

INTERVIEWEE: Cedric Mayson

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PLACE: Johannesburg Central Police
Station



Q: Maybe the best thing to start with would be to tell us how you first came to be held at John Vorster Square, What were the circumstances of your detention?

A: How it happened. Yes, you see it was quite a unique thing because we were actually on our honeymoon. We'd been married in Cape town by Theo Kotze who was a minister in a Methodist church like I was but he was also in the Christian Institute. He was the Regional Director for Cape Town, Western Province. And on the way home, we were going up the Garden Route and this police car came alongside and waved us in and they said look they were security police and I was being detained so they said would we follow them down to Mossel Bay so we did. Now my wife was originally from overseas and she had only come before that situation so she really didn't know the situation. The Security Police at Mossel Bay didn't know anything about the situation so they had been told to pick us up. So eventually we were transferred into two police cars and they drove us through the night eventually to our flat in Twist Street in which they had a group already in there ransacking the whole place and then from there they brought me round here.

Now I had previously met Struwig and I met Cronwright and I met Petou because you see in the Christian Institute, and I had worked there for several years, and we were constantly being interrogated about one thing or the other. So I knew who they were and they knew who I was. So then they brought me round here and that was it. In that sense I was armed by the fact that I knew who I was dealing with, you know, it wasn't a completely strange thing. And then I remember they took me into a room where Struwig was there and he had a file about this thick and he said, "Well this is where we begin your interrogation," and he started to ask me all sorts of questions and it was quite clear that they had been following me and asking questions in the congregations I had been involved in for several years and they'd got their lines so completely messed up. I have a cousin overseas who at that stage was quite well known in the British Communist Party. I also have a sister who came to visit me and someone had confused these two stories, you see, and said that my sister was a prominent member of the Communist Party. You can't imagine anything more impossible than my sister being a member of a communist party. So I remember saying to Struwig "How on earth do you get these stories? How much do you pay people for them?" and he said "No we recognized that some of these stories were more true than others." I was constantly trying to maintain my relationship with them which said "Look, If there is any agro, it's coming

from your side, it's not coming from the Christian Institute side. We are quite ready to answer questions, we are quite ready to tell you all sorts of things that we are involved in". So that the agro eventually did come from their side. So then he started going through all sorts of questions to us. What they were trying to do, you see this was in November 1976. They knew that we had been involved in a lot of ways with people in Soweto. They did not know at that stage that I had been involved in taking people out of the country. I used to fly light aircraft and they did not know that I had been involved in taking people out of the country at that stage or any of the other activities that we'd been doing.

I remember them saying that what had happened in Soweto by the students - and not only in Soweto of course but in many other places around the country eventually - that this had not thought up by Black people. It was a White initiative and they were trying to say it was a Christian Institute initiative, which of course it wasn't. We knew what was going on but there was nothing to do with our initiative at all. And it was also quite clear from the beginning, and we had worked this out long before: the one that they were really gunning for was Beyers Naude. He was the leader of the Christian Institute: the Afrikaner, the leader of the Broederbond who had discovered the truth as he saw it and then left and he started the CI.

We had always realized that what they would probably try and do is take one of us and put us on trial and then use that to blacken Beyers and then eventually pull Beyers in and we also thought that what they would probably do is take either Auret or me and try and use the one as evidence against the other, but that was pure supposition on our part. And by the time they took me it was quite clear that what they were doing was quite really to build up the case that the CI was part of an ANC network, which it simply wasn't and I may say that was quite deliberate and that's what they were after.

Q: During this first detention were you physically assaulted?

A: Well the way they used to do those detentions you see it was the same with both of them but the first one was worse. What they did, they started off with the interrogation and then when Struwig was tired he pulled in another couple of guys and they kept up this interrogation. And eventually it went on three days and nights continuously. So you weren't allowed to sleep. They would give you a bit of food occasionally but you weren't allowed to sleep. Cronwright came in quite near the beginning of it and said "Why has he still got his clothes on?" and started to pull my

clothes off. So I said "Look! Leave it I'm perfectly capable of taking my own clothes off and if you haven't seen a naked man before I have," so ok, so this sort of business you see. And it was that sort of attitude that they were trying to break down and so then I didn't have any clothes on for a couple of days and nights right through and it was quite cold at night and they gave me a blanket that I could put on if I got very cold and so forth.

And then you see they kept up the succession of people coming in to interrogate. So other people had the same thing and you were the only person who was there all the while and what I used to do, I used to ask them questions "Why do you ask that, where do you get that from?" that sort of idea and they would say things and then you could put this together with different answers you got from other people. So in that sense it was a game of wits.

There were certain things that we did not want them to know about that we had been doing but what they were particularly anxious to get was the fact that I was part of an ANC cell. Now a few months before in fact, I had met Thabo Mbeki in Botswana. One of my children was at school in Botswana and so I had a perfect excuse to go through there, either by car or fly through which is the way we usually went. I'd met Thabo and had fascinating discussions with him because at that stage most of us in the Christian Institute had not known personally, not known any of the ANC leadership. We had the same principles, we knew all about the Freedom Charter and we had met many people on the ground who had been inside for one reason or another and come out again either from the Island or from jail or whatever but it was the first time I'd had the opportunity to meet prominent people and he was quite opposed to the idea that I should become a member of the ANC because he said, "What you are doing is far more valuable to the struggle if you are not a member of the ANC than if you are a member of the ANC." So there would be no question of us being part of the ANC in that sense.

In any case they wanted to get the story and the interrogation went on, one after the other and then at one stage they took me through into a room. It was an office. I think it was probably on the 9th or 10th floor, I can't remember which, and there they got the whole staff to come including all the women to come either in the room or standing on chairs outside looking through these clearstory windows and they just started insulting me trying to break me down, saying I wasn't Christian at all, I was being activated by the Communists or by something like that. One after the other. It went on for quite a long while, they were

shouting at me. They just wanted to make me lose my rag I think. And then they went out one after the other. It was obviously very carefully prepared and then each time each person went past me they either spat at me or insulted me or something like that you see, except Struwig who was the ex- boxer and gave you a big thump. And he'd also had a bit of a run-in with my wife at home when they were searching the place and she got very cross with him because he was insisting on reading everything including all her love letters which were there, which he found and so I remember she threw something at him and missed him, but still, anyway that's another story.

I was very tired by this lot that was going on. And then they took me in to see this chap, Van Wyk, Spyker. He was called Spyker because of what he had done to Mac Maharaj and he took my fingerprints.

Q: Sorry what had he done to Mac Maharaj?

A: He nailed his foreskin to the table. Ja. So that's why he got that title. Some people say it was on nails but it wasn't, that was the story. But I never discussed that with Mac Maharaj but I believe that was the story. But in any case Spyker for some reason just jumped on me, got hold of my hair, and I was handcuffed behind my back you see but I was bigger than he was and I think he was wanting me to fight him back or something like that but I knew that way was no answer you know. You couldn't win those sort of battles. So he just pulled me all over the floor and pulled part of my hair out and later when one of the security police came back, one of the guys who'd been questioning me came back to resume his questioning, he wanted to know where all the hair had come from, you see so I told him. So that sort of thing went on but I didn't have any of that heavy beating that some of them did have. I don't know why, I thought at the time it might have been because I was a bit older than many of them. Many of the guys who were beaten were the students. I was in my top fourties, fifties by then. It may have been because I was White. It may have been that they just couldn't understand my attitude, I don't know. But in any case, but it was bad enough and of course the tiredness got to you in the end. You just keep going. But when they eventually took me back to a cell, all you had was a mat on the floor but you just die, you just go out.

Q: You were kept in solitary confinement?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you able to communicate with other prisoners?

A: In the first detention these inside bars that you see on these inside windows were not there in John Vorster Square at that stage and the outside windows you couldn't

get through them they are still the same windows but they're just slots that open. At that stage you could open those slots and at night the place was quiet because your lights were on all the while but the place was quiet and you could then talk to the people in the next cell through that way. I didn't know any of the people who were detained at the same time as I was. There was an Indian woman, a Hindu woman there. She was in the cell on the other side. I cannot remember the name of the guy that was next door to me but he was very upset, a White guy, he was very upset about what was happening and we had a long discussion in the middle of the night. He wanted to know why was it that I was different and this Hindu woman was different, and what difference did faith make? So we had a long discussion about theology in the middle of the night and I was trying to encourage him to keep going because he was scared of what they were going to do but apart from that there was that sort of thing, there was no discussion with any other comrades at all.

My second detention, I was held much longer and then there was no discussion with other comrades but I met a couple quite by accident and I was walking along the 9th floor with my guard and coming towards me from the other way I saw Barbara Hogan with her guard and well they knew that we had been in touch with one another, I mean everybody knew that. So we greeted one another but didn't talk and so forth. And another person that I met in a similar way was Frank Chikane and I could see when Frank was coming, we were both trying to work out, now do they know we know one another or don't they, you know. So in the end we just said "Hi" and that was it but we didn't want to get too closely associated. Frank at that stage was still a minister out at Kagiso, near Krugersdorp and had been doing quite a lot of work. He had an education project with a lot of duplicators. The old fashioned duplicators and in fact after everybody else had gone home they had been doing an awful lot of pamphlet making which we'd helped with, with the financing and also some of the written stuff. There were other things that we had done. But we didn't let on any of that of course, Ja.

Q: Going back to the first detention, how long were you detained in total?

A: Only 16 days.

Q: And what kind of effect did it have on you emotionally and physically?

A: Well you better ask my wife. My wife was a bit shattered because one of the things we had concealed at that stage was that the Christian Institute had been receiving a lot of money from outside which we'd been able to pass on for

various projects and things inside and we'd realized that eventually we would be interrogated about this and so I got two lots of books, one which I could quite legitimately be interrogated about and one which was the records we kept. That book was always on my desk and when my wife went through things after I had been taken in, she thought it was probably secret so she hid it away somewhere so they never got it. So I said did they find it on my desk and they couldn't so they took me home to get this book And I managed to convey to my wife what had happened and eventually she found it and produced it but she said at that stage I was hardly recognizable because I was totally involved with what they were doing and what they were saying and I hadn't had sleep you see. So I think I was affected physically in a sense that it wears you down a bit but spiritually and mentally I was very much on the ball.

I remember one of those, I don't know if you ever had any of those moments, of real spiritual perception, which one of the few that had happened to me in my lifetime was here, after I came round after that first interrogation and I was all alone in that cell, just like this except the walls were green and I remember walking around that thing and being absolutely convinced that we were going to win. There was no question, they might kill me, they might do anything to me but we were going to win the struggle. It was a tremendous experience of faith which buoyed me up tremendously all the way through but mentally, intellectually, I always like playing chess, and the challenge of the questioning and answering I found quite stimulating and not the other way around.

Q: In either of your detentions were you ever allowed visits or parcels or anything from the outside?

A: At one stage we were, change of clothes, that sort of thing. Because they took us in without any change of clothes or anything like that. I think my wife was allowed to come once or twice a week. She's got a notebook at home because right from the beginning, and it went on in the second detention, in that 15 Months I spent in the Fort or in Pretoria. Right from the beginning she kept a notebook of what she brought in and sometimes they'd initial it to say that they'd got, it you know. At that stage it was basically clothing, change of clothes and that sort of thing you know. Later on, but that was when I was in the Fort, when you move from the category of detainee to category of awaiting trial prisoner then you were allowed to have food parcels and that was when the Detainees Support Committee did tremendous work organizing those. It was also how we managed to smuggle whisky into the Fort for Christmas, but that's another story.

Q: All your interrogators and warders, Were they all White?

A: Yes, They were White. They sometimes brought Black guys in with them but they did not take part in the interrogation. The interrogators were White. On that I should say there were differences in the interrogators especially when they had a lot of us in detention at the same time because the same sort of thing was going on with other people and they didn't have enough skilled guys to follow this through and that had a couple of very interesting spin offs as far as I was concerned. I can't remember if it was the first time or the second time but one of them was that they brought in people that were clearly not skilled interrogators. So their instructions really were to go on asking questions but to keep you awake not to let you go to sleep that was the idea. And I remember the second interrogation in particular, it was very clear that between 1976 and 1981 there was a change in attitude amongst many people here. Originally there was no question that they were going to win. Apartheid was going to be established, the ANC was going to be knocked out of the picture, all the opposition parties were going to be removed. And by five years later that completely changed and some of the tough guys like Cronwright and so forth were still convinced about it but others were talking in terms of "When you guys take over," that sort of thing. There was a clear difference there and it was there that I began to notice the difference in attitude in some of the interrogators. They were all White but some of them began to see the writing on the wall. One of the other things that happened once with one of the Black guys was very interesting because there was a desk in the room and both guys had been sitting at the desk and I had been standing there and they kept throwing questions at me then the White guy went up the corridor and the Black guy moved over and stood in the doorway and over his shoulder he said to me "Sit on the edge of the desk." It was an interesting sort of sympathy that was coming through and I never followed it up afterwards. But there were the changes in attitude you see and of course to sit down even on the edge of the desk after you spent days and that was tremendous relief.

Q: Before your first interrogation you had come to John Vorster Square specifically for questions you said?

A: No, they had come to us. We had offices in Daikonia House which is still there in Jorissen street in Braamfontein. They came there.

Q: You never been to the building itself?

A: I don't think I had been here at all.

Q: Did John Vorster Square as a place mean anything in particular to you at that time?

A: Oh we all knew this is where the heart of it was. We all knew about the 9th and 10th floor. We all knew where Timol

had been pushed out or sort of jumped out and in fact my first detention he took me around and showed me the window he had gone through. It was part of the intimidation process. Now we all knew the reputation that John Vorster Square had got but we hadn't been here at that stage. Some of my friends had been in here and Horst Kleinschmidt was one of them. He was the first person I took out the country illegally but he'd been here earlier, long before I did and he told us when he came out, he told us all the things that had happened you know.

Q: So had you prepared yourself in any kind of way for the possibility that you might be brought here?

A: You always realized it was going to happen. We were always being followed and often they wouldn't attempt to hide themselves, they would let you know and you know, you grew up over a period of years with the realization. You never talked on a telephone. You assumed that all the phones were bugged. We had a funny experience about that too because at one stage we'd moved from Twist Street to Crown Mines and applied for a phone and in those days if you applied for a phone you could expect to wait for at least three or four months and in fact I went round there one day before we moved in and the telephone people were there putting a phone in. So I said, "Well now we know how to get a phone quickly, you get the security police interested you see," and of course they didn't respond at all. But apart from that I mean we had no extensive discussions of what we were going to do if it happened.

One of the things that we had always wanted in the Christian Institute was the opportunity to go public, to tell people what we were doing and why we were doing it and in as wide a way as possible and it was nothing to do with Communism, it was nothing to do with revolution in the sense of warfare. It was to do with rights, it was to do with justice, it was to do with all those things. It was to do with Gospel basically. So from that point of view we had been preparing ourselves as it were for what was going on and we'd also had a lot of criticism of course from colleagues and other people in the churches who were scared. At that stage I was the editor of the magazine Pro Veritate which came out monthly and quite often we would have people who would be worried about this and say, "No you mustn't say those things" and that sort of thing not because they were wrong, but because they thought we might have problems with the Security Police and we'd always realized it was a struggle and we would have problems at one stage. But we hadn't had big seminars on what to do when it happens or anything like that.

Q: And then going back to JVS, do you remember anything

in terms of sensory experiences of the building?

A: I remember every now and again Cronwright who was a leader here of the building, of the security police and he was a terrible person in many ways. We used to say he reminded us of Hitler because of some of Adolph Hitler's rantings and he even looked a bit like Hitler if you look at pictures of Cronwright. He would get people out into one of the corridors, a group of people and then just rant and rave for ten minutes, quarter of an hour, longer about all sorts of things and with me what I remember in particular was the way in which he always used to attack me on what he thought were theological grounds saying that what we were trying to do was anti-Christ and all that sort of stuff. And in fact I think my first detention was more or less over. I had made a statement and I think he was going to release me and I made a mistake of tackling him on this grounds of his Christian belief. And he ranted and raved forever and then he said my statement must be rewritten in Afrikaans and my Afrikaans was always awful. And he brought some policemen in to translate the whole thing into Afrikaans and he brought in a guy who could hardly speak English. So we battled to try and get this thing and in fact it took two days and I'm sure it was part of Cronwright's sort of spiteful reaction because of the reaction I made. I remember that very clearly. I remember clearly the incident with Spyker. The incident with people mocking me through the windows and so forth and in the room.

Q: What were they saying as they were mocking you?

A: Oh! They were saying just that I was a Communist and that I wasn't a real Christian at all. And then some of them took the line that the sort of Christianity I had was opposed to freedom which they said was theirs, you see, and that sort of idea. I can't remember the details now. Possibly I wrote about them afterwards I don't know.

Q: So your being a reverend or a person in the church never got you any leeway with any of your interrogators?

A: No, not at all. At least not as far as I know. I think with some of the interrogators as I say you have a series of them, I think some of them were genuinely interested to know how someone who had got a theological background could be in the position that I was and could take the attitude that I did to a liberation struggle. You see they were so completely indoctrinated that the old Afrikaans Nationalist approach was the Christian approach and to find someone who could out-talk them on theological grounds, because I knew more than they did, and took a different attitude to them on the political ground, this intrigued some of them and they wanted to know how. Others of course simply just wanted to plough you. So that's what they would always do.

Q: Just going back to earlier when you were describing what you could see out of your windows?

A: They moved you around a little bit but one of the cells I was in I would look out to the East and if you go up there and look out there's a triangle in the middle there covered with pigeons and people going backwards and forwards and so forth and it was always very interesting to see something of the rest of the world, at least you could see it in those days. When they put these grids up it became more difficult to see out.

One other thing I should mention in the second interrogation, one day without any announcement they took me through to one of the offices and then the door opened and they brought my wife in and I wondered what that was all about and then I saw she was wearing a black armband. Now it was never our custom in the family to wear black armbands. So I said, "What's all this about?" wondering what on earth had happened. So she said, Cronwright brought her in, so she said to Cronwright, "Can I tell him?" and he said, "Yes" and this was Neil. And apparently what had happened is that after Neil died there was such an outcry through the Detainees Support Committee and then through everybody to say how many of the other detainees are still alive? And so everybody was then given a personal visit to prove that they were still alive and that was the story about that. She knew much more about Neil Aggett's detention than I did and she was very friendly and still is, with Liz who was his girlfriend. But that's the sort of memory that sits very strongly.

Q: Was that the first time that you were aware that Aggett had been detained?

A: That was the first time that anybody else was detained except those that I had seen like Barbara and Frank but it was certainly the first time that I knew that Neil was in there.

Q: During your detention were you ever visited by a magistrate or a district surgeon?

A: Not here, no. When I was in the Fort and particularly I was when I was in Pretoria. But that was in the prison but not here. No.

Q: You were held at various places, how did John Vorster compare to other places that you were held at?

A: You see the ruling factor to answer that question is the personality of the people in charge of you and there's no doubt that this place was dominated by Cronwright and Cronwright's attitudes and he was so tough that it just dominated everything else. The person in charge of the security aspects at Benoni when I was there was a Captain Van Rensburg and he was a much more approachable

person. You used to wonder, you see, are they playing a game here that you have a tough guy followed by a weak guy. They certainly did that with the interrogators. Some of the interrogators that came in, often there were two at a time and one would be extremely rough with you and the other one would be softer. This was a sort of well-known technique to get through to people. But the dominant difference here was Cronwright.

Also it was bigger and it was more impersonal in that sense. At Brixton it was much smaller and also at Brixton they had more Black police than they had here and the Black police at Brixton were very sympathetic. I mean there are stupid little things that you remember but there was a woman that I didn't know, a Black woman, I didn't know her at all but she had also being detained and was being held in Brixton. And one of these cops, a Black one, brought me a message from her, you see, just a simple Amandla type message you know because she knew who I was, although I didn't know who she was and at that stage, you asked about things being brought in, at that stage they were allowed to bring food parcels in for Christmas. My wife did. She had to deliver it here. She had no idea whether I was in Brixton or Benoni. She had to deliver it and eventually they took it out. But amongst that, stupid things that you remember, but amongst that there was some Liquorice Allsorts and these little jelly tots things. So I picked out some of the yellow and green and gold jelly tots and stuck them in the bag and gave them to this cop to give to this other woman. I never met her at all, I don't know who she was. But that sort of thing you didn't think about here. Here at John Vorster it was very tough and nearly everybody you dealt with was White. And sometimes they had to bring in people from, they had simply run out of cops, they would bring in people from the Railway Police and that sort of thing and they were White guys. But I believe that Cronwright was eventually moved because they said he was too tough. I believe he was a bit tough on the staff. I don't know at all.

Q: Going back to Cronwright, he obviously comes up in a lot of stories in detention. Can you tell us more about his personality?

A: I don't know what his background was but I think he was originally; I think he had some Scots blood in him. His name is Arthur Benoni Cronwright so at what stage he'd come into this country and how he became involved in the security police I just don't know that background but he came over as a very arrogant person. A bitter person, he could be cruel and he used to use that attitude to put fear into people. Whether it was part of his nature or whether it was something that he put on or whether it developed as

part of his job I don't know. Probably a bit of all of them. On a couple of occasions I tried to get through to him when we were on our own, mainly on the Christian line because he used to maintain that he was a staunch member, I think of one of the Afrikaans Pentecostal sects if I remember correctly but someone would know about that. I used to tackle him on some of those lines but of course he just didn't want to know, he was completely certain in his mind, you were the enemy and he was going to defeat you. That sort of idea.

Q: And then both of your detentions he was still here at John Vorster?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Now, you told us of how you were detained the first time. The second time was in 1981 what were circumstances of your being detained that time?

A: Well you see by then we had moved to Yeoville at the house we're still living in now and in the interim there had been various interchanges between the Security Police and the Christian Institute and the big thing by that stage was that we had been banned for several years and that meant that during that period of course you weren't allowed to meet anybody else who was banned or go to visit anybody else who was banned, you had to remain in the same place and so on. And in fact my mother and father at that stage were both in the UK and they were both very sick and I had applied for permission for my banning order to be lifted to enable me, it was a funny sort of thing, all I had to do was to get a release to go out of Jo'burg just to go to the airport and they also had to give me permission that they knew all about me going. Eventually they gave me permission and eventually they took away the banning order. But it meant that throughout that all that period, for example Beyers and I were banned together with others and we were never allowed to meet one another but we met one another constantly. We used to set up one meeting at the previous meeting and that sort of idea. We were in constant touch with Horst Kleinschmidt who was in Europe by then and that was done by telephones mainly and we had the numbers of a whole lot of public phones around Jo'burg and we'd given them all names so that when we'd have the conversation one of us would bring up the name of Angela or something and we would know the next phone call which would be at certain date would be to this other phone call. That sort of thing. So by then we got used to living with the pressures of security and that sort of thing and so we weren't really very surprised at the second detention. They arrived, Cronwright was there too and Petue and various other people. They arrived in cars about five o'clock in the morning at our house in Yeoville and they came in and said

they had come to detain me and so forth and they wanted to see all the children and make sure everyone was around which they did, the kids all woke up anyway. The dogs were barking like crazy. And then they searched the place and the interesting thing was that we had a couple of places which we'd made to hide papers and hide money in and that sort of thing and they never found them. Altogether they searched the place ten times and they never found anything. It was things like false bottoms, false bottoms in the cupboards and that sort of stuff.

So then they took me away but by then it was a different sort of thing. The struggle was much more advanced by 1981 and we had by then been fully expected that something was going to happen and Steve [Biko] was dead and all those other things had happened and the interrogation when it took off it began with me where I had left, the previous statement I have made and then they wanted another statement. There were major changes in our understanding of what the situation was. I've already indicated that it was a change which some of the interrogators understood too because whereas before there was no question before, Verwoerd was a great hero and Vorster was a great hero and they were going to win. By the second detention they were talking in terms of "When you guys take over" and it was quite clear that they were anticipating that there was going to be a change. And also we had realized that the struggle had taken a new picture altogether and in the interim we'd got much more closely linked with people in other parts of the world who were supportive of what was happening and of course people in our own country who were supportive of what was happening. The whole liberation theology thing had burst. That was the big bubble throughout the world at that period and I had no doubt at all when they took me in that they were going to move towards a trial and that the trial would be the opportunity we were looking for to say on the public record which people would pick up, why it was we were doing what we were doing and what we were doing and what we were not doing. We were nothing to do with some revolutionary army or anything like that.

Q: You said that the second time was less severe than the first time?

A: I think the main point about the second time was that I felt more in charge of the process. We knew it was going to happen at some stage to one or other of us. Although it was only 1981, we were quite sure that we were going to win the struggle and we were quite sure that the Christian input to the struggle was going to be crucially important. And what we were wanting to do was to put that attitude over and certainly at the back of my mind I would have to

check through with some of my records to find out if I've ever written anything about it but certainly I knew the sort of thing that we had to get over to the public when we could go public and of course the trial would give us the opportunity to do that. So in the second detention they were particularly keen on this business of writing a statement and I knew that the idea of the statement from their point of view was that they wanted me to commit myself to saying things which they could use to bring a conviction. What I was trying to do was to write a statement which I knew that we could bring in the things that we wanted to bring in and when eventually the trial came off - the trial never materialized in the main trial- but the first part of it we were ready for them. We had people coming from all over the world. Well-known theologians and so forth to show that there was nothing wrong with what we were doing. So from that point of view I knew that I was wanting to make a statement. I wanted to make a statement, which made it clear that as far some of us in the Christian Institute were concerned; we were supportive of what the liberation movements were after. We were not members of any of them. I couldn't say that, partly because we weren't but in any case you couldn't say that sort of thing in those days but certainly I was quite open about the fact that we had met them, that I had met them and that we had discussions about this and that and that and I was wanting to get those things into the statement. So from that point of view I had no doubt at all that eventually it was going to come to a trial and from that point of view I felt much more in charge of the process.

Also you see the first time my wife and I had only just been married and it was difficult for her because she had only just come to the country but by the time the second trial came of course because of the first part she had been so completely immersed in the whole thing, the Detainees Support Committee and all the work we were doing all over the country with different people and so she was far more able to cope with the situation and with the children and one thing and the other. So from that point of view, my approach, I was very upset when they came in particularly the way they, we had a daughter of three and she was very upset with what was happening and I was fed up about that but as far as the trial itself was concerned and coming to detention itself was concerned I was much more prepared for it by the second time. And I also knew more about Cronwright and Struwig and the other guys here by then. I suppose it was true to say that in some sense they had become part of our life and it's difficult to put it over to people who weren't there but the struggle really was part of your life. You knew quite well that you were going through

something and of course there were all sorts of restrictions: you weren't allowed to meet other banned people or anything like that and we did regularly, we used to do parties with all the security stuff of our own and so if anybody came people knew which door to get out off and that sort of thing. So from that point of view we were far more advanced at the time of the second detention. Also I'd been here before and I knew Cronwright and I knew he was a fraud and there was no way he was gonna make me change my mind or anything like that. So that sort of change of attitude, made a difference. It didn't stop them of course. They still tried all the old tricks but there is a difference when you're absolutely convinced you're going to win and when you really don't know what's going to happen next.

Q: How long were you here for that second detention?

A: You know I can't quite remember. We were talking about it this morning at home and I'd have to look it up. My wife had kept a diary of that time but the diary was quite interesting but it was all notes. But it was much more about how the children were coping and about how she was coping than about anything to do with what was happening in here. She would say things like the fact that she was called to come to John Vorster to see me and that sort of idea but it wouldn't have helped your story very much. See that was because she was quite deliberate on her part because she knew that anything she wrote down they might eventually get hold of it anyway.

Q: How do you feel about John Vorster Square today?

A: Look it was all part of that whole system that we had to break down. So as far as I'm concerned it's just something that had happened. It was a long period we had to go through but you see the real challenge came once we had won, if I can put it that way. The real challenge came when we faced the problems of liberation. We didn't carry with us the problems that came from the past. One of the interesting things, I was talking to the secretary general of the ANC just the night before last, that's where I work, Kgalega Motlanthe, he was a long while on Robben Island. And we were saying that it's interesting that there's so many people in that ANC building and around the country who were detained either here or in other places or on Robben Island or one of the prisons or something. The conversation is never about that. They never talk about it. They never did. It was seen as something we had to go through but it was to get us into the new South Africa and that's what the talk is about, where we've being going since, the mistakes we had and the problems we had and where we are going. So when you say what it's like to come here? It's just one of those places where those bad things

happened which you had to go through as far as I was concerned and we came out the other side and we started something else.

Now of course with Neil Aggett it was different. There are still two minds about whether Neil was killed or whether he committed suicide and I think the truth is that people have two minds about that but it was quite clear that for Neil Aggett what was happening here was a crucifying experience and whether he killed himself or somebody else killed him that was the sort of experience. Some people had that and some people carried that on afterwards and I know there's one friend of mine, a Black couple, they went through some bad times in those old days and all they can talk about since is those bad times. But most of us had left it behind years ago.

Q: Do you think that it's important for people to understand what happened here?

A: Oh yes I do! It's very important. It's important because what happened in that period was the result fundamentally from my point of view; it was fundamentally an example of wrong theology, wrong thinking, a church that had gone wrong and I don't just mean the DRC. The whole of colonial Christianity had gone wrong and one of the results of a church going wrong like that, it affected the whole of society. If you're interested in reading the whole story of the British Empire, Victorianism and so forth, it was all affected by wrong attitudes but the extreme expression of it was the sort of thing that happened here under Apartheid and the sort of thing that happened here under the security police in John Vorster Square and it's important for people to realize that what was happening to us then happened in the first place to South Africans; all were mixed up, Indians White Coloured, Blacks and all sort of people. It happened to us, it happened to us as a result of that colonial Christianity which we inherited and it can happen to the world again unless we make quite sure that we don't get trapped into a similar sort of thing. Now I don't want to get lost now or I'll start the preaching service. But you see it's precisely the problem at the moment particularly with Bush and to a certain extent with Blair, but particularly with Bush. What the Western United States Empire is trying to do, globalization is simply a continuation of colonialism and it's when we look at what happened here in John Vorster Square that we realize that the sort of thing will happen if this Western Empire, the US thing in particular, is allowed to go on as is happening in the Middle East and all over the place and we have to realize that it was South Africans going through this experience that realized that and coming out of that experience that are pointing to a different future now. So that's why I think it's important. It's important for

people to understand our own history. But it's even more important for us to understand what's going on in the world and if I can just finish it off you see it means we have to have a completely new understanding of what spirituality or religion is all about and it's not to do with that corruption that came over in colonial Christianity. It's to do with something which is interfaith, it's to do with something which is spiritual not religious in all human beings and is to do with something which we South Africans have got a very important role in spreading it to the rest of the World.

END OF INTERVIEW

