

INTERVIEWEE: Dr Kantilal Naik

DATE: 5 March 2007

PLACE: Johannesburg Central Police Station



Q: What caused you to end up being detained at John Vorster square?

A: I and actually Timol were teaching at the same school and Ahmed Timol had just returned from England and was re- employed by the Roodepoort Asiatic School, that's what it was called then. And the previous day, that was actually on Friday the 22nd, apparently they had actually set up a roadblock where they intercepted Timol and Essop and found, according to them, that there was some inflammatory documentation regarding Umkhonto We Sizwe. I mean none of us actually came to know about it but the following morning, which was Saturday, I heard a huge knock on my door at home and that was in the region of about five o'clock, I think, and we had two security branch police saying "We are here to take you to the school. Apparently the school keys are with you, please come with us, we want to go and search the office," and things like that.

So they took me to the school and we went into the secretary's office and there were some typewriters, which they confiscated and after that they left me at home. I actually on Saturdays, used to work for a pharmacist called Mark Hirson Pharmacy and actually sort of, very tense you know, in terms of what had happened in the morning, went to work and it just wasn't easy at all in my mind. At eleven o'clock they actually came to pick me up again, brought me home, searched my room where I was living, took all the books down, put them on the floor trying to look for banned literature, emptied my drawers and emptied virtually everything in my room you know. They went under the bed and things like that and then they took me to John Vorster Square. That was in the region of about midday. I got brought into John Vorster Square and I think taken to an office called 1020 where I was just left alone to sit there and stay there.

Subsequently, actually, they brought the pen and paper and they said, "Just write a statement." And knowing actually what transpired you know with detention with Timol I said, "Look I had nothing to do with Timol," and they weren't quite pleased at all about what I had written. They said, "Look you are actually lying, you are trying to hide things." And then of course a new set of security policemen came to question me. That was during the night. And while I was in the same room I actually heard Mohammed Salim Essop screaming and I think that was probably

deliberate to also put a bit of fear in me, to say "Listen, you better co-operate". They weren't satisfied in terms of how I was responding and they decided actually to tie my hands with a cloth and they slipped it down my knees, and between my elbow and the knees, they put a broomstick and they suspended me between two tables. They carried on hanging me like that and of course rotating me. Till the following morning, from Saturday night till the morning of Sunday, they tortured me like that. And by that time they undid the cloth, they didn't use a rope, they used a cloth so that they would leave no marks on me, that's what I learned subsequently. And once they undone my cloth, my hands were totally sort of immobilized and that remained for quite a time, almost till about three to three and a half months.

Well, subsequently, I got visited by the chief of this particular investigation called Colonel Coetzee with the district surgeon called Dr Vernon Kemp. They saw me in the lift. I mean he didn't examine me. My hands were actually in plaster casts, one of the hands and in a sling and the other one similarly but not plaster cast, it was in a sling, the other hand and the other one also similarly but not plasters. And so I got treatment in terms of physiotherapy and then electrical sort of charges so that my hands could recover but most of the time I was actually confined in the cell and I think the cell was 213 initially because that Sunday morning they actually locked me up in cell 213, I remember, solitary confinement all the time.

Q: How often where you turned and were you turned violently?

A: Look initially when they started questioning me, because I couldn't make statements in terms of my hands being disposed, I couldn't write anything and there were sets of people who were questioning me and if they felt that I was lying, they would punch you. I mean as I was standing the one guy would punch from the one side and when I fall over to the other guy, he would punch me the other way and so that became a seesaw thing. But then eventually, I mean they were giving me treatment and that was twice a week or once a week, depending on circumstances. Then I had a guy called Sergeant van Tonder who actually came into the place where I was being questioned and he said to these guys, he said "Ek het 'n opdrag gekry om hierdie man's se verklaring te neem." So then he took over actually taking statements from me. He was a, I think he was a reasonable man, in a sense that he wasn't torturing

me, he didn't hit me or anything but the previous guys were just impossible, they thought I was hiding something. I knew Timol had been involved in activities, which was quite open, I think he wasn't sort of afraid to show that he was involved but they actually also deduced that I had been involved with them, which was not true. Then Sergeant van Tonder started taking my statement he was sort of reasonable and he thought that he was going to get much more out of me. I also told them that I supplied him [Timol] with a chemical called hydrochono (?) which was an oxidizing agent which could be used to decipher letters that came in invisible handwriting.

Apart from that I also had a lot of battles with my food and I complained to the magistrate about the food. You actually had visits from the magistrate almost every Tuesday and they would ask, "Enige klagtes?" so at one stage I actually complained about my hands, I said, "Look I was actually badly assaulted," and he said he was going to look into the matter and also look into the matter of my being a vegetarian, I mean they would always supply me with pap and vleis and when I complained and said, "Ek eet nie vleis nie," they would take the thing out of the cell and remove the meat and then bring the pap and I just didn't eat. I actually starved myself for the rest of the period.

When I had complained about the cheese, I said, "Look I do eat cheese and vegetarian stuff and cheese," the station commander here called Captain Moffat came to see me. He was very upset, he said "Hierdie plek lyk soos Diagonal Straat en hoe kan jy klag maak by die magistraat waarom het jy my nie gese nie?" I said "Look I'm vegetarian and I'm not gonna be able to eat meat" he said, "Nee ek sal jou voorsien van kaas en jy sal kaas eet tot jy kak!" so I mean you got actually tortured in various ways you know, abuse verbally, abuse physically and you just don't feel comfortable.

Also what happened when I was being questioned the one time somebody actually put a brown folder and on top it was written "Timol Oorlede" and I wasn't quite sure whether I should take them seriously, I thought they were actually having me on, you know they were just trying to put some sort of thing in my mind. But when I had laid charges I was actually taken out of John Vorster Square for the first time. I was taken to Newlands police station where I actually

made a statement regarding my ill treatment and of course my hands being tied and of course I was badly assaulted. So that was the process as far as it went. When I came back there was a huge subtle pressure from various people for me to withdraw the charges. Eventually I used to talk to the pigeons and say "Look, what should do I do?" Not being insane but you know that was a thing, that you talk to them and say, "What do I do?" and then of course the pigeons nodded and I actually withdrew charges. Of course I was not gonna get anywhere in terms of laying any charges against these police who - I knew them - but you know once I had laid charges they had removed these police from the questioning panel, I mean I didn't even see them at John Vorster square.

Q: What are the names of those police?

A: I think it was actually Sergeant Ferreira, Sergeant Pelsel, Sergeant Cloete and of course the man in charge of that was a Warrant Officer called Cloete you see, and nothing happened, subsequently I mean, once I had withdrawn charges that was what I mean.

Q: What was that, subtle pressure?

A: Subtle pressure says, Ja you know you'll have to actually go to the identification parade and you have to actually identify them and you know you are not quite sure whether you will be able to identify them and they said, "Look we suggest that you just drop charges." So that was kind of a pressure and you were not quite sure what was happening to you.

When they used to take me to the shower, I mean there was actually a newspaper; I think it was The Star. I am not sure what it was but I think it was The Star. He said actually if you are not released by 2nd February you are going to be actually charged. So I knew my fate that I was going to be charged because I was still here on the 2nd February.

Totally incommunicado, solitary confinement. The only time that you had some sort of communication was when they took you up to the 10th floor for treatment or actually when they wanted to know more from you. But what had happened, one of the things that happened, I'm not quite sure whether they came to know about it, is when we were taken from this side, facing Market street, from that cell to the other side, I think the cell number was 230, I just remembered, and one of my neighbors was somebody who was a student at Wits University doing

engineering called Yunis Patel. He shouted from the other side, from the window and said, "Who's there?" I said, "It's actually Kanti Naik", he said "Look Yunis Patel here." And then we started communicating using the wall. I worked out a deciphering system. I had a comb and I had a pen so I could use that, A was one dot, B was two dots and so forth and we were able to communicate. I think they probably found out or they did not find out, I am not sure. But I don't think they found out at all, I mean we were able to communicate quite sort of openly. Whenever I got taken out of the cell for treatment or for questioning I would actually pull the toilet thing to tell him that I'm leaving. When I came back I would do the same thing so that he would know. But then he got released much earlier than me and I fell to pieces and I cried like nobody's business. Even being an adult of 33 Years old I just cried.

What happened is that my daughter was born 3 days before I got detained. My family told me subsequently they used to send food stuff knowing that I am a vegetarian but nothing came to me so that was a bit of torture. But then what happened is that when they had to name the baby they said "No, it's not the father who names the baby, it's the father's sister who names the baby." But they used that as a pretext to get communication from me. They sent a list of names and which would you prefer to be given to my daughter Rishma. I had something called Tusha but they preferred Rishma and they named her Rishma.

Also what had happened is that some of my teaching colleagues went to see various people that included Professor Blacksley. Now the textbook that I had done, Professor Blacksley gave a foreword for that and he then sent a reference letter. The pharmacy where I worked, Mr. Hirson sent a letter; my community sent a letter to say, "Look this guy is actually a very service orientated man. He wouldn't harm anybody." So that was quite a bit of representation that I had and when Blacksley's came I actually had tears in my eyes because Blacksley was a gentleman, I mean he had a lot of time for me. But of course I was not sure whether I was going to be charged or not. Eventually I was released I mean on the 7th February or something.

Q: How long had you been in detention?

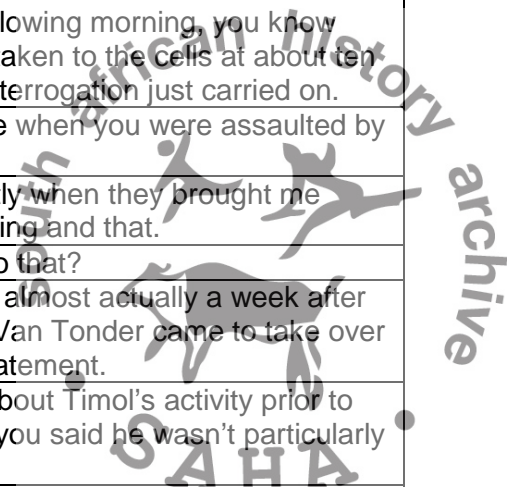
A: I was in detention for almost 5 Months.

Q: All the time here?

A: All the time at John Vorster, except when I said I got taken out when I went to make a statement regarding the assault, to Newlands police station.
Q: And that was it, was that for a day or in the morning...
A: No it was just the morning, it was just the morning. I just made a statement. They were quite pleasant; I mean I must be also honest. I supposed they wanted to induce everything that they wanted to know from me in terms of what had happened.
Q: Now why were you in detention for so long and why were you asked so many questions?
A: You see they were actually, I wasn't sure they were going to release me. They said to me, "Look as far as we are concerned you are a finished man. You are not going to any educational institution whatsoever, you are quite finished." But they had to get my hands in proper order and that's why they gave me a pen and I had to practice and get my handwriting so that there wouldn't be any doubts that I was assaulted.
Q: And what did you use that pen for?
A: No I actually did a lot of writing. You know when you are in a place like this, in solitary confinement you are just not; you are not your own man.
Q: What did you write on?
A: I wrote actually on toilet papers.
Q: And did you managed to keep some of that?
A: Yes I was able to keep that. I took it home although you know what happened, one time they decided that they are going to fumigate all the cells and all the carrier bags that I had, I had my plaster cast and all the slings in there and with that pretext they visited every cell and looked into the carrier bags and found out that I had this, probably I was going to take it out and use it as a weapon against them and those they had removed, the plaster cast and the slings and everything.
Q: What I'm getting at about you being detained for so long, did they suspect you of something?
A: Ja they suspected something...
Q: What was that and why?
A: No, look what had happened is subsequently I found out when it came time for Timol to make a statement here he mentioned some of the names of couple of people that were on the staff plus some learners who he said that, look he had not actually spoken to us but he felt that we could have been prospective candidates for the Communist Party. So he may have not done it intentionally but I mean he just mentioned these names and I think so most of

them were detained as well.
Q: As long as you?
A: No. Some of them were released subsequently. Yunis Patel was released, there was a girl called Shia Alf (?), she was released, she was a learner. And there was somebody called Lisha Jetto (?) who was released but in my case I think they just wanted me to have my hands working properly. There are still after effects, I can feel my second finger not being sort of quite good, could be also due to rheumatism with the age but what they did to me also played an important part in my hands not being that efficient.
Q: And when you were being tortured with a cloth... what is that called?
A: It's called helicopter treatment. That only I found out when I actually went to make a statement to the TRC and the person that took my statement was an ex-policeman and the TRC assured me, they said "Look, be quite open with him and tell exactly what happened" and he said, "No that's what is called the helicopter treatment" because with the broom around they could rotate you.
Q: How often did they do that, once or ...
A: No, no, no that was actually once. I mean you know, frequently. I mean I wasn't even sure I couldn't even remember you know you are so sort of dazed.
Q: That was the total torture, they were not hitting you?
A: No they were not hitting me, they were not hitting me. The hitting came subsequently when I was actually standing on my feet but this was actually an ongoing thing. Look, I'm not sure; it seemed it carried on till probably past midnight.
Q: And were they asking you questions or what?
A: They were asking me questions all the time.
Q: And what were you saying?
A: Well I can't even remember what I was saying.
Q: Did you make a statement at some point?
A: Yes I had to make that statement to Sergeant van Tonder.
Q: And what did you say?
A: I said, "Look I know Timol quite well" and I said, look I mean I was politically active I mean, but not active in a sense that you know I was involved in say ANC or those activities, not clandestine activities and look Timol knew that I was looking after my extended family plus my own family. I'm not sure, when I made that statement to Van Tonder that was actually accepted I think.
Q: You drew the sketch of Van Tonder on the toilet

paper?
A: Yes I did. You know he was quite a smoker. Quite an interesting story about him. After we were released he married an Indian lady who was a wife of one of the pharmacists, who had a pharmacy in Fordsburg and relocated to Durban and I actually then got hold of him subsequently because one of my relatives was living there and he actually had a coffee shop where he was selling things and I said look wouldn't he actually tell me what happened to Timol and he was sort of sworn to secrecy or what, he just didn't want to say anything.
Q: Were you aware of Timol being in the cells at the same time you were?
A: No, not aware of Timol at all except I heard when Essop screaming but Timol, just not anything.
Q: How long were you interrogated for physically?
A: The day that I got detained it started at about 12 midday till almost the following morning, you know Sunday morning. I was taken to the cells at about ten o'clock I think and the interrogation just carried on.
Q: And was that the time when you were assaulted by being hit with fists?
A: That was subsequently when they brought me back for sort of questioning and that.
Q: How often did they do that?
A: Look they did that for almost actually a week after that and until of course Van Tonder came to take over from them to take my statement.
Q: What did you know about Timol's activity prior to your detention? I mean you said he wasn't particularly discreet?
A: Look at the school, when there were staff meetings he was quite open about many things, I mean in terms of discriminatory things regarding salaries and so forth and he wasn't afraid to tell the principal where to get off. When he had come down he had tried to recruit a lot of people, you know I'm not quite sure whether he was aware that he was probably been watched or that they may have had people planted at the school as well, one doesn't know.
Q: Why do you think he might have been watched?
A: Look, in hindsight when I looked at various things, because I've looked at one of the books that came out recently and I also looked at a chapter from one of Gordon Winter's book called "Inside Boss" regarding torture in South Africa. Gordon Winter claims that it's because of him that Timol got detained. Recently I picked up a book called "Apartheid's Friends" by James Sanders and I've been looking at the book and



he said look he knows about Timol been to Russia for training and even people from there had informed South African intelligence that Timol is coming to South Africa to do some underground activities.

Q: Can you describe what it felt like coming into the prison, into the cells, your experiences as you first came?

A: Look it was absolutely traumatic for me. I never thought I'll be in trouble with the police. So it's not something that I had expected you know and when I came in I thought they would just release me but that did not happen and I think what prolonged the thing was the assault on my hands and so it was totally traumatic.

Q: What did it look like, what were your physical impressions of what you were seeing; smelling, hearing... can you remember any of those?

A: Physically I thought, look this is the end for me because they said "Look despite your intelligence you are going to be a tea boy on Robben Island." I mean that kind of verbal torture sort of, virtually drained you. Probably I was still a sensible man and I was also fairly religious. I said, "Look they are not going to actually make me commit suicide," and I don't put it past people that are detained that you know you think of suicide as actually an alternative way out because they were totally in command. I even thought these people in that kind of command, this country is not going to become free in my lifetime. That was something that went through your mind that the country is still going to be ruled by the Nationalist government for ever and ever.

I mean they were actually, they abused you; I remember the one policeman came with red hair trying to sort of make you feel that you are inferior. Look he said "Julle blaksem se Coolies! Julle wil die Swart mense clever maak ne?" He said, "We gonna show the Indians a point. They think they actually are going to be able to stir up revolution? They not gonna get that right. And of course Coetzee who became subsequently the commissioner of police said to me look he's studying for a law degree at RAU and so forth and I actually thought Colonel Greyling is in charge of the security police here and why is it that this man seems to be in charge of the Timol's case? But quite a shrewd man I think, he was a very shrewd man. It was sort of internal conflict between him and this guy called Van Tonder. I could actually see from Van Tonder's reaction to me. He was confiding in me

and said, "These people are trying to send me to the border. They have given young people promotion but they've ignored me." So there was a lot of internal conflict within the security police I think.

Q: Why did he confide that in you?

A: He thought I was somebody that was fairly intelligent. He got a textbook from me through Mr. Lorgat who was the principle, for his son's Matric, and the son said it was quite a helpful textbook. Then he realized I was a vegetarian and he felt pity for me so one day he brought me a packet of biscuits and a milky bar chocolate which I had to eat in bits and pieces so that it could last me for whenever I was going to be here.

Q: What were the signs that you have of internal dispute or disagreements amongst your jailers and the police?

A: The very first guy that started questioning me was somebody called Sergeant Roefet and one day he came dashing in and he said "Die mense se vir my die bladie Naik is taking me for a ride, he said you are not co-operating." And there was a guy called Hennie Petou who was actually a body builder who seemed to have been also a sort of fairly understanding human being and he said to me, "Look at your body, you need to do a bit of exercise," because he was a karate man. Look he didn't assault me and neither did Roefort it was other people that were, somebody called Tiny somebody but I am not sure what his name was. And there was some sort of reasoning with some people as well but you could feel that there was a huge tension. I mean they were having meetings and saying that this Naik is actually not co-operating with you and so he was not quite pleased that I couldn't tell him and I said, "What do I tell you? I mean I don't know anything".

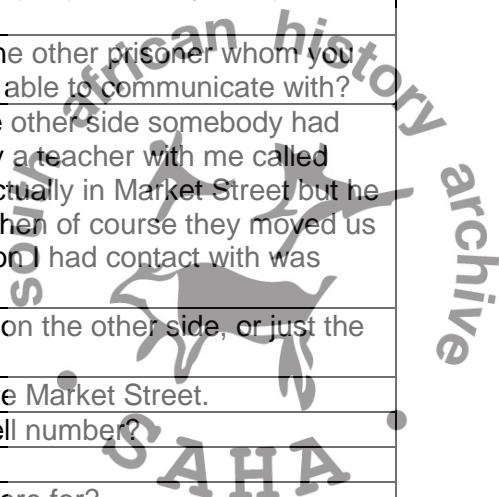
Q: You didn't see anybody except the magistrate within that period? No lawyers, no family?

A: I had no visits from anybody. I mean the magistrate seemed to be reasonable. Look when this magistrate came, I think it was actually a magistrate called Brink I think so was the guy, he never asked me why my hands are like that, I mean I had to tell him. So they would say "Enige klagtes?" and they would make a note. But then the positive thing is that they were there every Tuesday, virtually every Tuesday I mean we could complain when there was a legitimate complaint.

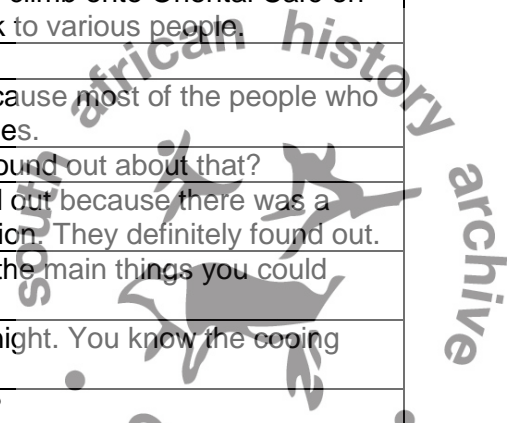
Q: What happened to those complaints?

A: Well look I spoke to you about this vegetarian thing

and about the assault I mean that seemed to have been followed through.
Q: How would you describe your cell?
A: Look my cell was actually I think, quite a tiny cell. I think there were two windows and you could run around but not that huge. I actually slept and the lights were always kept on during the nights and I just slept on the mattress like this and they would provide you with actually two blankets and it was October and so actually it was quite warm it wasn't cold. During the night you could only hear the clanging of these gates. If they came to fetch somebody you could hear the door being opened and the clanging of the gates and you could hear the pigeons because I mean this area has got a lot of pigeons and early in the morning you could hear the birds and that. I think that particular set of cells were just kept for the detained people it wasn't actually for normal people so only one person per cell.
Q: And there was only one other prisoner whom you were aware of who were able to communicate with?
A: No. When I was at the other side somebody had shouted. He was actually a teacher with me called Garda. He had a shop actually in Market Street but he had given up teaching. Then of course they moved us there and the other person I had contact with was Yunis Patel.
Q: So you made contact on the other side, or just the other side?
A: It was actually opposite Market Street.
Q: And what was your cell number?
A: 213 I think.
Q: How long were you there for?
A: There , you know once they found out, there was a lot of people were coming to the Oriental Café communicating with the prisoners or the detainees so they decided to take us out from there and take us to the other side where we could only see the highway and the...
Q: Can you explain the process of communication?
A: Ja as I said I used to...
Q: Particularly on the other side?
A: No the other side, it was just verbal.
Q: Like what, explain to me?
A: He said look "Who's there? And I said Kanti Naik and he said look he doesn't know why he got detained and I said look between you and me I think because we know Timol. When you were there he was going to approach you to write for his pamphlets that he was going to distribute. But once I got



released Garda just kept his distance from a lot of people. Recently when Timol's book was published, Garda said oh he only now realized why he got detained because his name was actually given by Timol in the same way as my name was written now, in that people that he sounded out for membership of the communist party.
Q: You said that appeared in the newspaper?
A: Sunday Express. Ja, it's actually Sunday Express.
Q: That was same year?
A: Same here, same year. As I said my uncle kept all the newspapers. So I've four scrapbooks of articles on Timol inquest and the Essop trial.
Q: So you said there was communication at the Oriental Café?
A: Yes.
Q: How was that happening?
A: I think people used to climb onto Oriental Café on top and they used to talk to various people.
Q: Prisoners?
A: Detainees, I think because most of the people who were there were detainees.
Q: And then the police found out about that?
A: I think so. They found out because there was a huge set of communication. They definitely found out.
Q: You said that one of the main things you could hear were the pigeons?
A: That was during the night. You know the cooing you could pick up.
Q: Was that comforting?
A: Well probably, comforting, relatively you know, than being tortured by the security police. I mean it's obviously comforting. And of course one of my relatives lived in Saban House that was just directly opposite the cell 213 and I saw my relative, I saw my aunt there many times but you know whatever problem. The other thing that I actually saw was one of the business people that used to park his car here and then I would shout at him and I say Solly! Solly! The other was one of my colleagues called Gangara and I said, "Gang! Casey here!" they used to know me by Casey. So that's something that I actually was able to do and then he went and saw my family and said look he actually heard from me but he wasn't ware of the assault and all these things.
Q: That was in your cell on the other side?
A: 213 in Market Street. Ja.
Q: And you said you started almost engaging with the pigeons when you were asked to withdraw the statement?



A: Well who would you ask? I mean couldn't have asked Van Tonder.
Q: No, no I know, could you describe it a bit more?
A: Look, I had some sort of confidence in Van Tonder. He also said to me look when you are released please don't say that I assaulted, which was true. He was just seeking some kind of reassurance from me so I wouldn't go and say anything that was a lie. And once I dropped the charges I mean I wasn't expecting much more but who do I speak to if I could communicate with some other people from outside you know just to get some kind of assurance from me that look I must withdraw the charges. And I thought if I didn't withdraw charges, Professor, they will charge me. They will trump up charges. I mean it would be in your court to prove that you are innocent and it wasn't going to be easy. If they lay the charge against you in terms of the Terrorism Act how would you prove otherwise?
Q: When you were being interrogated you were in a cell then you were taken out of the cell to be interrogated..
A: Yes!
Q: Can you describe that?
A: Well you know what happened is that they would take you down the lifts, I mean the way we came in right now I could recognize. They would take you down to the charge office and then take another lift to the 10th floor on the other building, because there's separate buildings. I mean on the other side I could see Van Tonder's office as well because the offices were on this side. You had to go into the basement and then go to the other building's lifts and they will take you to there and then of course before you could actually alight there was somebody actually on the 10 th floor to see that you are a legitimate person to coming in to the 10 th floor.
Q: Describe the lift?
A: Well lifts, I think they had these canvases. Not canvases on either side I think. That's what I remember.
Q: Did It have that sort of grill as well?
A: Ja grill as well, ja, ja.
Q: That's stopping when you escape?
A: Ja, ja, ja, they had the grill as well.
Q: Were you frightened as you were going up the lift?
A: No you became accustomed you know when they came to fetch you for treatment or for questioning.
Q: Did you know whether it was for treatment or questioning?

A: We didn't know, we didn't know.
Q: Did they start assaulting you after a week or two weeks?
A: I would say almost about two weeks.
Q: And then each time you were taken to the 10 th floor?
A: Ja for just questioning and sort of treatment.
Q: And where did you go to in the 10 th floor?
A: Look I can't remember Van Tonder's office whether it was the ten, twelve, I'm not even sure.
Q: Was it just one office?
A: One office ja. Just one office. And if van Tonder or any of these people went out they would actually leave so-called "Non-White policemen" to keep an eye on me.
Q: And before Van Tonder interrogated you which office did you go to? Another one?
A: I think it was a different office, different office.
Q: And what did that look like?
A: I think they were more or less the same. They look like 1020, 1026. The offices were similar.
Q: Can you tell as when your hand was damaged as a result of your interrogation, what were your feelings about that?
A: Well look, not being a medical man I'm not quite sure whether my hand would become normal again. I was not even sure. In my sort of knowledge, now, is that had they not given me treatment my hands would have just collapsed. Look I actually have beautiful handwriting not to say that I would boast about it but I've got good handwriting and then I play Indian instruments. I play this thing called harmonium and I play the Japanese banjo and I thought, "Look that's my end now. I mean I'm not going to be able to use my hand." So that was a huge traumatic sort of shock for me and I somehow feel that had they not given me treatment and left me like that I mean I may not be able to use my hands although there are still some effects you know what have happened but I'm living with it.
Q: What kind of reputation did John Vorster Square have before you were brought here?
A: Look the simple fact that it was named after John Vorster was a bad thing itself and in terms of the stories you heard about detainees actually that were detained at John Vorster and subsequently lost their lives. So it wasn't a pleasant sort of experience that you were going to face I mean you were sort of traumatically shocked I mean you know, that you are going to be taken to John Vorster Square.

South African history archive

Q: What kind of effect did your detention have on the rest of your life after you were released?

A: Look I was told by that time I'm not going to any educational institution but when I got released they came to see me, the principal, they said "Look you must come back to school. I said " Look but they say you are not going to school anymore," and I was not sure but I got reinstated by the chief inspector that came to see the principal that morning, the following morning. They said that "Look Billy, hierdie man het mande in die tronk gele, jy moet nou sorg hy gaan nie weer le nie." Then I said, "Look I need a holiday badly," I said, " Look, I'm not myself," he said "Nee, nee, jy begin more." So I started teaching. I had mixed feelings. I wasn't sure I mean was this a trick being played? "Look you are not going to any educational institution and I said, "Look, what is the hidden motive? But as time went on I had one of my colleagues coming to say to me you know what one of the senior teachers said, that they must be careful of me because I'm working for the Security Police. Of course that actually was a terrible shock for me because when I went home I said to my brothers "Look I must give up, I don't think I'm gonna be well treated at school because this is the kind of information that's being actually spread."

I mean so you went through a bit of a loop, and you felt that people are not going to trust you any more. They somehow felt that I'm actually working for the security police.

Then of course I didn't have a passport for almost about 15 years. I didn't get a passport.