole, you know, Rev. Sithole's ZANU, you know, and other reactionaries are clubbing, you know, against the - the popular movement in - in - in Zimbabwe, the Patriotic Front, and you are an COREMO and others, you know, clubbing against the popular mo - what we are doing here is a - is a - is a - is a development that we are already witnessing in the continent - in - in the region here - reactionary organisations clubbing against popular people's organisations - at any rate, we won the battle because we got a lot of those fellows onto our side, many of them - converted them into the ANC - and many of them are here now in key leading - key positions in the ANC here - in our army as commanders, some of them, and in our - in our administrative offices all over the world, some of them, as even chief representatives of the ANC, in Europe and other places - so non-racialism won the day again.

J.F. How did they respond when you brought the whole issue of non-racialism up on its own - did you have debates with them?

S.T. Very, very, very hot debates - they (?) didn't accept it - black man, you're on your own, that was the slogan - black man you - even the poetry they wrote, black man, black man, black man, you see.

J.F. What do you think helped win that battle for the non-racial point of view?

S.T. No, we won it.

J.F. But what - if you think about the Island times, was there any particular argument you used or was there any particular approach or was there any particular way in which you think a factor that helped win it - people come, they're committed to an ideology they fought for, they've been sentenced for it, and yet the Terror Lakotas and (.....) - these people moved - what - can you think back to those debates to think which elements moved them?

S.T. You know, Julie, you know, like a teacher, you know, you - you - you would use your knowledge, you know - those they (?) were backward politically, you know - take a simple model, you know - here is Bram Fischer dying of cancer, you know, in - in - in a - in jail, you know, serving life sentence, and here is a Hlabane, you know, who gave evidence against Bram Fischer, who was (?) actually convicted - he's a black man.

J.F. Hlabane?

S.T. Ja (.....) you know - the fellow who was assassinated some time back - the chap who gave evidence at the - with Nokonono at the - for - against (.....) court (?) in the state in - in that commission - what we call them, these commissions in the US, when they had an - you remember?

J.F. With that young girl who was....

S.T. Ja, Nokonono from P.E.

J.F. What's her name?

S.T. Nokonono.

J.F. Is that the surname?

S.T. No, that was the first name - I just forgot the second name - and Barto Hlabane, you know him - he was a member of the Communist Party.

J.F. Wasn't he assassinated?

S.T. He was - that's the chap who convicted Bram Fischer by his evidence - he's a black man - how many other black men have given evidence against white - take Dennis Goldberg - Dennis Goldberg I mean how many blacks gave evidence - now you use such simple thing to disprove the notion that the black man, you know, you know, by reason of colour - simply by reason of colour, you know, he has a - he is the only one just - justified to fight, you know, and that the - the - the white people, by reason of their colour, are reactionary - I mean nature - I mean even if you study, you know, dialectics, you know - even in the ordinary physical sciences, you know - I mean natural sciences, there's not (?) - homogeneity, you know, is not there.

If you take this table here you'll find the particles making up this table are heterogeneous, you know - even this ashtray, if you were to break the molecules (?) there, there's no homogeneity there, you see, so it's worse (?) in social sciences like - like politics - I mean in (?) natural sciences can't talk strictly in terms of homogeneity, you know, so there's nothing like that - Matanzima's black, but is he beautiful because he's black, you know - you use those things (.....) Matanzima, you know - who would you prefer, Matanzima and Bram Fischer - between Matanzima and Bram Fischer, who would you choose, and this is the history of Bram Fischer, this is his role in the struggle, these are the privileges he forfeited, you know, from that society - this is what he's going through now, you know - you see that - simple models - you don't come with grandiose concepts (.....) and all those things - simple basic things - simple basic things, you know.

Here is Slovo - he's a key figure in the army, which is - which is going to carry out, and is already carrying out, you know, war against whites in South Africa - what do you say about that - here are the Hodgsons, founding fathers of Umkhonto we Sizwe, hot scene (?) you know - you point out the whole history of the white involvement in the struggle from the days of Bill Andrews in - in the teens (?) of the century.

J.F. What did you say about the founding of MK....

S.T. The - the Hodgson, you know - Jack Hodgson - I mean those were stalwarts who have been there in the forefront, and our people knew them - and then in (?) such simple things like Steve Biko inquest singing, you know, and these things -

S.T. And then from there now you advance, you know, to what do we mean by people in the struggle - who are the people - the enemy camp - the - the - the - the people's camp, you know - and then you bring in, you know, examples from other countries, examples from - from Angola, where you had Portuguese there who were doing very good intelligence work, you know, for - and you bring in - for instance, if you want to - to - to - to blow up Voortrekkerhoughter and you had to reconnoitre that area thoroughly inside and outside out, now how do you do it as a black man if they find you loitering around there, you know (.....) but a white can just drive around there and even he has the Moumbaris, Moumbaris did very good work for the movement, you know, you know, moving about as a tourist in (.....) National Park (.....) - in the meantime he was busy doing work - work for ANC, you see, so, you know, you just simple, you know (Tape off) - use those on - now come now with theories now.....

J.F. It's just really finishing up loose ends - the last time we spoke you'd finished up talking about being on the Island, and I think we might have pretty much finished discussing your stay there - you talked mainly about theory - I guess the only thing I wanted to finish up was that the BC people who came off the Island - who came on the Island - was that your first awareness of BC was when they started coming on, the Murphy Morobis?

S.T. Ja, in - in the sense of a physical contact with them it was, and getting first hand information as to what their outlook is and their attitude towards the ANC, the attitude towards the liberation struggle as a whole in the country - it was my first contact with them - and we felt of course that there was quite a lot wrong in their approach to our struggle and that we needed to bring them into the fold of the ANC in particular, and we did that - of course they had a lot of problems - some resistance from people who saw themselves as members of the black people's convention, and because we had established, you know, some sort of protocol on the Island that with them, those who belonged to the BPC, that we should work together, the ANC, the BPC and we'd (.....) together and confront the prison authorities together and try to have a common perspective in - not only in relation to our problems on the Island but also in relation to - to the struggle as a whole outside prison too, and to sort of establish a harmonised relation between BPC and ANC - that's what - the position we adopted with the first two members of the BPC who arrived earlier on Robben Island and....

J.F. Who were they?

S.T. Msibudi and Gutsewo - they are here - I saw them here - they're stranded somewhere here in Zimbabwe - they're not doing anything - and so that - that - that's the position that we took, and having done that we - we went on well for some time, but when the big group arrived, you know - they arrived - they became very unscrupulous and they switched their allegiance to the PAC and identified, you know, with the position that the ANC was being led by white people and it was a communist organisation, all that sort of junk, you know - now we tried to give them the - the history - the history of the ANC and how the separate (?) nationalism that the ANC put forward, how this nationalism broadened, you know, with the growth of the struggle, to bring into its fold other people from other racial groups, and that our nationalism was not a narrow one but a broad dynamic sort of approach to struggle in the country - that it was a product of - of the objective situation in South Africa, that we - we are not going to interpret - can't interpret correctly our struggle in terms of other people's experiences elsewhere outside South Africa - that nationalism, at any rate, is a product of its own situation and it takes shape, you know, according to the dictates of the situation it seeks to influence - that's our position.

S.T. We - we ran into a lot of trouble - they were very silly, very arrogant, these youngsters, and they were insulting us and all that sort of thing, but we insisted, you know, and there was a time when they ganged up the PAC and completely isolated the ANC, because their position was that we were encroaching to their liberty as organisation....

J.F. You were what?

S.T. Encroaching into their liberty - that the ANC cannot - should not recruit, you know, from these BC groupings, from - as I told you the other day - but we decided that we are going to recruit, and we recruited, and within two years, you know, we made progress - by '78, you know, we had taken quite a big number of them into the fold of the ANC - they come to (?) understand, you know, the - the - the - the policies of the ANC, the correctness of our strategy and tactics, and we were (?) not only the ordinary membership, you know, of the BC groupings but even the leadership, a section of its leadership - but there was the politically backward section, you see, the reactionary section of the Saths Cooper type, you know - obviously we detected that here (?) there're no prospects of our making any headway because firstly the Saths Cooper, for instance, and his group are not that much interested, you know, in - in - in fighting, you know, against the apartheid regime in South Africa more than they're interested in just being seen to be people who have - who are, you know, political conscious, and it's a privileged position to be known to be (?) political conscious and not seeking to identify yourself with the ANC, because I mean once you do so the ANC - once you do so, you know, you attract the attention, the hostile attention of - of the enemy, because the enemy knows it is all - all - always known, you know, that the - according to them the trouble-shooters are the - the ANC, and we have to deal with them, you know, accordingly.

That's the trend even today in South Africa, you know, those people who don't want to get hurt, who don't want to get their fingers burnt on (.....) the level of merely shouting slogans and whatnot but shun, you know, being directly involved in the struggle with the ANC, you know, for opportunistic reasons, for safety, for at the same time them to be understood to be in the fold, you know, of democratic - whilst in actual fact they are doing nothing - whilst in actual fact they are afraid of being seen by the enemy to be working with the ANC, because they know that once that - that's the case, and then the enemy's pouncing upon them - so that's the position, but they left the Island in (?) 1979 and I had no doubt by then that we are making headway here, and we did make headway by way of putting across our - our policies to the youngsters of the BC movement, the serious minded ones - I'm not talking about those who did not have that much of interest in the struggle - so that was the position.

J.F. Tell me about the communism issue - how did you deal with it - what do you think is the roots of this kind of suspicion about communism in the community - where does it come from and....

S.T. From the?

J.F. What is the roots of that kind of suspicion of communism to the extent that it existed that you referred to it, especially with the kind of Africanist and BC mentality that - why did they come up with this thing that communism - what was their fear, what was their suspicion, and how did you deal with it and how did you deal with it successfully - if you could address the whole issue of communism?

S.T. Ja, simply, you know, I mean on the surface of it, you know, that mainly communists are whites and their interests, and secondly, communist is - communism is an - is a - is a foreign ideology and having absolutely nothing to do with our struggle, and BC, you know, has its own solutions, which are not based on Marxism, Leninism - its only solution - solution to the problem in South Africa (?) and that the - this is what they said, you know, they're claiming originality, you know - it's an original philosophy, you know, and what Marx and Engels put forward did not mean, so far as they were concerned, that there was a ceiling (?) you know, in the field of creativity, of thought whatsoever, you know, so BC therefore is an expression of that understanding that the Africans can evolve their own outlook, their own ideology too, and at any rate, communism there's nothing good in it, so far as they're concerned - it's tyrannical, it's - it's - it's repressive and dictatorial and all that sort of thing, you see, and they even went on to state the PAC positions that (.....) of transferring our - transferrings of power to the working class - there's no working class - we are black people - we don't belong to classes, all that - we are just black people - the whole wrong, you know, set of concepts that they were using, and out of ignorance - they were young - quite ignorant and - although of course there were some intellectuals amongst them who knew what they were saying and not for our (?) purposes, you know, and - like Saths Cooper, as I'm saying, you know - he was not a bad boy, and obviously his interest, you know, being in the - in the entrenchment of - of imperialist (.....) in South Africa, you know.

J.F. What's the origin (?) - your (.....) state their position - tell me why you think people would have those kinds of ideas - what is there in the kind of formation of the consciousness of blacks that they would have that point of view - we understand why whites are afraid of communism - they get propaganda from a white government, but where do you think that kind of anti-communism takes hold, and how did you deal with it more....

S.T. From ignorance mainly - from ignorance, you know, and at the same time from - from a class position that they - that the - the - the - certain intellectuals in the BC grouping take, you know - not that they're ignorant - the rest is ignorant, but they're feeding that, like the PAC did, you know, you see - they knew, you know - they read, you know, even if they had not - never been introduced, you know, in formal discussions to it as such, you know, but they knew that what they were saying was in actual fact not the issue - it was very easy for them to come up and - and pose as a people who are being original, you know, in outlook and in thinking, you know, and well, communism basically insofar as we are (?) concerned was foreign to Africa, but they were rejecting it - PAC and this grouping, the BC said (?) they were rejecting it purely on an ideological (?) account - on ideological grounds - they did not want it simply - and of course, you know, they were being influenced because the - the government propaganda in South Africa is not confined to the whites.....

END OF SIDE ONE.



S.T. .... it's not confined to the whites - I mean it's put across racial lines - they want to win everybody onto their own side and - and in order to do so they're parading this communist monster, this communist bogey, you see, so a section of these boys was influenced by that, certainly - you know, the propaganda, and not only the South African government's propoganda but even the American propoganda (.....) US - British, a lot of - they were reading their - I mean such publications as the Digest, Readers Digest and Christian Monitor and whatnot, those things, and they believed (?) some of those things, and some of them read these for purposes of explaining to the, you know (?) politically backward of their lot, you know, just to insulate them against any influence in - from - from - from the Marxist-Leninist direction, so it was a deliberate war (?) counter-revolutionary.

We are not a communist organisation of course - the ANC's not and - but we understand what communism means, and we do understand at the same time how the relationship between the ANC and the SACP historically developed, you know, and we - we - we - we explain that to our membership, and we - we wanted them even to understand what communism is - (.....) intellectuals on that - this is communism - we're not imposing it on the membership of the ANC, but we wanted them to understand that this is what the philosophy's all about, you see, so that they must be clear, because we are in alliance with communism - they must know who they are, you know, and what their - what they think - you must know I mean the people with whom you're in alliance (?) - the - that's the basic point (Tape off)

J.F. I guess what I'm really interested in is how you tackled those kinds of prejudices without alienating, and if your goal was to say : O.K., this person's confused, how do we move them - how did you deal with them on that issue of communism?

S.T. You know, we dealt with them from a simple - we never posed just communists, you know, and we - we put across the perspectives of a national liberation movement - what it is and how it recruits from all sections of - of - of the society, you know, and we put forward models now from Asia, from Africa, from Latin America, you know, and why is it necessary that people have to come together in a (.....) positions - we did that - but at the same time we felt that, you know, the - they must understand, you know, the - the - because (?) most of them did not, you know - what actually is involved in the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and we would therefore again, you know, teach by simple models....

J.F. By what?

S.T. Simple models, you know - O.K., let's take the present struggle - we are waging an armed struggle in South Africa right now and you also are convinced that there's no way out excepting of arms (?) and where do you get your arms from - can the US administration give you arms to fight against the regime - can Britain give you arms to fight against the regime - can France do so, can West Germany do so, you know - why not so - why is it impossible - why are they having a community of interests with the oppressors in South Africa, why - what's the position (?) - what is imperialism - and we had to explain these basic concepts to them, you know - and where do we fit in as a national liberation movement in the - in the broad, you know, worldwide counter-offensive against imperialism - where do we fit - do we or don't we - those sort of perspectives, you know, but we approached it, you know, from the angle of presenting, you know, simple models, you know, without getting into the theories as such, you know, and that had to be done later I mean when ultimately you've made them see the points.

S.T. And then you had even to show to them, you know, the dedication of communists in - in the ranks of the liberation movement - Bram Fischer, Joe Slovo, you know, and Moses Kotane, J.B. Marks, you know, and these are communists in the ANC and, you know, who - who - who have proved, you know, over the years, over decades, their commitment to the ideal of a non-racial democratic South Africa, without necessarily positing, you know, their communist ideology on the movement, and that has to be understood....

J.F. What was that?

S.T. I mean that we made (?) that they must understand that position - that's why I say that ultimately we were able to convince quite a lot of them that the ANC's not a communist movement and that, at any rate, you know, communism is not the - the sort of monster, you know, that the - the regime portrays it to be - that communist countries are our allies, for that matter, you know, in the struggle against imperialism and capitalism (?) and racism - they're our allies - not only our allies, allies of all liberation movements, genuine liberation movements across the face of the globe - that was the position.

It was difficult, Julie, but we had to do it, you know, to convince them, because this was one main obstacle, what to do - talk to them.

J.F. Getting ready to leave the Island - is that a process - you knew your date of release would be in early '79 - did people prepare you or do you help get yourself ready to go off and did you have a sense of what you wanted to accomplish politically?

S.T. Ja, when you - when you are just about to leave the Island there's a lot of anxiety, particularly for long term prisoners - I was away for 15 years....

J.F. There's a lot of what?

S.T. Long term prisoners - I was away for 15 years, you know, and I did not know how the country looked like, and at the time of my arrest, for instance, there were no Datsuns, there were no (.....) South Africa, you know - we had Oldsmobile and Chevrolets and all those things, but these youngsters (?) was telling us about Kentucky Chicken or about Datsun Nissan Toyotas - what are all these things - and even the new currency - at the time of my arrest, you know, it was at the transitional period, you know, from the rand - from the Sterling to - to the rand, you know, so I was completely out insofar as, you know, the - knowing the - the currency of the country, whatnot and all those things, you know - the highways and whatnot, all those things were completely strange things to me, you know, so you - my mother (?) passed away, and I did not know how it looked like at home.

My brothers had become grown up, all married - I was single, you know - I'm the first born at home, you know, and they - they - they were already rearing up big families, you know - you know, these were the sort of things, you know, and what are you going to do, how are you going to do it, you know, and then you get people like Nelson Mandela, who'd, you know, sort of give you, you know - sort of arm you, you know, what you are likely to confront and what the expectations of the movement are, you know, about you - you've been here with us for so many years and we're sure that wherever you will be you'll keep the banner of the movement flying high - that's the sort of thing, and you feel very much inspired, encouraged and all that sort of thing.

J.F. Did you have any specific plans - how did it pan out once you got there - just interested in those years that you spent in South Africa from the time you got there - were you surprised at the politics you found, were you encouraged, how did people treat you, what did they ask you, what was the level of consciousness, what was the level of support for the ANC?

S.T. Well, I - I left the country - I mean the prison in 1979, and on the day of my release I was served with a banning order, which banished me from East London, the city, you know, home (?) city - I was dumped on the outskirts of King Williamstown in a small village called Peelton, and there I spent two years in isolation - you were not allowed to meet more than two people at a time, not allowed to - to - to talk to the press, people like you, and not allowed - and not to enter into an Indian area, into a Coloured area (.....) premises, so it was very difficult for me to communicate freely, you know, for some time - for two years, to be sure.

But people did come to me and I did go to them, and I could feel that, you know, their level of political consciousness was quite high, very high - they risked coming to my place, for instance, and they gave me a lot of encouragement and assisted in various ways, you know, so that I can find out - I mean I can adjust, you know, to - to the situation - no hostility and all that sort of thing, and they would even tell me that you must be careful of so-and-so, careful of so-and-so, don't talk this and that and that to him, he's a police agent and all that sort of - they told me all those things, you know.

And of course I mean I could see that they were - they were fighting - trade unions were on the move, civic organisations were springing up, you know, and eventually I got - when the banning order expired I got into the flow - I spent some time in P.E., and by that time I was already married and had a - a nice little daughter, Yonda her name - Yonda means go straight - it's a Xhosa word - when you say Yonda, go straight, don't give it - that's what Yonda means - that's my first born - she's in Zambia with her mother now, and people of course say : Hey, Steve, is this your first born (.....) - yes - how old is she - she's about one year now and - but at your age - and then such like things, jokes of course, now I mean which of course reflect on the number of years I spent on the Island - so I was accepted by the people - they were conscious, they knew what they wanted and they loved the ANC.

J.F. You found that, you....

S.T. No doubt, they loved - they really loved the ANC - they loved the leadership of the movement, they loved the policies of the movement - black and white came to see me, black and white were - were eager to assist me, you know - no racial prejudices at all, you see, and I was very happy too to notice that, you know, that the non-racial positions of the ANC have - have permeated right into the roots of our people through (?) the country, and I was sure then that the ANC, you know, is a - is - is the winner in South Africa, and indeed it is the winner - that's the position.

J.F. And did you get involved with specific organisations once you were allowed to be free?

S.T. No, not in the sense of membership - I was teaching then at a local high school there, and teaching history and....

J.F. Teaching when?

S.T. At the local high school in Peelton....

J.F. So you were allowed to teach from when you got off?

S.T. Ja, because, you know, they did not allow me to teach, but the - the - the masses, the people rose up - it was said (?) - that was in the Cis-kei - some were saying that now we can't allow communists to come and teach in our schools, all that sort of thing, you know, and it's dangerous and all that.

S.T. But the people said : Look here, this is our child - it's what the - the villagers said - this is our child, and if he's dangerous, let us detect that ourselves, but he must eat, he must feed his family, and here is a school - this is a - this school is a communal - is a - is a community (?) school, and take him to the school, we want him - so he had to relent against his will - I taught, but I was expelled and then detained in 1983, after I'd been to the launch of the UDF....

J.F. So you were expelled right after that?

S.T. Ja, they expelled me, and I had to choose - of course it was a - more of a question of a grudge than anything else, because on my release Charles Sebe took me to his brother, Lennox, and for the first time I came into contact with a puppet (?) and he - he told me that : Look here, you - you have made a very big contribution towards the struggle of the liberation of the black people in South Africa, and that's what I'm (?) involved in too, you know, and that is in the homeland, and I'm in the position in which I am today because of people like you, so I want to assist you - you have no money, you have no job, you have no - no - no - you - your friends have left you far behind and all that sort of thing - I'm going to give you a position as - as a minister in my cabinet - you'll serve as a minister of - of information and publicity in my - in my government - I declined outrightly, with due respect, thank you very much, you know - I even, you know - I thought what could our leadership say - what could Nelson say, what could Govin Kathrada say, you know - what - what would the youngsters or - on some of the leading positions in the movement (?) say - people I recruited in the '60s - some of them had died, for that matter, and then I turn and - against the struggle and join the bantustan - that would have been treacherous, you know, for me to have done - no amount of money could buy me away from the ANC in the liberation struggle - that was the position.

So I did not work directly with any organisation (?) at the time, except of course assisting in political discussions, political education in the trade union movement and assisting in the unity talks that were going on amongst trade unions - trade unionists, you know, for the establishment of one federation in the country - 1983 (?) came and I was elected as an interim chairman of the border region of the UDF, you know, so I went to Cape Town - came back from Cape Town - I told my kids in the class - I was still a teacher - that there's a new organisation - I brought them a lot of material - that the organisation the name of the UDF - that you - you are the - you are the heirs, you know, of - of - of a new South Africa to be born and - and you have a role, you know, to play so that we become real inheritors of the society that we are looking forward to accomplishing in our country, so you have to play a part now, you have to be involved in the struggle, you have to know - so I explained to them what the UDF means and its non-racial position.

J.F. And did you speak publicly at the UDF launch?

S.T. I did.

J.F. Had you spoken publicly from when your banning order was ended - did you immediately begin public speaking?

S.T. I addressed a lot of rallies, a lot - just a lot of meetings, workshops, speaking publicly, a lot - a lot of press interviews.

J.F. Did you have any sense of what particular message you wanted to get across - obviously there's a lot to say, but if you tried to isolate the priority you felt those years....

S.T. The priority, Julie, was getting people rallying behind the ANC - that's a genuine liberation movement in the country - getting people accepting the policies of the ANC, explaining them, not necessarily directly that it's what ANC says but this is - what is the correct approach to our struggle - I did that in the - you know, in the UDF, in whatever, just to - to - to - to make them, you know, come closer, you know, to ANC positions, and even to - to fully accept them - I mean I felt that was my commitment - I had no other (?) thing to preach, you know, other than taking people to the ANC - that was my mission, and of course destroying such counter-revolutionary things as the PAC, you know - I've an ingrained (?) hatred for them - that was the position.

J.F. And were there any particular people or groups that you were especially impressed with that had come up that you hadn't known anything about before?

S.T. No, even everything about South African politics I was reading on the Island, and I was listening to people who were coming in - I knew everything and it - it was our position that we must know everything as much as you can - there's no ceiling to knowledge of course - it's relative, but you must try to have your ear on the ground to be able to change the - the - the society which we want to change - you can't do it if you are ignorant, you - you have to know everything about - you have to know the BC, you have to know the - the - the Trotskyites - Trotskyite group, you know, in the non-European Unity Movement - you have to know the - the church (?) outlook towards the struggle....

J.F. The what?

S.T. The church outlook towards the struggle - you have to know the trade union positions, you know, and we have to correct some of their (.....) positions like, for instance, that the struggle is purely a working class struggle is economic and that the working class has nothing to gain by getting involved in struggles outside the factory floor - we have to correct those things, you know, that the worker is not sleeping in the factory, you know, and he has to board a bus home, and he has to get home, drink water and have electricity and rear kids who go to school, you know, and to contend - he has to have proper toilets, housing and health services - he's not sleeping at the factory, so he's - he must be of necessity involved in - in the political struggle that is going on in the country.

J.F. I guess what I'm saying is you'd known in theory - you'd heard what there was, but when you got out was there any particular person or group that you wanted to experience - is there any place that you wanted to rush to, is there any particular person that you found impressive that you wanted to meet with?

S.T. No, not necessarily, not as such - I wanted to meet - I was (?) in the vicinity, I was in - in the company of trade unionists, you know, (... ..) (... ..) and the lot of them, you know, they were just around here, and they were coming to me for explanation on that and that and that, and I was going to them for them to explain to me what and that and that and that, you know, so we were mutually reinforcing one another, you see, and I went to P.E. - I spent about three months in P.E. after the expiry of my banning order and met a lot of friends of mine, some of them from the Island, Hashe, for instance, I was staying at his place - he was a close personal friend of mine.

S.T. So I got detained in September, 1983, when I'd come back from the UDF, kept for four months and spent my '83 Christmas in prison and - I mean detention, and was released in January to be expelled from my teaching post at the school, was expelled - without job for three months, and with a very solid (?) wife behind me, Pam (?) is a good wife, and she gave me (?) the encouragement and - until a friend of mine, who is an attorney in - in King Williamstown, offered me a job - not that he had no people there but just to make it possible for me, you know, to - at least to - to eat, you know - so I worked with him and I was just about to do articles, you know, when I was banished from South Africa in 1984 in October, declared persona non grata, that if I have to - to confine to the Ciskei - that's your country - if you are to get to any point in South Africa you must be in possession of a valid visa and your temporary residents permit.

Well, I said I can't carry a - a visa in my own country - I don't recognise the borders you have drawn and the new so-called states you have created - South Africa's one indivisible, and it's my country - I'm not carrying any visa - but for safety's sake I took the matter, so that they don't take me to prison - I was prepared to go to jail - I would not - I've never carried a visa - so I lost the case in the Supreme Court in Grahamstown, and I took to an appeal in Bloemfontein - Bizos was defending it in - in Bloemfontein - it's on now (?)

J.F. The case?

S.T. Yes.

J.F. Who's defending you?

S.T. Bizos, advocate Bizos - judge Bizos.

J.F. But while you were litigating you still stayed in Ciskei - while it was under litigation did you live in Ciskei?

S.T. No, Julie, I could not - I mean that would have been succumbing to the - surrender to the fascists - I can never surrender to the fascists - I went all over the country - I visited many places, Kimberley, Wabatsu, whatnot, Namaqualand, rally - addressing rallies and disappearing quickly - they would mount roadblocks, look for me, I'm already behind their lines, you know, and then go again - that I did for over a year - they would not catch me - I was talking to our people, talking to UDF executive meetings, national executive meetings, addressing even regional - I was the border chairman of the UDF - I would go, you know - would go, use circuitous (?) routes, get to the meeting, speak and put across what are the perspectives of the UDF - what do we think as a regional executive committee, what should we do - I would attend, see to our people.

J.F. So you were underground - you didn't move house but you just....

S.T. No, I was running away from them - I did not want them to catch me - I didn't want them to catch me, but I went to places - I prepared myself to get to these places - I went and addressed, for instance, the massive funeral of Victoria Mhlanga - I was the key speaker there - and I was the key speaker at the mass funeral in Duncan Village in East London - I went to Uitenhage, you know, attended the - the mass funeral of the 29 people massacred by the racists, you know, in - in Uitenhage, Kwa-Nobuhle - I was there - all the way from Peleton I travelled.

J.F. But Peleton, is that in the so-called Ciskei?

S.T. Ja.

J.F. If you - when you went home to Peelson it was the only time you were doing something legal?

S.T. Ja.

J.F. But you couldn't stay there either because they would have (.....) to get you for violating?

S.T. I did go in 1985, after having been on the run for some time, just to see my pa (?) you know - I had a sense, you know, of feeling that they might arrest me ultimately (?) you know, and eliminate me that they've eliminated the Goniwes and the Calatas, and my close friend, Mashe, had mysteriously disappeared, presumably killed, and that likely - I mean the - the - the - that the same was likely to happen if they can catch me, you know, because they were frantically looking for me, but they just could not get me, and the Daily Dispatch, you know, the - the - the City Press called me the pimpermelling border president of the UDF.

END OF SIDE TWO.

J.F. Who were you more concerned about evading, the Ciskei police or the South African police, who....

S.T. Both - both.

J.F. Is it possible to say who's worse?

S.T. No, I - no, I was evading both of them and - you know, the - the police in the bantustan, you know, are even worse than these - they want to outdo their masters - they want to prove that they are really, you know, playing the ball with the so-called terrorists, and to get a pat on the back from the masters - brutal, nothing to defend, no prestige to defend - they're the skunk of the world and they are, you know, looking for any recognition and, you know, no sense of remorse for anything bad they're doing - they're outcasts, you see - they act from that position, you know - that's what is the case with them - and they even invite their masters when they detain you - so that's what they are, you know.

But on this day, you know, it was a very bad day for me and I've been on the run for - for some time, and I wanted to go and see my old man, and when I ran right into the hands of the security police, I found them in the lounge at night, about nine o'clock, and I was worried - they jumped, they were happy, you see - we told you we are going to get you and we're going to clip your wings, and we told you some time back that you were working your way back to Robben Island, and you wouldn't believe us - you wouldn't even accept our offers, because if you had worked for us you'd be a free and a safe man, given all the security, all the money and (.....) and all that sort of thing - you thought you were a smart lad around here and you were taken (?) away for a very long time - talking (?) away (taking away) (?) - it was bad - they said get dressed, because I was just in my shirt - they said just get dressed warmly....

J.F. Do what?

S.T. Warmly dressed to take me away - I got into my bedroom - I'd been away from that bedroom for - for months, you know - so took my jeans and my heavy coat and that was it (?) - and they were taking down the - the posters in the lounge there, UDF posters and all those things, you know.

S.T. They used to come there, they now (.....) but the - the day they took them down (.....) communicated with their - their - their headquarters, their regional headquarters, that now we have found him and he's under arrest.

J.F. Were they Ciskei or were they South African?

S.T. Police - South African - so it was bad, Julie, and I was saved, you know, by the arrival of a friend of mine with whom I taught at the local school, a fellow who was totally apolitical but who loved me, idolised me - he crept into my house - into our house, you know - drove into the yard, he was completely drunk - I don't even know how he got in there (?) you know, and then (.....) says : Oh, take me to the police (?) - (.....) he had nine (?) suits, you know, and he pretend as if you are good people, you are police (?) - as usual you have come to arrest my friend, but you are not going to get away with him today - you are going to arrest me instead, not my friend - you've been taking him away for a long time (.....) - every time you come here you take away my friend - and then they jumped on him, wanted to beat him up, and then I intervene : O.K., leave him, he is drunk, he's a friend of mine, don't do that - but you must not interfere - they are understandable about (?) his drunk - I was in the lounge with them now, separating - don't do that, don't do that - O.K., keep quiet, you - and then from there I made a bee-line - I pretended to be going to - to my - to my bedroom, and I made a bee-line between that point and the back door and I ran like a man possessed, you know, jumped - crossed the border into the Ciskei, because that portion of Peleton where I stay - Peleton is divided into two - a portion of it is in - is in - is in the so-called white corridor - that's where I was staying, so - and there's a railway line all the - the - the land east of the railway line from East London to Queenstown is in the so-called white corridor, and then west is a - of the railway line is Ciskei, so I was running for that border - I ran - they never saw.

They discovered, you know, about 30 minutes after I had left that this chap is not here, so they were looking for me - I went to (.....) at Mdantsane, you know, and I stayed there - that's where I was working with the leadership of the UDF in East London, in P.E. - P.E., Cradock and Cape Town - we were planning to have a (.....) from my hiding place, and from there I went to address that mass funeral - they were looking for me and people said (?) it's dangerous for me to go there, but I did go - talked to over 80,000 people, taking the struggle to the white areas - they're having a very good time, they're going to the beaches, they're going to the cinemas and they're driving nicely, you know, in the - in the towns, as if all this fire here in the townships is happening somewhere in Beirut - let's take it to them now, you see.

So they were very mad after me because incidents happened that very night after I had spoken at that funeral, you know, and I escaped immediately I - I spoke - I did not wait for the procession to the graveyard - they thought I was going to do that and then mount roadblocks - they - no - they mount roadblocks so people come up (?) they - they - they mount roadblocks - by the time they mounted their roadblocks I was already in the township, watching my TV screen - ultimately I decided to call it quits - I left the country in October, 1985 - end of October, clean-shaven, no beard, no specs, tight jeans, takkies, tee shirt, cap - I borrowed a - a friend's girlfriend, you know, to accompany me, heavily lipsticked and big earrings - we were some (.....) on a - on a - on a love sprees (?) to Lesotho.



S.T. They knew me by my heavy beard - all the photos they had they posted in their border posts wherever, in the police stations, heavily bearded, thick lenses - I removed all those things and I had - I had a - a false passport, false names, everything, but they nearly caught me at the Maseru border post because, you know, when I submitted this - the other two had no problems, they had their things stamped, and they took my - my - my passport and they went (.....) came back - what - what are your other names - no other names except those - went back, came back - I mean he went away, he came back and : Where is your dcompass - that is this - you know dcompass - that's a duplication, that I can't be carrying a dcompass and a passport at the same time, but the law says you must carry your pass - said : No, no, we are not going to do that (?) - I'm going to Lesotho now, you know - what are - how - what are you going there for - I'm going to a graduation party in Lesotho.

And he went away and he came back - well, you have never been to East London - never - where do you stay - in (.....) - what're you doing there - I'm a farmer - he went away, he came back, said : Look here, just wait here (?) for a little while - and then they rang the security police from Bloemfontein, you know, and these guys came and they identified me - no, it's not the man, that's what they said - in the meantime my specs were tucked under the seat of the car, you know, and a black man, policeman was searching my suitcase - when they let me go I went there - he was repacking - I (?) said : No, don't - don't worry, my brother - I was so tense - don't worry, leave it, I'll do it myself - he left it - he drove off - I looked back at them, bye bye, he's animal (?) - when I got to (.....) I looked at them, army men (?)

J.F. When you got where, to London?

S.T. No, it was Lesotho - stayed there, unpacked in the house where I was supposed to be lodged - unpacked, you know - to my surprise, you know - a huge UDF brochure - it was on the jacket I wore when I was addressing the rally - I mean the mass funeral - and a MACWUSA badge (.....) badge there - and then it was the ignorance of the police, you know, which saved me - so thereafter I had now to prepare myself for Lusaka, so we got onto a plane one day with my wife and my two kids....

J.F. They joined you right away?

S.T. They joined me about two weeks after - so we boarded a plane, direct flight Maseru-Lusaka - on the way the plane was ducking and diving in the sky, you know - it could not keep - keep buoyancy - and then the pilot was first to divert to Botswana, and then we made an emergency landing at Gaborone in Botswana, and then in the morning we slept there at the police station - we were guarded by the Botswana security....

J.F. Because they knew who you were by then - did they know who you were?

S.T. Ja, they did - and we spent the night there - there were 41 of us - and then in the morning we are told that no, some saboteurs had tampered with the plane - unscrewed certain knots (?) somewhere, all that sort of thing, so that's why the plane, you know, could not keep buoyancy and all - and apparently the text (?) was that you must land somewhere in the Free State (?)

J.F. Like Victor (.....)

S.T. Yes - so that is my story to you, Julie, and I don't know - I'm in Lusaka now.

J.F. How did you feel going into exile?

- S.T. It was bad - I was resisting - I was resisting - there were a lot of pressures that I must leave, but I did not ever enjoy (?) it, you know (endure it) (?) - the explosive situation which was unrolling in front of me and to which I had played a very tremendous part for - now I felt I wanted to see, you know, you know, the - the - our ascendancy into power right inside the country, you know, and I really wanted to mess them up, you know - I had that feeling that, you know, we - we - these are - it's a bad regime and we must destroy it, you know, and we must make things difficult for it and make things easy for the ANC to operate in the country, you know - strikes, consumer boycotts, everything - just do everything to weaken them, you know - but I had to leave and against my will, but it's a disadvantage which now I have turned into an advantage - I'm messing them up right now, and I make the point that they feel the pinch, and they're feeling it - they're feeling it.
- J.F. Tell me, when you spoke at that (.....) funeral and you said about take the struggle to the white....
- S.T. No, that was Duncan Village mass funeral.
- J.F. For - when was that?
- S.T. That was '85.
- J.F. Was that the last one before you left?
- S.T. That was the last I attended.
- J.F. What was the mass funeral about - what had happened to the people?
- S.T. You know this (?) uprising, this mass upsurge in the country, and over 19 people were killed, you know, in Duncan Village, just as it's even the case in Uitenhage, in Soweto, whatnot, this police impression (?) you know, of the - the people were fighting, stones and whatnot, you know, breaking bottle stores, burning them, burning administration houses, bus offices and all those things.
- J.F. What month was it that that happened?
- S.T. That was round about September.
- J.F. I just wondering what - you've been talking so much about non-racialism - if you could just clarify just so nobody gets confused, as to what - how taking the struggle to the non - to the white areas fits in with non-racialism?
- S.T. Ja, no, it's - it's one - it's one thing - you know, the struggle cannot be fought and won in the black townships - you have to fight in all areas in South Africa, and the white community must be involved in the struggle - you have to take them into the struggle and they must know that there's a war going on in South Africa, because they are living, you know, a very privileged life - imagine Botha, he's the president - he's supposed to be the president of the country, but he's an old man of over 60, you know, P.W. Botha, but he's a South African too, born in South Africa, but he was going to an African township for the first time this year, just to see how life it is in the township - for the first time - he's ruling that country, you see - that sort of absurdity, so they - they must know - they must know, they must be involved, you know, and even get hurt at times, you know, so that they know that there's a struggle going on there, and that there's a need for change.
- You know, it's not the African people who are going to fight for the liberation of our country alone, you know, and it's not the African people who must die - we are not going (?) to die for the liberation of our country alone, you know.

S.T. It - it - it belongs to all of us and all of us must, you know, play a role, either to liberate it or to - to - to - to keep it in bondage, but those who like to keep it in bond - to keep it in bondage must feel the pinch of - of - the pinch of the position they are taking - so taking the struggle into the white area does not mean going to kill whites and all that sort of thing - it means that we must also attack enemy institutions in the white areas, not only confine to attacking enemy institutions in the black townships - we must attack, you know, the police headquarters, the police stations - we must attack them in the white areas where they are, you know - that's what it means.

In the process ordinary white civilians might be caught, you know, in the crossfire, not intentionally - it's not intentionally, you see, but at the same time it brings an awareness once the struggle's waged across the country and across residential - racial residential areas, you know, people become aware - they don't take it as something that is happening in - in - in - in Beruit - they don't want to see it in their own TV screens at night when they relax, you know - that's the point, Julie.

J.F. Another point the South Africans got so shocked, the government, about the Goniwe funeral with the SACP flag - from your experience of knowing the Eastern Cape so well, did that just come out of nowhere - how - what kind of background can you give to that?

S.T. To the flag?

J.F. Although there're some people who say : Oh, it was the system putting up the flag.

S.T. No, it was the people - it was not the system, it was the people, but there's a case on about it and further investigations on that, but it was good you saw - I saw (?) - I was in the restaurant there - they were approaching the front of the coffins - the ANC flag, the SACP flag and the UDF flag, splashing of lines (?) against fascism in congress terms - that's what all it meant.

J.F. What's that?

S.T. That's what it all meant, there is an (?) alliance, you know, against fascism.

J.F. But from your knowledge of the area throughout the Eastern Cape, did you sense before that that there was actual SACP structures?

S.T. I did not know that they were going - that there were?

J.F. That there were - I don't want to talk about any of the litigation - cause problems, although this won't come out for two years anyway, but were you aware that there were such structures existing, that there was actually a base of support for?

S.T. Well, they should - I should have been aware of that, and any person with his mind in the right place - I mean the Communist Party has been there from 1921 - from 1921 right through - how could there be no presence of a cell somewhere around in that area there after such a long period of time, so it never surprised me - I wasn't surprised.

J.F. Just some last theoretical questions - are we talking - when I keep asking you about the non-racialism, are we talking about the national question - just to define terms, what's the national question?

S.T. Ja, the national question is a - a concept which relates to the immediate urgent strategic objective of liberating the oppressed black people in South Africa.

- S.T. The content - that's the content of the - of the strained (?) phase of our struggle - a national liberation of the black man, of the black people in South Africa - and of course, as I explained to you, this has grown to a - to bring nationalism has broadened to encompass all democratic forces in the country, including whites, but the spearhead of that struggle is the black people, and it's a struggle that goes hand in hand with the class struggle - it's not a phase issue that O.K., the two are going simultaneously but the emphasis is on - is on - on - on national liberation, but the working class struggle is not (.....) it's going on simultaneously - like I was explaining to you the prong of a fork - the prongs of a fork, how they operate, you know.
- J.F. Back in the early days of congress, did you talk about multi-racialism ever before you talked about non-racialism, or did you make a distinction between them?
- S.T. We talked about multi-racialism - we talked about the '50s and whatnot, you know, and our understanding even then of multiracialism was non-racialism, you know - we under - we - we never understood, you know, in multiracialism even at that time in terms of recognition of racial categories will be represented as categories in - in the government and all that sort of thing, you know, you see - we understood it, you know, in the present context, that what we meant then in the '50s by multi-racialism is what we mean right now - there was no difference - it was not an evolution, you know, from a certain ideological position to a new position, no - we are always non-racial - we're always non-racial, but we happened to have used, you know, that concept of multiracialism, you see.
- J.F. Can you comment on this perennial question that's been in the history of South African resistance about how far one should - the structure should go in setting up non-racial organisations within a framework that all one race only - do you think that there should still be the whites only kind of Congress of Democrat, Jodak kind of groups and the Indian congresses and African organisations and just organise separately at this stage or (?) in the future?
- S.T. No - no, not in the future - right now I mean the situation does demand in certain instances....
- J.F. (.....) what?
- S.T. In certain instances it does demand that you have here a particular group working in a certain area for specific purposes - take IDASA, you know, for instance - now IDASA, they have left parliament, they've come to realise after over a decade in parliament, you know, that the locus of change is outside of parliament, and they formed IDASA, these Afrikaaners, and what is important about it, you know - we don't say to them join UDF, join what and that and that, but the focus of their mission should be in the white community - it's easier for them to go to their own Afrikaaner people and speak in Afrikaans to them (.....) than it would be for me, a black man, to go - to go to Potchefstroom University and rally the - the - the Afrikaaners and say voetsak, kaffir, you know - so it's easier for them, for the whites, to go to those people there, talk to them in their own language, whatever, persuade them (.....) Botha - we want to cheer (?) you know, at the - at the base, power base of the Afrikaaner community - of the Nationalist Party, which is the Afrikaaner community - so it's tactically good that you - you - you set up organisations with a popular focus in a certain area, like NUSAS - NUSAS is rallying the white students, and SANSCO is rallying the - the black students, but we are working together - the two are working together for tactical reasons - at times the situation does demand that we adopt such strategies - do you get the point - nothing wrong.

- S.T. But not in a future South Africa, where we shall have demolished the walls that separate the people - we'll be all Africans in Africa, South Africans and compatriots, no group rights, individual rights strongly entrenched, bill of rights, whatnot, but no group rights because group rights take us back to square one, to apartheid - group rights for who, for whites, you know, minority rights for whites and all those things - do we have whites or shall we have whites I mean in the racial sense in a liberated South Africa, no....
- J.F. I was going to ask you about that - for someone who might say : Look, what's my protection in a future South Africa - can't there be some kind of protection of minority rights?
- S.T. No minority rights - that person was wasting the - his (.....) time - no minority rights, but there will be no minorities and majorities - it will be a country of the people of South Africa.
- J.F. And how would you say to that person that whatever they're worried about is going to be protected?
- S.T. It's not going to be - the product of justice are going to be protected (?)you know, in, you know - in no special way - there is a bill of rights there, there's a constitution there, which - which - which entrenches, you know, the - the protection of individual rights - Freedom Charter's quite explicit on that point, you know, and it will be further reinforced by a bill of rights - no minority rights, no group rights, because there will be no groups, there'll be people.
- J.F. And then I want to know that since the ANC's had such a long history and tradition of non-racialism, why was it - how can you explain why it was derailed to a certain extent in the '40s and '50s with the Africanism, even of Mandela and Tambo, as they said, and again in the '60s and '70s with the BC, even of the Murphy Morobis and those people?
- S.T. It was not derailed, Julie, you - I mean as I said, you know, that ANC is a broad coalition.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

- S.T. You got all sorts of people in the ANC and classes, social groups, what-not, you see, and it - it was only natural, you know, that in the '40s, for instance, that the youth league had to come up, you know, with that blend of nationalism, exclusvistic and anti-communist and all that sort of thing, you see, but that was a - a position taken by individuals, not by the ANC - that is why they too came to be convinced of the correctness of the ANC position - it was not the ANC that subscribed to that outlook but just a group of young African intellectuals, you know, who were not very much experienced in the struggle, who had read about the struggle at college, you know, and all that sort of thing, and who were still to find that, you know, the situation on the ground in the heat of the struggle is different from the situation in the lecture room, that there you come into contact with your enemy and you come into contact with your allies in the trench there as you fight, and that you come to rely on - on that person there because of his performance in the field, that you come to forget about his ideological persuasion, you come to forget about the colour of his skin, but you become inspired by the way he fires at the enemy and the way the enemy fires at him, you know - his determination and all that sort of thing.

S.T. And then you grow to understand now (no) that's not the myth I was believing in, you know, a myth - I mean even, for instance (?) if - if AZAPO were to be involved in actual struggle in South Africa, to be involved not just to be a talking shop, you know - to get involved in the struggle, they would have long realised that their position is erroneous (?) - it - it - the best teacher is the struggle - that's where you get to know people - you get into the river, you swim there - you don't learn swimming in bed - you get into the river there, you negotiate with sharks and whatnot and crocodiles and you come to recognise that this is a friendly fish, it's not aggressive, that one is (?) aggressive - not from bed - when you are in bed you can have all manner of illusions about the - the - the fauna in the - in the water, but once you are there, you come to realise that no, this one is actually not dangerous, you know - when you get to the sea you swim there, you come to understand that oh, the - the - the - the dolphin is a - is a friend of man, you know, unlike a shark, you know, but they are all fish, but once again you begin to differentiate now the hostile ones and the friendly ones and all that sort of thing, so that's the thing - so if they can just get involved in the struggle and stop talking about it, fight it, you know, they will come to understand what is - what is what.

J.F. My last question is what are you going to do when South Africa's free - do you ever have goals, do you think about specifically where you'd want to be and what you'd want to be doing and what you think would be your best contribution, do you?

S.T. What's that, Julie?

J.F. Do you ever think about what you'll do when South Africa is free - what role do you want to play in a free South Africa - do you have any idea - you've never been able to do anything on a - teaching isn't necessarily what you're equipped to do, and if you were in South Africa that's free and you thought about what position you'd want to be in or what specifically you'd like to....

S.T. I don't know, Julie - I don't know what I'll do if I survive, you know, the revolution, you know - I might die on my way back to Lusaka today, you know, I might die tonight - there might be a raid in Lusaka and I might die in that raid, you know - anything might happen, but if I do survive, I still hope to play my role, you know, the role I've played all alone the line - help build that country in whatever way wherever I might be assigned, you know, whether I - I'm sent to teaching, to the police force and to - to what, you know, but wherever I will be placed I will do my level best, you know, to build national unity, reconciliation and reconstruction - I'll play my role wherever I could be placed - I have no specific ambition, you know, but I would like to be there (?) return there and back (?) - I would accept just any position, just as it is the case now - I accept any position that movement gives to me, if I'm capable of doing that - if I'm not, you know, I can't do that - I don't have the ability to do it....

J.F. You don't have what?

S.T. I don't have the ability to do it, but I'm not going to pick and choose, you know - I will accept any responsibility assigned to me, and you will be there too (Laugh)

J.F. I'd like to get that book that you talked about, that (.....)...

S.T. Donjado - get a friend from South Africa to get you that book.....