


J.F. If I can start by asking when and where you were born. 

D.G. I was born in Cape Town 11th. April, 1933.

J.F. And your family's background in terms of...

D.G. My parents were born in London - both of them were the children of immigrants from eastern Europe, either Latvia or Lithuania, something like that - one of the Baltic states anyway - settled in Cape Town, I think 1929 - they had grown up in the East End of London - they'd both been involved in leftwing politics in Britain -

My dad had been a sailor - a steward on board ships - a merchant seaman - he had been a trade unionist in his - in the seamens union, British Seamens Union - he'd been shop steward - when they settled in South Africa he became a petty (petit) businessman -

He had garages, he had service stations - a service station, a few petrol pumps, employed a few mechanics, eventually became a cartage contractor, transporter of some kind, had two or three trucks - the end of the war he sold them up and with the whole five hundred pounds that he had he set up a bookshop, and what I remember of the bookshop was the rows upon rows of selected works of Lenin and Stalin and Marx and Engels and so on - there were other books as well -

He then became an estate agent because such a bookshop couldn't make a living for him, and that was it.

J.F. So was he affiliated to any organisations in South Africa?

D.G. Oh, yes, he'd been a member of the Communist Party in its legal days - that was about it, I suppose.

J.F. Just your father, not your mother as well?

D.G. My mother was active - my mother would not join the Communist Party because she believed that a member must be available at all times - she was always available at all times, but she had young children and she felt that to bind herself might mean that one day (Laugh) she would not be able to fulfil her obligations - she always fulfilled every call upon her in a way which very few members did but she did - and so I grew up with an attitude in you undertake a job you do it - I took that in with my mother's milk.

J.F. And unlike a lot of the people I've interviewed you actually came from a home that - you didn't rebel against those values in any way - you were actually nurtured in the values that shaped you later.

D.G. I had a problem - when I left school and started university - I started university in 1950 - remember the Nationalist Party had come to power, the Afrikaaner Nationalists, in 1948 - 1950 saw the passage of the Suppression of Communism Act - things were pretty tough for the left - there was a lot of fear -

At the time when I started university I was 16 and I turned 17 in my first year at university - it's a pretty hefty step socially anyway, and intellectually, from school to university - I also had to work out for myself if I was going to be politically active, because I was intellectually committed, not simply because they were the values of my parents - do you follow - I had to work out

D.G. whether I accepted, because the risks were great and growing greater all the time - well, it took me four years at university to work out that I could not stand aloof from the struggle for liberation in South Africa - not that I had to support the struggle - I had to be in the struggle for liberation - I wasn't just a supporter - I was in it - once I would get involved I would be in it - that was the problem all the time, you see -

But university students talk - even engineering students have serious discussions sometimes - and to paraphrase it, and I've used this formulation before, inevitably the discussion would end at the point where I would say : But why does black and white matter - why does skin colour have significance in South Africa - and the answer would be, again paraphrasing : Well you see, there are blacks and there are whites and one's going to rule over the other so it might as well be the whites - but that was no answer -

It didn't explain anything - it simply accepted the situation as its own explanation for the situation - there was no content to it - I doubt if I would have expressed it as briefly as I am now at that time, but it was unsatisfying - and so the ideas I'd grown up with, that racism and apartheid in South Africa are connected intimately with exploitation, with fat profits, with starvation and unemployment, were correct - there was no other valid explanation.

I'd grown up in a home where yes, I suppose, the problems of being white and living in a white part of the city, white suburb, and having black people, Coloured people, Indian people coming to our home was at times embarrassing to a kid at school, because I would have to face the mockery of my classmates who were white - but I loved my parents - what they did was right, there was no question about that -

That's the sort of thing that I had to work out, that I talked about when I was at university - and in the end was I going to have the privileges of being a professional civil engineer - one of an elite amongst the elite of white South Africa - or was I going to reject those privileges, because the price really is too high in terms of poverty, disease, early deaths, and you were aware of them - you couldn't - once you were politically conscious you could not but be aware of what was happening to people who were not white -

And then it seemed to me if you believe that people are simply people there can be no justification for that - that that divide is based on skin colour - it shouldn't be based on class either, but that's the form of racism in South Africa, skin colour, and if you reject it - you have a set of beliefs - either you live by your beliefs or you don't - I chose to live by them, so I got involved when - not when I left university - while I was doing my undergraduate thesis for my engineering degree, which seems to me in retrospect the wrong time, because I passed my final exams but failed my thesis - it doesn't matter now.

J.F. So that was what, like '53, '54?

D.G. 1950, '51, '52 - end of '53 - end of '53 I got involved.

J.F. And does that mean that you made the first contacts with movement people or was that.....

D.G. Oh, no, I had contacts all along through my parents and during those years at university some of my parents' friends - I lived with my mother - my parents had broken up while I was writing my

D.G. final school exams in 1949 - would demand to know of me why I was not politically engaged, why I was not involved - they came close to driving me away forever, some of them, those very stupid people - some of them, not all - and when I would say I need to work it out for myself, and in any case I find university studies more than enough for me, they would say : Other students manage, why can't you -

Well, you know, art students doing their three year Bachelor of Arts degree have free time, they have lectures off, engineering students don't - they have full days every day (Laugh) for four years, and since I battled to get through anyway I really didn't have time - maybe I would have studied better if I'd been more politically involved, I don't know - but those were my reasons -

And yes, I had contact - I knew people who were involved - when I did get involved there was no problem about it because I was known - I was a brash young white - somebody - a couple of comrades later said to me : But, yes, you were brash but we knew you were sincere so we were prepared to wait to see what you would do, and since you were prepared to do anything to help we could see that you were like that - you weren't - your brashness was your youth not your whiteness -

I must tell you that I found comradeship of an unequalled kind, really - I can remember travelling by ship from Durban to Cape Town, having done an engineering job in Durban, stopping off to see Govan Mbeki in the A.N.C. offices - not the A.N.C. office - the office of New Age newspaper - I think it was a Saturday - walking in unannounced, and he leaps up and embraces me and welcomes me, makes arrangements to take me to lunch, goes on with his work, and then acts as my host for the rest of the afternoon.

I'd known him before - he'd been to Cape Town and I'd met him, but there was that easiness, that simplicity of relationship - and later in Cape Town - you asked for anecdotes, didn't you - I remember a meeting of the joint congress executives, you know, of the four congresses in the '50's, and I was offering cigarettes around - I had money, I smoked - I earned enough anyway to buy cigarettes for myself - and my comrades would take a cigarette and then refuse and refuse and refuse, and maybe take another cigarette later in the evening, and I would say : But I've got the cigarettes, why don't you use them, smoke them -

Later one of them in the car that I was taking him to where he could catch a bus to where he lived in a black township, said I shouldn't feel hurt - what I have to understand is that he and others can afford to buy one packet of ten cigarettes a week - if they were to get - become accustomed to smoking at will they would find the ten cigarettes not enough, and that would mean not eating bread or not feeding their families - it was as simple as that - not dramatised and, you know, bread is usually an emotive issue - it was straightforward simply like that, because at that time a packet of cigarettes in South Africa cost about the price of a loaf of bread - that was the comparison -

And I felt that he could - the fact that my African comrade could speak to me that way showed a trust and a sense of belonging from both of us, which in retrospect I still find very moving - had some great times, and parties, and drinking, and dancing, you know.

J.F. Let me backtrack to ask - your parents always had black people in

J.F. the home.....

D.G. I don't ever remember a time when they were not - I probably went to my first May Day rally in about 1938 or '39 when I was five or six - certainly by six I knew about exploitation of workers generally, and of the double exploitation of black workers in South Africa as workers simply, and as black workers doubly exploited - probably knew about it by the age of six.

J.F. And the black people who worked in the home for your family?

D.G. Ja, that - that's an oddity about my family, because there was always a domestic servant - I've never known quite why or quite how, and never resolved the relationships even in my own life, when I got married and lived in Cape Town - it was quite strange because no matter how friendly the relationship was, and we did know the families of (Laugh) our domestic employees - we really did - and knew their surnames as well, unlike many white South Africans -

While there was a friendship there was also the relationship of master and servant - there just had to be - complex, very complex - but I never - I don't feel any guilt about that part of it, you know - used to argue in prison with one (or) two of my prison comrades of the younger generation - shall I call them that - who would say : Oh, how could you possibly do it - you've got to do all these things for yourself - ah, maybe, maybe not - I didn't find it made them have particularly better understanding of the situation in South Africa itself - at an emotional level maybe - at a level of understanding I'm not convinced, but be that as it may - I'm not defending myself, really I'm not - it's just one of those facts -

You grow up in your own time and you do things which are average in your own time, even though (Laugh) you're seeking to smash the thing that you live within (?)

J.F. And when you said that you decided to get active at that period - you had known the people there - what did you do - go and make yourself available or did you officially join or was it....

D.G. Round about that time at the end of '53 I met Esme - came to live in the same block of flats as I lived with my mother - now she comes from a very similar background to myself - I mean you could repeat many, many parts of our - of our stories - well, we met and we became friendly, and she was already politically involved in Cape Town, and I used to sit in (Laugh) on committee meetings of Modern Youth Society it was called - you know of that from Amy, I'm sure - and well, didn't take long to get (Laugh) co-opted onto that committee - it just kind of happened -

But I was ready for it - as I said, I'd made up my mind I was going to be active - it just happened a little quicker, that was all - and that was what we would now call a non racial youth organisation - then it was called multiracial - so that in our own lives - Esme and I got married six months later, April of '54 -

I don't ever remember a time when our home was not - where we didn't have comrades, whoever they were and whatever their background or race or ethnic group, whatever word you want to use, in our home - comrades who would come from Johannesburg and sleep

D.G. over, and just comrades from Cape Town, and parties and fund-raising functions and meetings - was just normal.

J.F. Was politics expressed in your home as African nationalism or as nationalism or as socialism or as communism?

D.G. In my - my own home after I got married or my childhood home?

J.F. Your childhood home and then your - when you went - when you did your rethink yourself.

D.G. Um....

J.F. First when you were growing up.

D.G. Growing up - (re)member in 1939 I was six when World War Two officially broke out - but I'm - I don't know if it's an artificial memory of having fitted dates together, but I'm quite sure that the talk of the Spanish Civil War in my home was not unfamiliar to me - I - was part of my growing up, so that later when I became politically active I seemed to know about the Spanish Civil War, even though it broke out in '36 and I was only three years old then, it's just part of my political history and background in the same way World War Two is, and we had war maps up, and listened to the wireless every night - the wireless as it was called, not the radio (Laugh) - and stuck pins in the maps on all the battlefronts of Europe, of the Pacific and so on, and Asia -

So that all this, of Nazism, of the necessity to defeat Nazism, of the emergence of the Soviet Union, of its change in the balance of power in the world, all this (was) part of my background - I - I never have to think about what part of it fits where, as I grew up with it.

Now you asked about socialism or African nationalism - I can remember pass burning campaigns in Cape Town at Langa - it must have been round about 1946 - I can remember the photographs in The Guardian - I can remember the stories and the headlines, and I can remember selling The Guardian then.

My parents' views would have been socialist - I grew up with that - I came to understand, as I said earlier, the double exploitation of black workers - I was part of it - I don't ever remember as a child or youth or later having any problems in reconciling the questions of African nationalism and socialism and so on, just as when I was older speaking to African comrades who were African nationalists in the sense of being members of the A.N.C., and who were also involved in trade union activity - they never saw any conflict between these things - they moved between them absolutely easily because of, I think I would have to say an analysed experience of day to day living, that to be a black worker was to be severely exploited -

And to work in the trade union field for - against that system, and to work in the political field of African National Congress against that system were just simply two facets of the same struggle -

I suddenly remembered a little anecdote and it sort of flashed into my mind and out again - it'll come back - it'll illustrate this - I'll try and piece it together later.

J.F. Because that's actually an important theme, especially - it's one

J.F. that's been through the history of the struggle against....

D.G. Mmmm.

J.F. Debated as well these days.

D.G. Well, I mean I've since read, since I've come out of prison - a lot of books were published in the time I was in prison, a lot of history - writing of history has been done - but from the stuff I've read I understand that from the early days of the formation of the Communist Party in South Africa that the majority of members were black very early on, and Tambo referred to it in June of last year after the national consultative conference -

There's never been any conflict of this kind - there've been communists in the A.N.C. and the A.N.C. members in the Communist Party, and there've been A.N.C. members who were not communists and communists who were not A.N.C. members - there just didn't seem to be any problems about it -

There were difficulties at times - if you read histories of the - the details of the histories there were times when anti communism was an element within the A.N.C. - I can't remember the detail off-hand - you can go and read the books anyway - I don't have to tell it to you - that's what reference work is for (Laugh)

But in my own experience I don't remember any of these conflicts - there was a period in Cape Town in the '50's when there was a group of A.N.C. members who were Africanists, as they were called in the '50's - I don't mean P.A.C. - I don't mean pan Africanist - but they were Africanists within the A.N.C.

J.F. Youth League (?)

D.G. Yes, and who after the Youth League had become the A.N.C. itself - that generation of Tambo, Mandela, Sisulu and so on, and others, who retained a lot of that feeling, but it was an internal kind of argument about tactics of posture - I don't mean posturing - of stance in political issues - there were times when it caused problems -

And one of the issues of course was the relationship of black political organisations to whites who wished to be active, so in that sense the question of non racialism or multiracialism was an issue at times, but it was always a passing phase - and looking back the tendency was for those who took an Africanist position to be the least active politically, the least consistent - this is an impression, and I'm talking about only - only about Cape Town - least consistent in their political activity -

Now maybe I feel that way because I didn't like their political views, and maybe I felt that way for subjective reasons - I'm prepared to face up to that possibility - but I don't think it was so - I don't think it's a subjective view.

J.F. Was the Jewish background a factor?

D.G. I've been asked that many times - I don't remember my family being part of the Jewish community in South Africa, or in Cape Town - yes, we were Jewish - I was aware of being Jewish - I had no religious upbringing at all - nothing at all - I can remember going to school on Jewish religious holiday in a school where there would be perhaps four Jewish boys in a class - it was a

D.G. boys only school, not co-ed - and my teacher asked me what I was doing at school - I said : Well, my mother said I should come to school - well, at that point he couldn't say anything more, you see, but what I didn't tell him was that I said to my mother : I'm going to have a holiday - and she said : Well, you must make a choice - if you're going to take the holiday to observe the holiday then you must go to the synagogue to observe it properly - you can't do it half way - either you - you can't use it as an excuse - so either you go to school or you go to the synagogue (Laugh) -

There was no choice - I loved school - thoroughly enjoyed it (Laugh) - I was with my friends every day - it was great (Laugh) - so to that extent, well - it was never an issue - never an issue.

When I went to school at the age of six on my sixth birthday, so it was the 11th. April, 1939 was when I started school, my parents said to me : You're going to run into some difficulties - the first is teachers and children might point to you and say your parents are communists - you need never be ashamed of that, nor need you ever defend us - I need not defend my parents - they could do that themselves - and the second thing is that in a school, as I say, where there was a very small minority of Jewish kids, I would run into anti semitism - I need not be ashamed etc. - same thing -

And in fact at school I ran into very little of it - the only time I did that little bugger got fucked up so sorrily (?) - well, we must have been about eleven years old each - particular kid was really the most unpopular kid in the class - little boy who used to wet his pants - he wasn't very bright - and I suppose he was looking for a little idle popularity so - I'll never forget - I was ten in fact - sort of relish bashing (?) -

Not because it meant anything to me, but he was just being deliberately nasty - that's how I understood it - it wasn't - it could have been anything - could have told me I had a hole in my head or whatever, I would have still bashed him (Laugh) - I haven't had the problem.

J.F. The Modern Youth Society - that was when you were a teenager before university?

D.G. No, after - after university - I'm talking about 1953 - September or October, '53.

J.F. So when you said you decided to get involved did that mean joining the Modern Youth Society?

D.G. That was my political involvement, yes - and then shortly after that into Congress of Democrats when it was formed in Cape Town.

J.F. Do you remember who was in Modern Youth Society with you?

D.G. Oh, yea, remember some names - who was there - George Peak, who's dead now - Amy of course, whom you've met - my wife - Herman Toivo ja Toivo, who was a very close friend - used to often visit our home - a whole - I can't remember lots of names, you know.

J.F. How did you get all those people, and given the South African situation where blacks and whites don't live together?

- D.G. But people had always mixed - this - I'm sorry - I see what you're looking for - I'm talking about '53 - there was a long tradition of political activity and of socialising - people meeting together, people wanting to be together - there were the Turoks there, Ben and Mary Turok, and Alb Sachs - I can't remember all the names of the black comrades - it's a long time ago, you know.
- J.F. But I mean just - I guess the only question I'm asking is how you got together - was there kind of an existing corps of people and you decided let's make this an organisation or....
- D.G. No, there was an organisation which I joined - it was already functioning when I joined it - and eventually we had - we took a room, a very large room in a very old building in the centre of Cape Town as our, I suppose you'll have to call it a club room, large enough to hold a hundred people or so, had movie shows there, socials, table tennis, meetings - meetings, meetings (Laugh)
- J.F. And then you got into the Congress of Democrats shortly thereafter?
- D.G. Yes, I think - I can't remember when Congress of Democrats was formed - must have been about....
- J.F. '53.
- D.G. '53 - well - so '54 when it was set up in Cape Town I joined it - I was - I think it was then.
- J.F. I remember it because it's the year I was born.
- D.G. Shame, it's not your fault you were born late (Laugh)
- J.F. It was a good co-incident.
- D.G. Good grief, Julie, you were born a year ahead of my daughter, who was born in January, '55 - God, I am old!
- J.F. So then getting into COD - was that something that - did you move through that into something else soon after or did you - was there a period of growth in COD or.....
- D.G. No, I was in COD until it was proscribed in 1960 - was it '60 - '61 - September, '61, I think - no, I was in it right from then onwards - I was on its branch executive right from the beginning, either treasurer or chairman or treasurer or chairman or etc. - you know, I mean it was just like that, which meant also serving on the joint executives of the four congress movements plus SACTU which made it five - that used to meet regularly to co-ordinate the work of all the organisations, so I was on that too, you see.
- J.F. And just from what I've read of your background being involved - you were an organiser for the Congress of the People - is that....
- D.G. I helped to organise in Cape Town for the Congress of the People - I wouldn't - you see, if you say I was an organiser for it sounds like I'd been appointed to be organiser - there was a structure to organise for the Congress of the People and the rest of us pitched in to help - my task was to work with comrades in the Leolo location in Simonstown next to the - near the dockyard - it's 25 miles from Cape Town - and to organise - to help people organise to the point where they would elect a delegate, having raised the funds for the delegate to go to the Congress of the People - yes, that's where I was involved.

J.F. Were you at the congress?

D.G. No, I wasn't, and I didn't go as a delegate either - their thing's wrong in that report that you've seen, that little bit of potted - little pen sketch - there are errors in it - I didn't get there - I wasn't intended to go - my job was to see the delegates did get there - like driving through the night to pick up people to get them to a truck going through and so on, you know -

My job was always, always - I worked as an organiser to build organisation - I was never a public speaker - on the occasions when I had to do it I hated it - I'm talking about those days - I made the plat - I helped make the platform for those who did speak in public....

J.F. Make?

D.G. I don't mean physically make - figuratively - I don't mean literally, I mean figuratively.

J.F. I was just thinking because John Matthews was...

D.G. Yes - no, I meant in the sense that you - you can have as many speakers as you like unless you have an organisation - you don't get audiences, or places for them to go to - and the leaflets and the publicity just doesn't get out - I'm not saying that it's mechanical process - it's a political process, because what's in the leaflet also has to be decided upon -

But then I'd been doing silk screening - I taught myself from the books how to do silk screening to make posters and so on at a time when it wasn't a - a popular thing - or popular in the sense of common - there were commercial people who did it for advertisers and so on, but I did it for us, and we could produce pamphlets on the side - I mean posters on the scale that nobody else was doing, because I was doing it - it didn't cost very much, you see, and it involved people.

J.F. Now the whole time you were working as an engineer?

D.G. Yea - yes, I worked for the Cape Town City Council - no, I worked for the railways at the time of the Congress for the People, and I remember speaking at a meeting at Simonstown at Leolo location on a Saturday afternoon - the security police were there - Monday I got to work and found a sealed envelope on my desk giving me 30 days notice to quit my job -

In fact I would (?) say I was entitled to only 24 hours notice because I was a casual employee - I didn't have my degree yet, and I was working as what they called a technical assistant, but they gave me 30 days notice, and of course I wanted to know why and nobody would tell me why, except I was told that it wasn't because of my work as an engineer - it was quite clear what had happened -

Eventually I found a personnel clerk who went to look for my file for me, just as an act of friendship, who was furious about it, and the file had disappeared, and he said when that happens there's something political going on - well, I lost my job over that -

We were married already - '55, yes, and had a child - it wasn't easy - and I still had to go back to university to finish my

- D.G. thesis, which meant I had to stop working as well - made things quite difficult for us.
- J.F. And did you get the degree then?
- D.G. Ja, eventually - I wrote it three times, I think, the thesis (Laugh) Eventually I got a second out of it which was not bad (Laugh)
- J.F. So maybe I should let - rather than some of the things I've read, just let you kind of tell me during the legal organising period in the '50's what you were doing - what - emphasising the non racial kind of aspect the contacts you had.
- D.G. Well, I mentioned the joint congress executives for the region of the Western Cape Province, and that meant that when campaigns came up we worked together on them, deciding on leaflets, deciding where meetings were to be - whether it should be a central meeting at the Grand Parade in Cape Town or meetings in black townships - and for years when there were meetings in black townships, specially in Langa near Cape Town, I would go down in my car and a guy would climb on the roof - on the roofrack - we couldn't afford loud speaker systems and so on - and I would drive him round the streets of the township and he would be shouting out that there was a meeting and where it was and who was going to be speaking and calling on people to come to the meeting, and I would drive up and down the streets, and almost inevitably we would see the security police - the special branch as they were then called - down the other end of the street, you see, looking for us -

And as soon as I saw them he would lie flat on the roof and I'd go whizzing over to the other side of the township and start there, you see, and then the cops would come that way and I'd go to another quarter and so on - it was a game, I suppose - eventually I did get caught at it, and they warned me that if I did it again they would charge me with illegal entry into the township - they were tightening up on these things -

But all our political activities were non racial in the sense that we worked together all the time - now there were activities which Congress of Democrats was expected to undertake amongst whites, where we would organise meetings at which there would be speakers from the other congresses - in other words black speakers speaking to whites - we didn't often get big audiences but sometimes we did - and so, for instance, it was Congress of Democrats which put forward the idea that we should bring.....

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- D.G. We put forward the idea of bringing Chief Lutuli to Cape Town, and it wasn't just for Congress of Democrats - we thought it would give the whole congress set up in Cape Town a tremendous shot in the arm - oh, it was marvellous - I had a meeting for whites in the town hall in Rondebosch suburb of Cape Town near where the university is, and we filled that hall to overflowing - literally to overflowing - the hall, two little side halls and people outside filling the car park to listen - whites I'm talking about - to listen to the president general of the A.N.C., you see -

D.G. what year was that - '59, somewhere round there...

J.F. So it couldn't have been just activist whites - it was.....

D.G. Oh, it was with whites - now was it after the state of emergency or before - I can't remember - just can't remember - but people - whites were anxious about their future - things seemed to be going too far, and they wanted to hear this man who was president general of the A.N.C.

Then, you see, there was a second meeting in the Drill Hall in Cape Town near the Grand Parade, right in the heart of Cape Town, and somehow the security police allowed a chemical device to - letting off teargas to be placed in the back of the hall somewhere, in a room off the hall - we had to empty the hall out, and that hall must have had three or four thousand people in it, white, black, Coloured, Indian, Malays - you know, it was fabulous -

And what it did was to give the volunteer organisation, the congress volunteers a shot in the arm - they dressed in a para military kind of uniform, khaki long trousers, khaki tunics, A.N.C. flashes on the shoulders - very disciplined as they were volunteers who were prepared to do anything, and that really emerged - it was great -

But I mean whites in the movement were in anomolous position - if you were white you had all the privileges of being white, therefore you had access to telephones and cars and houses, and on that the story I said I'd tell you -

The same comrade told me one day, that had talked about the cigarettes, said to me on an occasion where he had phoned me mid winter, bitterly cold, raining, please will I come and tow his car away, it's broken down - I knew it wasn't his car - it was an illegal - the A.N.C. by then was illegal, and they had a car - a very old broken down thing - and he phoned when he knew I will be home at supper time, and when I got to him he said he's sorry to take me away from dinner but he knew that I wouldn't hesitate anyway - that's why he felt he could phone me, you see -

And I towed his car away - if he phoned me I understood it was something important - I just would go - and he said : You see, that's the point - we've - amongst us we've discussed people like you - some will respond straight away, no questions, others will say oh, they've got to go here or they've got to go there, and you can't - they don't respond - you do, but it goes further than that - we know that you're forced to live in the sort of area you live in - you do earn more than we earn, but you have to because you have to pay more rent, you have to maintain a particular style of living in the area you live in - you work as an engineer you have to be an engineer, and nobody wants you to throw it away -

And what it revealed to me again was the sense of comradeship of a man that could tell me quite openly that some of my African comrades were actually discussing how it is they could work with a person who had all these privileges - and I make the point again, my attitude was never one of supporting but one of being with - there's a clear distinction there, and I think it's that that he was talking about, you see -

I always wanted to play bridge, you know, and be in a bridge school - you know, you have a regular foursome or whatever - but I never could because I could never find a night on which I could be sure that somebody wouldn't phone me and say : You've got to come to a meeting now - or two days in advance say : Sunday

- D.G. night there's going to be a meeting, you see - and bridge schools don't like that - you've got to be there all the time - well, those things which were the normal part of white existence, some of the normal parts, I just didn't have, as a matter of choice.
- J.F. Would they have been saying to you : We want you to be an engineer and we don't want you to throw it away - because they knew that that could be also important for the movement.....
- D.G. No...
- J.F. Or is it just purely saying that's what you are and that's the way the society is right now?
- D.G. They were saying the last - I think they were saying to me : Look, that's the way the society is but we know that you want to destroy it, so it doesn't matter what you do - as a white you've got to live in white South Africa and at least outwardly conform otherwise your life would be impossible -

Now I mean to show that understanding - really - really - anyway - so what I'm saying is that I don't ever remember a time when my political work was not involved with black comrades whether they were African, Coloured or Indian, and where I've not known comrades who were black, Coloured and Indian, and don't still run into people who knew me before I was born, and they represent all the people of South Africa, you see -

I mean literally knew my parents, so it was just part of me - nevertheless it was an effort - I mean I had to - I told you that those years at university where I had to work out what I was going to do -

I must tell you when I did get involved it was like coming home - and I make the point because Nadine Gordimer's book, Burgher's Daughter - you've read it - is psychologically right - I don't care what people say about the false - the fact that the character she's drawn of whites on the Johannesburg left - they're people who were very angry about those - those caricatures - for me it doesn't matter - I knew them, and I think every writer does things like that - I think they were psychologically correct pictures, but the psychology I'm talking about is of Burgher's Daughter, who keeps coming home from Europe into political activity - goes to Europe, has to come home, has to get involved again - it's that psychological correctness -

When I got active at the end of '53 and early '54 it was that sort of coming home - I didn't need to guard my tongue - I could express my beliefs because I was with people who accepted that - it was great - it was absolutely great, that sense of ease with comrades.

- J.F. Throughout the '50's you weren't just involved with COD, were you?
- D.G. Well, and the joint activities.
- J.F. Yes (.....) but that was what was going on then - can you talk about leading up to the banning of the organisations and the kind of move from aboveground to underground?
- D.G. Oh.....

J.F. Can I - I was going to preface it by saying do you remember hints about the inevitability of that - did it ever occur to you that armed struggle might be an option - was it being discussed.....

D.G. I was pushing for it, was arguing for it - I mean amongst the groups I worked in I mean - at that period even to distribute leaflets, legal leaflets, you would be harassed by the security police - we knew our telephones were tapped - we knew they had dossiers on us - knew, in quotation marks, it was inevitable that they did, because they used to sit outside our houses at various times -

When there were threats of arrests and what have you we'd go and find somewhere else to live for a few days if necessary, just so that the political campaign could go on for a few days longer - so we knew all this -

At that time, for instance, I talk about legal leaflets - the Congress of Democrats never did anything illegal - it just didn't - I'm not saying that individual members might not have been involved in other things which were illegal, like putting up leaflets calling on people not to buy a certain product, like all the cigarettes manufactured under brands controlled by Rothmans - that's Rupert because of his attitude to his workers, black workers - or at one time to the United Tobacco Co., which was the big one at the time, and the main rival of Rupert, or of which Rupert was the rival - and we would call on people not to smoke their products by putting up little stickers - that was illegal restraint of trade, of all bloody things -

But we used to organise very carefully to get them up and not get people arrested - sometimes we slipped up - Esme, my wife, was arrested once with two others or - six of them were arrested and I had to go and bail them out, for putting up posters illegally - oh, it was posters for Coloured Peoples Congress - but we had to organise it in that way otherwise our people would get arrested as a matter of course -

And I was urging, because of my longer term view of what was - what would become necessary, a kind of para military structure - I mean structure - not that it was military - but in the sort of formation, where you could contact each other, where people were physically fit - if they had to run from the police (Laugh) they could run faster - because I thought it would be good for people to think in these disciplined ways of working together, of working carefully together, of not exposing themselves, of preparing themselves to go underground, and that could only mean militarily underground -

For me it was a relief when Umkhonto we Sizwe was formed because I'd been arguing for it amongst some groups of people I knew - not formally in the Congress of Democrats or anything.

J.F. When you say you were arguing were there people who were against?

D.G. No, you know, you debate and you argue about timing and should it be and shouldn't it be and when should it be - we were detained in 1960 - we spent four months in prison, or at least I did with a number of others in the Western Cape Province - there were lots of things to talk about - you know, now it's time and I didn't find any problems with it -

Eventually when I was asked to join Umkhonto we Sizwe at the time of its formation I said yes, and the person who asked me said : But go away and think about it - and I said : But I've been arguing for it for over a year - what's there to think about - and that's where my training as an engineer was important,

- D.G. you see, because technical skills were in short supply - it's one of the effects of racism in South Africa - it was - people now get professionally trained.
- J.F. Was that the first time you'd been detained?
- D.G. In 1960 - yes - in the state of emergency.
- J.F. And was that under a couple of 90 days or....
- D.G. No, no - no, they declared a state of emergency - I - and it went on for five months and I was held for four - most of us were held four months.
- J.F. Now getting asked to be in MK - is it true that there were - there certainly is no doubt that there were numbers of people who - whites who were in the Congress Alliance....
- D.G. Oh, yes.
- J.F. But weren't there far fewer who were actually asked to join MK?
- D.G. You know, I was not in Johannesburg where the command would have been situated - I was in Cape Town in one of the regions - an oddity about South Africa - national executive committees were almost always based in Johannesburg - to be on them you had to live within 50 miles of the city, or something like that - so often many things were - not concealed - were just not open to your knowledge by osmosis even, you see - not every African was asked to join Umkhonto -

One of our big problems in the Western Cape was the constant demand for men to be sent away for training, and we wanted not everybody to go because we wanted to keep the political structures alive even though the A.N.C. was illegal - you can't go on recruiting unless you have a political structure to do the work, you see -

Yes, there were far fewer whites in MK, but far fewer Africans as well.

- J.F. And when you said you'd been arguing for it, was that with a feeling that you would have this technical offer that was being an engineer?
- D.G. I had - I - ja - I had no doubt that if it was done I would be in it - I mean I never had any hesitation about it - I wanted it - after '60 and '61, the emergency in '60 the - the - in effect the suppression of the general strike round the referendum on the republic and getting out of the British Commonwealth in 1961 - they had the army and police on stand by, they had the army patrolling up and down the townships -

In Cape Town we were urging people to go to take part in the stay-away, the general strike, and at Langa in 1960 people had had a very tough time - just before the emergency was declared the police blocked off every road - no food trucks could go in - they cut off water supplies, they cut off electricity, and after a few days went in and literally drove people to work at gunpoint, and at the end of the riots - the end of a riot stick or baton -

And they were saying in 1961 : If you can protect us, comrades (us comrades) from the police then we'll stay home, but we can't take a beating like we took last time - and clearly they were saying we've got to have a peoples army - they were ready for

D.G. it then whereas the year before they were not - and even when we went on trial in the Rivonia trial there were witnesses from Port Elizabeth, from New Brighton Township, which was one of the really top notch areas of A.N.C. organisation - I was standing (?) in the witness box, and of course there's something suspect about the views they express there, because they've been pressurised and tortured and so on - they were talking about the murder of a police witness, or attempted murder - the one for which (.....) was hanged, and others -

The people were saying it's wrong to shoot a policeman because after all he's one of the people - a black policeman I'm talking about - or wrong to deal with a police witness, a black police witness, because he's one of the people - by 1961 this was already shifting in Cape Town because of the experience of 1960 -

Sorry, I've got the chronology wrong - what I'm saying is people were beginning to think in these terms of having to have a peoples army to defend them against the police - by 1963 there were still witnesses - '63, '64 - state witnesses, African comrades, former comrades, who were expressing the views in the township that it was wrong to attack a black policeman, but the mass support was growing for a peoples army, which meant that that sort of thing would happen -

Within a year or so - a year or two of the emergence of Umkhonto we Sizwe there was no question that it was right, and I want to tell you I think it's one of the great pieces of political timing in South African political history - before 1960 it would have been far too early to hope to take mass support with you for an armed struggle -

After the events in the middle of '61 around the referendum and the actions of the police and the army it was the right time - not that you had whole hearted support - after all there are still collaborators, but there's no question about the support for A.N.C. and Umkhonto we Sizwe - it grew very rapidly - it was a miracle of timing in my opinion.

J.F. Just to harp on my theme, did you notice any difference between white attitudes to the escalation to armed struggle and black attitudes?

D.G. Yea, I can remember a chat at work one day - I was resident engineer on a highway construction job, and the contractor's engineer knew my background somewhat, and there'd been some violence somewhere and he came to tell me he thought it was terrible and I said : Why, what should people do - he didn't know I was in Umkhonto we Sizwe of course (Laugh) and he couldn't give me an answer - he said they should wait, things would come, you know - and I said : But you're not doing anything, and you won't - people are going to take their rights and they going to take them by force - it's up to you - he says - never forget it - : If I were to see a mob coming to attack my home and I had a gun I'd shoot and I'd shoot to kill - I said : Well, I understand your feelings, but I don't think you can do it, because all you're doing is making it worse - it would be unfortunate if you or your wife and your children were harmed in any way, but it's part - it's because you're part of a system whether you like it or not, and if you take it personally and do what you say you will do then this thing will never come to an end -

And what surprised me was that he got the point - he said : Well,

D.G. what happens if you're walking down the street and the mob comes the other way, what do you do - I said : Run like hell, but don't get into it, and if you do get into it just accept the fact you're in the wrong place at the wrong time for you - you're just part of a process -

And it surprised me - he was a liberalish sort of a guy and he was obviously upset, but he seemed to take the point - I don't think he ever became active but he did talk about it - and in fact one of the things that happened - this came up because he told me he'd been called up into an urban commando, one of the militia type things, and he asked me if I had been - I never received my call up papers for that -

The security police must have actually vetted them - vetted the call ups - and he thought I should come along to protect my family and other whites and so on - that's what led to the discussion.

J.F. Did you.....

D.G. Let me give you another example, another anecdote - at university I dearly wanted to fly, and I could have - I could have joined the university flying club and would have received free pilot training from the South African Air Force with the condition that on completion of your flying training and your university degree you'd become a - you would be put on the list of reserve officers of the air force -

When I discussed it with my dad he said to me : Oh, it'd be marvellous to fly, but if you're on the reserve officers list of the air force you might be called on to fly your plane against people you don't want to fly against, like strikers or black people protesting - what would you do then - and in fact you've got to make the - I said : Well, obviously I would refuse to do it - he said : But then you face a court martial, you see, so you must make up your mind and make up your mind now -

He didn't tell me what to do, but he put it in the correct terms - and even in wanting to fly, because we couldn't afford to pay for flying training, the whole question of what were the racial relationships in terms of a racist system had to be sorted out before you could make a decision - that's because you're politically conscious - if you're not you just go and do it - it shaped my life in every way, being aware of these things.

J.F. I wanted to ask you at some point, the decision to be actively involved in the armed struggle - did you take that by discussing it with your wife.....

D.G. Never - never - not a word - not a word - if I spoke to her in my sleep that was an accident, but an absolutely definite calculated decision never to discuss it with her, and I think it was fortunate because after I had been detained in '63 at Rivonia she was also detained - I don't - I can't remember how long she was held - was it 38 days, something like that, I'm not sure - under terrible conditions - in her cell there was no toilet, no bucket, no light, and rats running over her as she slept, and nobody near, in a sort of outhouse, outbuilding next to a police station - filthy lice ridden blankets -

But she didn't know anything - she just did not know - she might have guessed - there might be a report in the paper about something happening, and I was out that night - you know, you do

D.G. learn things by feeling, by intuition, by a dropped word - osmosis I prefer to call it - but never ever a discussion - and when - there came a time in - shortly before I left Cape Town to go to Rivonia where I was asked if I was prepared to go abroad for military training, and I said yes - and they said : Well, what are you going to do about your family - I said : They'll never know why I've gone - and what I said to Esme was : I might need to go abroad and not come back - how long will you be away - I'm not sure, three to six months - what for - I said : Well, I need to go and do some political work - and that was all - it was very difficult, and there were many things I didn't - I never told her what they were about.

She's a physiotherapist - she used to do house calls - she often worked at night - if I needed the car for political activity I'd have to say I need the car Wednesday night, and she would arrange her work accordingly, but I couldn't tell her what it was for - so Esme would say : Oh, you're going to see your blonde in Camps Bay, you see -

Years later in prison she wanted to tell me that political activity was hotting up - she wrote to tell me that my blonde in Camps Bay had been very busy and very helpful - you know, it took another 20 years (Laugh) until I came out of prison to find out what it meant (Laugh) because I couldn't remember a blonde in Camps Bay - I didn't remember the reference, but she did, you see, and ja, well - I didn't have a blonde in Camps Bay (Laugh)

J.F. And the kids - she obviously sensed and knew what you were about, but the kids - was there - you had two kids?

D.G. Yes, a daughter of 31 - yes, 31 - and a son of 28.

J.F. So they were - were they just too young to - did they have some sense....

D.G. My daughter was eight and my son was five when I went to prison - when I was taken to prison - if our African comrades came to our house it was just the most natural thing for them, and I can remember Dan Tloome and Mark Shope, SACTU comrades, coming to our house, sleeping over Saturday night - they'd been to a day long conference or something - waking up Sunday morning, and we're chatting over breakfast and David, or David and Hilly, my daughter, wandering around in and out of the house, and David, tired of all the talking, walks up to Mark Shope, climbs onto his lap and goes to sleep - when he's had a rest he gets off and goes out again - and Mark Shop saying an interesting thing to me -

You know, he was a herd boy and he went to school very late and got a degree through correspondence through University of South Africa - he looked around our house and he said : You know, your children have such advantages - I said : What do you mean - he said : There're books all over the house, but more than that, here we are talking serious things and your children just walk in and out - it's part of their lives, whereas where traditional family life is retained, or at that time maintained amongst African people, children would be driven out because it's not childrens business, it's for grown ups only, it's serious, so your children grow up with a set of attitudes, as I did - but then, you see, it's not essential to grow up with attitudes on the left -

The younger comrades in later years who came to prison and joined me in prison had come from orthodox white homes - Rob (?) a

D.G. Christian background, a rebel at school who had to find his own way - Karl Niehuis from a Calvinist background, Calvinist school, Calvinist university, you see - these are important developments in South Africa - and more and more white men and women - Barbara Hogan - I'm talking about - you asked me to talk about whites - who can see there is no other future -

Either you believe, as I said earlier, that people are simply people or you don't, and if you believe it are you going to be consistent or not - the price of that inconsistency is too high in the suffering of others but in terms of your own moral position, and you cannot sustain it - it's very important -

In other words I'm saying amongst whites the - you do not have to come out of what I would call the old left, either by family connection or family friendship, to be in the liberation struggle - not support it - to be in it - you get into it because you can see no other way to sustain the very values you're taught at school and in your family to overcome those contradictions -

One of the bitternesses of prison was precisely that we were deliberately kept away from our comrades - I was sentenced with seven other comrades - I've not seen them since the day we were sentenced because they are black and I am white - and officials (?) said to me : We maintain a policy of apartheid even though we know you don't - we will never put you with them - it's a very bitter thing -

We could share a house together, we lived together, we cooked for each other, but we couldn't be in prison together - oh, the shits - anyway.

J.F. I guess that what we're leading up to now is Rivonia - do you want to stop now?

D.G. No, I've got till four o'clock.

J.F. I'm kind of going chronologically but you must stop me if I miss gaps or - but I was talking about the development from above ground to underground, and trying to see whether there was an element of the non racialism in that - before the arrest in working in launching MK and all the work that was involved in that, was the fact that there were people of different race groups involved - was that actually useful?

D.G. Ja, very much so....

J.F. Would it have been as effective a struggle if it had been just blacks - not in terms of white skills as much as the opportunities to evade and to do the (.....)

D.G. Never thought about it in those terms.

J.F. Well, whatever terms maybe I should let you answer it.

D.G. I think there were possibilities that developed - talk about underground - I talked about underground leaflets, talked about having technical skills - I was known amongst some of my comrades as Mr. Technico - I didn't mind getting my hands dirty, covered in ink and things like that, you see - so I get a phone call at eleven o'clock at night : Denis, you must come down to the herbalist's shop - and I say : What for - you know, I mean what you calling me for eleven o'clock at night - is it a trap - what is it, you see - well, we want you to fix the duplicator - the

D.G. cycl. O C style machine, O.K. - so I put the phone down quickly before a tapping can be made (Laugh) you see, and I say to Esme : I'm going - she says : Where - I tell her just in case something happens to me, and off I go - there (are) two duplicators going in the back of the herbalist's shop - he was an A.N.C. comrade under - you know, in the illegal organisation, and he was using the back of his shop at (Laugh) eleven o'clock at night to run off illegal leaflets with people walking in and out -

So I walked into it and I said : What's the trouble - they said : Both duplicators have broken down, help - it must have taken me 30 seconds to fix both, because I was so shit scared (Laugh) - I was going to get out of there - I mean it was so blatant, you see -

But the point is they could phone me and I could go there, and I would and they knew it - so those skills I could bring - doesn't mean African - there were no Africans who didn't have those skills - it's just that I did have them and I was in the movement with them.

When it came to buying duplicators it was much easier for a white to go into a shop and take up money and buy a duplicator or to buy hacksaws to cut iron tubes, or to buy a rope or whatever - it was just easier - and then there was always the question of access to cars and time, time - didn't have to work such long hours or travel so far, so you could do things, so in the facilitation sense it helped -

Politically that might have been harmful in the sense of holding back people who had to develop these skills - yes, this is one of the basics (?) for the B.C. movement - if you want to know I think B.C. movement in the '60's and early '70's in South Africa played a necessary role and an important role - what fascinated me was how quickly, relatively quickly, Africans in BCM - people in BC movement understood that the belief coming out of liberation theology and some of the black politics of the United States - if you believe you are free then you are free just doesn't take account of the material conditions in which you can be really free, and how quickly people understood this, you see, that psychological freedom's not enough -

You're not free when your tummy's empty and you spend all your time looking for food to fill it, to put it in crude terms - ja, I think BC was important - sorry, I've gone off the track again.

J.F. No, that's excellent because you know what it's making me think of was when I interviewed Horst yesterday he was saying that in that period of BC when he was at the Christian Institute the way some BC guys would just kind of use whites....

D.G. Yes.

J.F. And there were a lot of dynamics whereby that wasn't similar, fortunately, to the situation you were in at all, but I was wondering if there was any - ever any element where you felt like you were being stretched thin or whether there were any people who kind of took advantage of you being Mr. Technico at all hours and....

D.G. I - I - I never experienced it that way, maybe through my lack of sensitivity or understanding or whatever - that's not my impression of it, and I'm not saying it was all rosy - there were white comrades I didn't like, there were black comrades I didn't like -

D.G. there were some I got on marvellously with - it's not a blind acceptance - I'm talking about comrades as consistent, committed people - I told you I grew up with the idea that if you're involved in something then you're fully involved - my mother used to call it my boots-and-all attitude - anyway - she didn't know I got it from her (Laugh) - never seemed to realise it -

Anyway we were talking about - about relationships within - whether being white facilitated things - I felt that that was what I could contribute, and I felt it was my duty to contribute, and I felt morally bound to contribute - I'll tell you why - my dad, I told you, had been a British seaman, he'd settled in South Africa - there weren't scholarships and bursaries freely available to put sons and daughters through university even if you are white - because we lived in white South Africa I got a university degree, even though he could never pay my fees on time - in the end he would go and give a post dated cheque so that I could write my exams and not be barred from writing them - he had a cheque book because he was a white South African and so on -

And that was part of the privilege of being white - once I understood that, it was necessary to give back that privilege - if you're in the movement - you see, if you support it only then you give it back in another way - you get rich quick and you pay conscience money, you see - if you're in it you use your skills that you've got as a result of your privileges for that movement, in that movement - that was my approach to it, so I never resented it at all - never -

That's why I say I taught myself silk screening - I'd worked all hours of the day and night - our house would be full of posters drying - you know, with sort of the whole living room of the house blocked off so that the cat and the dog couldn't walk there and the kids couldn't wreck them, and string strung across, you know - that was just part - it was great (?)

J.F. I guess maybe I shouldn't have necessarily emphasised that aspect - what I'm saying is if maybe there's any anecdotes you could tell about the underground struggle that would illuminate the black and white relationship.

D.G. O.K. - waiting outside under a tree in main road Rosebank outside or near the womens residence at the University of Cape Town - can't remember the name of the residence - for some comrades to come for a meeting of Umkhonto we Sizwe regional structure - the person with a car coming late, so late that he didn't come at all - and Looksmart Ngudle, who was the second person to die under interrogation later, joining me and we saying to each other : We must get away - we're being - we're breaking all the rules by standing here talking -

But there were things we had to talk about, and so we talked, and somebody had seen an African and a white standing under a tree in a residential area, and phoned the police, and they came along - when they went back to their pol - they took our names and addresses and I had a motor scooter and they took the number and then disappeared - they just left us - they were ordinary uniformed cops - and when Looksmart Ngudle went back home he walked to where he had left his scooter, and the security police were there and they arrested him, took him to the police station and interrogated

D.G. him - there was nothing - they couldn't prove a damn thing, but they had linked the two of us together - they let me go, but he when they let him - I mean they didn't come and arrest me - they knew where I was - he then had to go back to the black township down the main highway to Nyanga - they followed him in their car and kept forcing him off the road onto the gravel verge of the road on his motor scooter - he felt they were trying to kill him, you see -

He told me about it - there was no bitterness that he had got it and I hadn't - we worked together - that camp we were on at Ma - it came up in our trial - he was there - we worked together organising it - it was a training camp - I'm happy to say it's gone down in the minds of those who were there and who are still in A.N.C. and have survived their battles as the first training camp inside South Africa - he was there, and they murdered him.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

D.G. Oh, it must have been the late '50's I remember Esme and I decided we were going to learn Xhosa and asked one of our comrades, Bernard Huna, if he could recommend a teacher for us who'd do it once a week, you know, a conversational language, and he said : Don't do it, Denis - I said : Why - he said : Because if you come into a township, black township - locations they called them in Cape Town, in Johannesburg they're called townships at that time - he said : And you speak our language people will run from you - you won't - you won't get on better - they will say you must be from the Bantu Affairs Department or you're a policeman in plain clothes, so it won't help you -

And I said : But when I'm with you I would like to be able to at least say hello, and he said : But I accept you, you're a comrade, you don't need to do it - so I never did - I thought about it a lot since then - I think he was wrong - I tried to do it through UNISA while I was in prison - did one course in Zulu - found it very hard because I had to learn it as a written language only - there were no voice tapes or anything, and even if there were tapes at that time they wouldn't allow us a tape recorder or a playback device -

So it's not structured like any language I would know, and I found it incredibly difficult - I didn't write the examination - then later when I wanted to do it again I couldn't and it came about this way - David Rabkin was going to major in anthropology - to major in anthropology in South Africa you have to have a major in an African language - he'd done two courses in Zulu - and then they refused him permission to study the third course because they have a system in prison that you may not study foreign languages, so you can't do French, German, Spanish or anything like that, but for a white South African African languages spoken by seven million people in South Africa - Zulu - at least seven million - is a foreign language, so I couldn't do it then -

D.G. I should have done it before but - just as I intended to read every bit of Shakespeare in prison - I never did get around to it (Laugh) - anyway - would have been useful - would have been - just following your thought that it would have been better to learn Zulu rather than learn an African language rather than to learn Afrikaans - not that Afrikaans doesn't have a place in the future of South Africa, I think it does -

And if you read the Freedom Charter which says that the rights of national groups shall be protected, and languages will be developed, and cultural forms and expressions, it must apply to Afrikaans as well - and interestingly Jakes Gerwel, who's the new rector at University of Western Cape, turned the department of Afrikaans and Nederlands at University of Western Cape into the biggest department at that university, because he said he was not going to allow the language of Afrikaans to be left to the oppressor - it is also the language of Coloured people, so that the language and the right to the language and the way it - you express things in it is a site of struggle, and it's gone on from there to the Afrikaans Writers Guild, (Afrikaans Schrywers Gild Afrikaans) now having members who are not white but who use and write - use the language of Afrikaans challenging the old writers like [redacted] and others about the way they write and the way in which the racism is built into the language, and they've got to be aware of it, you see - anyway that's just by the way, but it's part of multiracialism or non racialism and that's - er el was particularly interesting on this -

And interestingly as well a masters degree was done at University of South Africa by a woman I think called Hannie van der Merwe - I think that's her name - in the early '80's on the racist images in school text books - she did a masters degree in communications, and she showed how in text books written for - in Afrikaans - how the images of Afrikaners as a rural people hankering for the land, to go back to the land, that golden idyll of Afrikaner existence when they were poor but free (Laugh) is so written into the language and into the writings for children and in the history books at schools, and how in the history books for children blacks are lazy, inefficient, incompetent - this is what children are brought up on -

It is a masters thesis - it's available from University of South Africa - and what she was showing is how the reality of South Africa no longer matches either the literature or the school texts - the Afrikaners are now an urban people - they're industrial workers and commercial workers and professionals and government servants, and if they hanker for the land it's because there's tax relief for farmers, so that doctors buy farms, put in a manager, and they have to actually farm it, but every bit of improvement to the land is tax deductible, so it gives them a tax haven - it's got nothing to do with the image of the Afrikaner as a farmer (Laugh) and yet, you see, the ideology reinforces this idea of the tax haven, because there are (?) better tax havens (Laugh) - and of course if you -

There was a big fight about childrens literature in English and Afrikaans in South Africa for whites because of the imagery used, so that you'll find a modern writer using in dialogue, written dialogue, a Coloured worker speaking to his employer on a farm and addressing him as Soer in the Western Cape, from monsieur from the huguenot days, you see - well, it just doesn't happen any more - it might have happened and did happen in the earlier 20th. century and certainly in the 19th. century, but for a

D.G. writer today to reproduce that is to perpetuate racial attitudes and racial language, and these things interestingly are taken up inside South Africa - South Africa's odd, it really is - anyway make of it what you will - it's a whole new field of investigation for you.

J.F. You did give some underground anecdotes - let me just ask one other thing about the underground which I want to ask, and that was were there still discussions when you were so busy working on that level when you had to maintain your family and your job and yet you were doing work for MK and all comrades were busy - did one still discuss - was non racialism an issue.....

D.G. It wasn't - I don't ever remember it being an issue in congress - no, it was an issue - it was - the issue was if you have a belief in non racialism why do you have four separate congress organisations, you see....

J.F. When did that come up?

D.G. Oh, throughout the '50's until the organisations were banned - Coloured Peoples Congress collapsed, SACTU was harassed into quiescence into - not quiescence - yes, quiescence - A.N.C. was proscribed, Congress of Democrats was proscribed throughout that period of the '50's of the Congress Alliance - you'd make, for instance, in Cape Town, I remember it would come up - you'd make contact with white students who felt they wanted to be involved - they would recognise the A.N.C. but not Congress of Democrats -

Some would recognise Congress of Democrats because it wasn't socialist (Laugh) - they would accept the A.N.C. which was not socialist but African nationalist, you see, but if you were white then you had to be a socialist in their view - it's just crazy thinking - but if you believe in non racialism why should I join an organisation which has only whites as members - and so you would point out the struggle was a struggle for African national liberation, you see, and Coloured and Indian people obviously were affected as well -

Now Indians were clearly a national group, as Africans were - the question was were Coloured people - did they fit that same pattern - well, they'd always moved between, politically I mean, between support for Africans in their struggles throughout history in the 19th. century and support for whites, and so Coloured Peoples Congress, also its predecessors, would grow strong and they would move closer and closer into alliance with African political movements, and then as the situation would change so those movements would collapse again -

And we were saying that there are laws and living conditions which affect Africans in a way in which they affect no other people in South Africa - the struggle for national liberation must be led by the African people, the vast majority, through their political organisation - the role of the other groups is to work in alliance with them because what happens to Africans determines what happens to everybody else -

Whites in the struggle are compelled to do two things - to work amongst whites to win support for the struggle for national liberation, and secondly to work with the A.N.C. in support of it, as part of it but in its separate structure - you can't - there came a point, for instance, when you could no longer go into black townships - blacks could come out, but then you're taking

D.G. blacks away from where the mass of people are - the work's got to be done where people are - so this argument would go on and on - and in fact I have a feeling that quite a lot of this argument was due to an unsatisfied emotional need that once you'd shed your - the shackles of a colour-oriented society you felt the need to work in one organisation so that you could in practice be non racial in your political work in every aspect of it -

Now that need wasn't satisfied by the Congress Alliance with its separate organisations, but social functions, fund raising functions, parties, and ordinary social get togethers in homes, there were always people of different races together, and these white students would come in on those, but they had this question about non racialism - if you believe in non racialism why not non racialism in practice - it comes out of some theoretical argument, and I think a valid one, about the nature of the struggle for national liberation in that particular phase of development in South Africa and also the sheer practical necessity for Africans to organise a powerful African National Congress, as a Programme of Action coming out of the Youth League sought to do -

And it does piss me off a little bit when BCM claims to have discovered black consciousness, which was such an element in the formation of Tambo, Mandela, Sisulu and so on, who twenty years - or ten or fifteen years earlier had discovered that it wasn't enough - that if anybody was to be free in South Africa everybody has to be free, and that means in effect you've got to work together even if you're not in the same organisation -

And it was P.A.C. broke away ostensibly over the Freedom Charter being too socialist - now P.A.C. says it's not socialist enough, as you know, but in fact the question - the break-away was over the question of working together with whites in the Congress of Democrats, you see - it pissed me off a little for people not knowing their history -

I couldn't help to do anything about it - I was otherwise engaged or detained, forgive me (Laugh)

J.F. Where were these debates going on - when I said was it an issue I don't mean to put that as a negative - I mean was it discussed....

D.G. Ja - oh, as I say, mainly amongst white students because they were the source of new recruits to the progressive movement generally, in the liberation movement.

J.F. Now I guess.....

D.G. Amongst whites this discussion was an issue - I don't remember, well, I wouldn't know if - what was discussed in detail, but that's my recollection by Africans - for instance, after Congress of Democrats was banned I was asked if I would join - if I would work together with comrades in the Claremont branch of Coloured Peoples Congress and would I come to meetings, you see, because they wanted the political experience I had and the organisational experience, and I said : Yes, I'd like to do that - and they said : We'd also like you to give us a regular donation - so I said :

D.G. Well, why don't I give you subscriptions - oh, no - they said they would like me to pay subscriptions - then they said : But we would like you not to stand for member - allow yourself to be elected to the branch committee, and I said why - they said : Well, it would be wrong in terms of congress structure - and I said : Well, you've got to sort it out in your own mind - you can't fudge the issue, you see - I'll work with you happily - if you want me to come to a particular branch meeting tell me, you see, but you can't say to me : Be a member but not be a member - well, that was it - I mean that was another aspect of it -

And yet our working relationships were very, very close - very close indeed, and of warm friendship - we used to visit in each others homes and so on so - and yet the political structure was important - anyway there it is.

J.F. In the early '60's once you got involved in MK and you were working quite intensively did you think frequently or at all about the possibility of being arrested or the probability - what was your kind of mood - what kept you going - what did you envision?

D.G. I told you when I was asked to join MK I was told to go and think about it and I said : But I have - I don't remember worrying about arrest - I'd been detained in 1960 - I knew prison was survivable - I probably guessed that prison-as against detention-in those days prison would have been far worse as it was - but there was a job to do and you had to do it - you took the precautions you could and that was it -

And sometimes, like in the story of being with Looksmart Ngudle we didn't always observe the precautions - that was stupid, you see - you were aware of the dangers but it didn't stop you doing the work -

My son asked me - I'll tell you a story I've told other people - when I came out and I met him, we were walking together once and he said to me : Why did you do what you did to take you away - to take you to prison for so long - that was the question - to take you to prison for so long - and of course I interpreted the question as why did you do what you did when you knew it would take you away from us for so long - why did you desert us - now he knew I hadn't from Esme, from his sister who was a bit older, had better understanding I think - but he needed to hear something from me -

What I said to him was this : There are millions of African women and children who live without their husbands and children grow up without their fathers, not because they're politically active but because of the migrant labour system enforced by law because they are black - now I knew that what I was doing could hurt your mother and you and your sister, but how do I put you ahead of those women and children - why are you different, and more I think part of being human is to care about others - that's why I did it -

Well, we sort of wept on each others shoulder for a little while - that was it - my daughter doesn't accept that so easily, by the way - she feels that I never even thought about it - oddly enough she's the political one of my children with a real political understanding, you see - but once I was out of prison then the question of the personal relationship of daughter father, father daughter became important again - she's an adult, she's not a

D.G. child, feels that her opinions are important, but I can't necessarily accept them even though I listen to them (Laugh) - and yet she's probably prouder of me in the sense of consciously being aware of what we've all been through and its value than my son would be, that (but) she has had difficulties accepting it since - while I was in prison it was fine.

J.F. Then leading up to.....

D.G. Your question - that was an answer to your question why did you do it - did you think about prison all the time - the answer is no, I didn't think about prison all the time - you did what you did because you had to do it - when the Sabotage Bill was about to become law in 1963, in May, '63 - it's the one that provided for 90 day detention, the first one - some of my senior comrades said to me : Denis, the day that becomes law you're going to be arrested, sure as sure, so you've got to make up your mind what to do - you can stay and be detained - they're going to interrogate you, they'll interrogate others - it will lead to a prison term, sure as sure can be - you can go underground in Cape Town or - because I knew Cape Town - that's where I'd done my work - or you can leave the country -

And we talked about it backwards and forwards - decided I should leave to avoid arrest, because my possibility for effective political activity had come to an end in Cape Town, you see - agreed I should leave - not just to leave South Africa but to do what I could and if possible come back again - could always be an immigrant or whatever, you know - chance your arm -

Anyway I left but was asked to go through Johannesburg to get a final clearance to leave from the MK high command, and when I arrived in Johannesburg (Laugh) they said : Dennis, you're free to leave and get what training you can, do what you can to prepare yourself for further activity, but there is a job to do, would you like to stay - will you think about it - what is the job - to investigate the possibilities of producing our own armaments in South Africa - think about it - well, that was also a difficult decision - the previous one had taken ten seconds, this one took five seconds -

But I did say : There can come a time when the security need requires that I leave, and I'd like it not to be felt that if I need to leave that I'm running away - the point is to do political work, not just to go to prison - so yes, I did think about it - but there was the need to do this job to see if we could produce our own explosives, our landmines, our hand grenades and what have you, and that's what I was doing after I left Cape Town - went to Johannesburg - and before the arrest at Rivonia - but I had thought about arrest -

But it wasn't a worry - it didn't stop me doing things.

J.F. And at that point you had left your job - you were working full time.....

D.G. I'd left my job - I was underground in Johannesburg, yes.

J.F. And so for the whole - how long were you involved with the Rivonia and based at Rivonia.

D.G. I was in Johannesburg for about six weeks before we were arrested.

- J.F. And - I think you've answered this, but when the arrest did come was it a shock or did it kind of seem inevitable at that point or how.....
- D.G. Well, we were taken from Rivonia to the fort in Johannesburg, and we were taken through the big gates through the battlemented walls into a courtyard, and I was looking around at the night sky, looking at the stars - I knew I wouldn't see them for a little while (Laugh) - I meant a hell of a long while - and a cop said to me : It's no use looking at the walls, Denis, you'll never get over them - he was being a little like a policeman, and in fact I was simply looking at the stars - I knew I would not see them again for a long time, not in a free night sky -
- Ja, it was a bit of a shock - I can remember being very cold.
- J.F. Did you discuss with your comrades at Rivonia the thought that you feel so bitter about that if and when you were detained you wouldn't be together - was that anything that ever.....
- D.G. No, it's just part of South Africa.
- J.F. Was that just known that that would be the case?
- D.G. Ja - yes.
- J.F. I've been focusing on you as the only white - did you feel any particular feeling as the youngest - was that something that.....
- D.G. All my life I've been the youngest - I mean it seriously - I started school at the age of six - I started in the second term of a four term year - I started in the first of two sub-grades, sub-A and sub-B - at the end of that first year I was put into Standard One, the first real school class out of twelve year - of further ten years of school - and so when I wrote my school-leaving matriculation examination I was sixteen - I started university at sixteen -
- I was always the small one in the rugby team - at university I was the young one and the small one, and protected by my fellow sportsmen - I can remember a guy, Carl Somebody or other - Carl - doesn't matter - he used to call me Pik, short for piccanin, which is an African word for baby, as you know, right - and there were times when I'd be heavily tackled he'd come and pick me up or he'd fix the guy that - that had set out to injure me, you know -
- You asked about anti semitism - let me tell you a story about being Jewish - playing under sixteen rugby at school, playing against an Afrikaans speaking school team - my school was English speaking - these rivalries were very strong, you know, the language rivalries between the groups - and being very heavily tackled by a great brute of a guy on the other side, who put me down, put me down hard and swore at me as a Jewboy, you see -
- Oh, I mean if he thought he'd gain something good luck to him - but we had a big guy in our team as well, and he really worked this guy over during the game - at the end of the game in the dressing rooms he said : I fixed that guy for you, eh, Jewboy! (Laugh) - but he said it with affection, you see, not understanding that it makes it worse, but these are - it never really worried me - it wasn't an issue in my life - it happened so seldom.

- J.F. And being detained at Rivonia and the fact that others were going to have a chunk of their life taken out but it wouldn't be their younger years, was that a factor at all for you?
- D.G. Ja, it was - I often used to think which is the best part of your life to lose - I mean the one you miss least - you know the Prime of Miss Jean Brody - every year is your prime - ja, I used to feel badly about it - I was 31 when I was sentenced - in my political work, in my personal life, in my professional life, I felt at that time, and I say it with a great deal of immodesty, I felt at that time that a whole world was opening up for me - I felt confident and capable of able to handle things -

I've never been a particularly unconfident person, but I was very shy at that age, which shows a lack of confidence - perhaps that accounts for some of the brashness that people talked about - but I felt then again a story, an immodest story of doing an engineering layout drawing for some roadworks, taken to a very senior man in the profession - not in the firm I worked for - who opened it up and looked at it and turned to me - he said : You did this.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

- D.G. Said to me : You did this - I said : Yes, why - he said : it's good - now you feel you can cope - not that you've arrived in the sense of oh, I'm the big shot, but that the work you do is worthwhile, but I felt that, and I haven't asked anybody if it was true, I felt that in the political work I was doing and my family life, all sorts of things - yes, I did feel a great sense of loss that the years of my physical prime the bastards had from me in prison, you know -

But then, you see Nelson, Govan - Govan wrote a book in prison on toilet paper, a man in his intellectual prime, and that's been taken - no, it hasn't been taken from him - he hasn't been able to give full expression to it, you see -

Those years in prison I feel I grew in prison as a person - had time to think, had time to study, to read - I couldn't always read what I wanted to read because they wouldn't let me have it, but I felt in the studies that I did I gained an ability to express myself on paper when I can be bothered to settle down to it - I always found deadlines dreadful -

Yes, I do - I don't regret those years - not a day of them - it was worth it, it really was - I would have liked to have been active - I'd like to have been active doing things - that's what I'm doing now (Laugh) - too many years of dry theory, because theory without the practice is not good enough -

But those years of thinking, writing for myself, writing university essays and so on, those were years of development as well - it's - I'm not being Polyana, looking on the bright side because some

- D.G. of the days and some of the years weren't very nice, to put it mildly - ja.
- J.F. (Tape off) - because it just seems so relevant to it - were you saying that in relation to me trying to.....
- D.G. I don't know what triggered it - I - obviously I've been thinking while we've been talking and so on, and the one thing I don't want to be is glib, because human relationships are not glib - they are based on very deep seated realities, and one of the deep seated realities in South Africa is that you cannot avoid the issue of race - you can shut your eyes to it but you can't avoid it (Laugh) in reality -

I've said that in political work there wasn't - I wasn't aware of non racialism being an issue in congress, but of course it was in some senses, and it is still today in the sense that there is, for instance, the forum, national forum group inside South Africa whose attitude to whites in the struggle for liberation is different from that in congress, so there is something there, and of course those attitudes were never utterly excluded in congress either -

I mentioned earlier - I talked about an Africanist element in the '50's in Cape Town and the Eastern Cape within the A.N.C., and this was reflected in working relationships as well, although one could work together - we could work together -

Now I told you a story of an African comrade telling me at the time when he'd phoned me to help him tow his car away that he and others had discussed the position of people like me, a white in the liberation movement, but the fact that they'd discussed it meant that there was something to discuss, which means that non racialism is a conscious attitude counter to the official ideology which affects whites of course by the way in which they're indoctrinated like children are indoctrinated in schools throughout the world -

Every school system, every society has its ways of perpetuating its ideology - in South Africa it's racism - the theory of the melting-pot or the ideology of the melting-pot in the United States, yet the pot hasn't melted everything, and so you move to multi-cultural education systems and so on, but these things are built into educational systems, into church bodies, into the way these things are propagated -

In South Africa the issue of race is perpetuated in many ways through the legal realities, through the social realities of day to day existence, through the way children are brought up - I mentioned the studies of educational materials - but it affects blacks as well as it affects whites - you do not - I don't believe anybody without thought constantly puts their necks out to have them trampled on in ordinary social life if you're rebuffed by a friend - a number of times you - you withdraw -

So the concept of non racialism is a very mature sophisticated political position which accepts that there are races, but it says they should not be important - it is the society which has made them important - A.N.C. talks of all national groups, meaning African, Coloured, Indian, white and whatever little sub groups there are, and it says there's a place for everybody - that's

D.G. a conscious choice of a way in which to face that reality - it requires for every group within the A.N.C. - people from each of the national groups who are in the A.N.C. to be consciously and continuously aware of that as a policy - there're times when it's less easy in relationships than at other times when there're feelings which come out of the reality of South African society come closer to the surface, and I say that with tremendous respect for people who can consciously set aside what is done to them day after day after day, and say : That is wrong, but we will not do it because that would be equally wrong -

And I remember - I told you of - of meeting Govan Mbeki in Port Elizabeth, and Govan telling me that he'd on one occasion had to meet somebody outside a bookshop in Port Elizabeth and went inside out of the rain to look at books while waiting - it was just after World War Two - one of the books he picked up was of the holocaust, of what was found in the nazi concentration camps - the extermination camps when they were liberated, and he said : Having seen from those photographs what racism can do he could never adopt a racist position towards any people anywhere, and it showed in his attitude -

But Govan Mbeki was the first black social - social science graduate in South Africa, I think - certainly the first black field worker in the field of the social sciences in the '30's - so that when he saw this book he was already politically mature, and yet the youngsters in South Africa today in the UDF have no problems, I'm told - I haven't been there while they've been active other than in prison, but from people I've spoken to like Amy, there's a whole new attitude of confidence, of awareness -

I mean Amy told me a story - I don't know if she told it to you - of being in hospital, doctors thinking she wouldn't live, and her black comrades coming to her and saying : Your children are at home alone - they're late (?) teenagers - we know you must be worried about them - can we do anything to help, you see - well, however difficult it is that's the future - but it's a conscious choice, and if it's a conscious choice there must be times of irritation and frustration in which I think natural attitudes stemming from bitterness and hurt come nearer the surface -

I've gone on a bit about it because I'm really concerned not to appear glib, that's all - we're going to do it - sorry.

J.F. No, that was really - I think that was really useful to put the rest of it in context - can I follow it up with a lot of specifics about it because you've set the context - there's a context (... ..) - the question I was going to ask next in a sense might jar a bit, but I think you've explained it so well - perhaps it can be answered just factually, and that was in terms of the pre trial detention and then the.....(Phone) - in a sense it sets up to get into the last bit of the interview better, because if we've established that context that I think I can understand your answers in a better way - there are questions that I had, such as the fact that after all you'd struggled for and your ideals you were just slapped into a prison without your comrades - without blacks, being in a whites-only prison with slightly perhaps better treatment and all this.....

D.G. And in some ways perhaps worse.

J.F. In what way?

D.G. A prison officer more than one - on more than one occasion saying : Nelson Mandela we can dislike but we can respect him for fighting for his people - after all Afrikaaners have stood up and fought for white Afrikaaners in their position - so we can respect him - but you with everything in front of you that white society could give you, you're a traitor, we hate you - and by God they hated us - they allowed - Esme went out on an exit visa to live in England with our kids while we were on trial -

I'm not going to go into all the reasons - they weren't all personal - some were political - the reason was basically political, because it didn't help me to have my wife out of the country and not able to visit me, and didn't help her, you see, and she had mixed feelings about going, but after discussing it in prison while we were on trial she left -

She left at the end - in end of November, '63 - they allowed her to return to South Africa purely for the purpose of visiting me - they gave her ten days in South Africa in 1967 - they gave us five visits of half an hour each, and that was a special favour - they then allowed her to return in 1971, four years again later - they gave us a visit of an hour, and a visit of half an hour, and a visit of one hour -

They never allowed her to come back to see me - I didn't see her for 14 years until I came out of prison - now I'm white and they treated me that way, and treated her that way -

When Ruth First's book was filmed, A Hundred and Seventeen Days, Esme played the wardress - she knew what wardresses were like - she had been detained - well, for some reason then letters started going astray -

Now there were times, I'm quite sure, when Esme didn't write - her life wasn't easy - London's a hell of a city to live in - but when she did write and I didn't get letters that was bitter-making, you see.

We in Pretoria were very near the prison headquarters in Pretoria, and you must never be too near a headquarters because every local decision then gets referred to headquarters, you follow, instead of it being a routine matter, because headquarters officers are always dropping in -

I told you I had after my - my dad used to visit me - he was my only visitor for years - then he got old, he couldn't drive - it was difficult for him to come from Johannesburg to Pretoria - Ivan Shermbrucker when he went out arranged for two young women, younger women, to bring him to see me and to visit me - eventually one of them, Lorraine (.....) was stopped from seeing me, so Hilary Cooney kept on bringing my dad, and when my dad died she was allowed to go on visiting me -

She then found me another visitor, Jane Dugard, John Dugard's wife - she and he went away on holiday or a visiting lectureship that he had to the States - she wrote to me, I wrote to her - they stopped the correspondence - they would never allow it to be reinstated, and she was never allowed as a visitor -

I had many people I used to write to - they stopped them writing to me, stopped even Christmas Cards from them, and they were correspondents - stopped them even sending me money as a gift, and

- D.G. I wouldn't know where it came from, you see - and every person who applied to visit me and I asked - applied for as well - they turned down and turned down until at the end of 1984 I said to them : You've got to do something about this - you giving me a privilege (Tape off - phone).....
- J.F. And you were saying it's a right not a privilege and they were just taking the stuff away from you.
- D.G. Ja, that they better do something about it, and then they did agree to one or two people to come and see me - a prison officer went through the statistical information I'd given him about my visits and visitors, and wrote a minute in support of my application, and it was then done, and they allowed a couple of visitors whom I wasn't able to see properly because I then got released, you know, and so on -
- But for years I had one visitor.
- J.F. How often?
- D.G. Well, it changed over the years - it was roughly once every three weeks or so - but it was a tremendous burden on her - she had a family, you know, and every third Sunday sort of thing, or every second Sunday was taken up with me - it was very nice for me - but it wasn't enough - you need an input - the longer you're out of the world (Laugh) the more input you need -
- Now I know they were doing this to African comrades as well - for instance, - I don't want to say - do not assume automatically that whites were treated better - that's all I'm saying - and Jeremy Cronin had something to say about this somewhere, about the fact - it's not a comparison worth making really, but I think it's a wrong assumption, that's all.
- J.F. And was that also the case in terms of the support at the trial - at the Rivonia trial?
- D.G. Oh, no, didn't feel any of that.
- J.F. I mean was there support for you, did you feel?
- D.G. Oh, yes - oh, yes - I certainly didn't feel alone.
- J.F. No, I just - in Tanzania while I was waiting for Stanley (.....) to arrange various interviews DIP gave me Hilda Bernstein's book, The World that was Ours....
- D.G. Tell me what you think of it.
- J.F. Well, it was nice for me just to get that - I hadn't read a lot of that information - I don't know if I have the background to judge it well - I just like that quote about - where she wrote about you saying they couldn't hear the sentence and they said what is it like and you said "It's to live!" - what did you think of it?
- D.G. I didn't finish it actually, and I found it a very distressing book to read...
- J.F. Really?

- D.G. Well, it reawakened a lot of things (Tape off)
- J.F. At this point I don't know if it's going to stay chronological - it's just a whole lot of things to deal with, but I'll just kind of go through my questions and then you can go on.....
- D.G. I'll try and speed up my answers.
- J.F. No, I'm just saying I don't know if it's - if the order is particularly.....
- D.G. Let me tell you a story first - Afrikaaner warders were very rigid, and in the early days there were some right bastards amongst them, not in the - it's not sadists in the sense of physical sadism because they didn't manhandle us - I'm talking about after sentence now, you see - but psychologically they tried in every way they could -

I'm talking about the early years in the '60's - by the early '80's there was a different, let me say calibre of young man coming into the prison service as well - not the same type, the same - these were young men with matriculation, and one day - there were four in particular who, if you'd met them outside, you would have said well, they're normal lightweight, intellectually lightweight, nicely brought up young men, given white South Africa, of course -

And in prison we found them very courteous young men - they'd been to school together, been through prison college together, come into the prison service together - one day one of them asked me to sit down next to him, he wanted to talk to me, and what he wanted to say was he wished to apologise to me for not calling me O m, Uncle, because young Afrikaaners are brought up to call older men uncle and auntie, O m and Tanta, and I said : Oh, don't worry about it, it's not important - he said but to him it is important, but he'd been ordered not to call me O m and that if he did he would have a black mark against his name in his personnel - personal file and he would be transferred to a hardship post, you see - he'd lost his security clearance, in other words -

And then he went on to say that the fact that after all those years, nearly 22 years of it, I'd still laugh and joke, enjoy a game of table tennis - if they asked me questions about the situation in South Africa, questions which to me must have seemed quite naive, he didn't - he said stupid but he meant naive - I would give them a serious answer - I didn't talk down to him - and when I had disagreements with them I would take it up as a matter of principle with his superiors so that the superior could say : No, I don't want it done that way - or I do want it done that way - but he didn't feel that he was being attacked personally for his own personal characteristics -

He said that, you know - and those things - and after all these years you still believe what you believed in - makes us think again, you know - now we asked them once - in fact Rob asked him : Why are you in the prison service - and he said well, they have a choice - they can do two years in the army or four years in the prison service, and he chose the prison service - then we said : Why - and he said : Well, the army's a waste of time - you sit around doing nothing - it's not a - you just lose any sense of - of time of doing things, you see - and we said : What about

D.G. the prison service - and he said : Ja, it's the same but at least you get a proper salary and not army pay - and finally he said : Well, I don't want to go running around in the bush - I'm quoting - and Rob said to him : You mean you like looking after terrorists who don't have guns rather than face the SWAPO men who've got guns - he blushed a very fiery red and he said : Yes, I don't see any point in fighting for a country that's not mine - Namibia's not our country -

I found that a very interesting experience, and I have no doubt of his sincerity - one of his young friends, when we were able to start a garden up again and plant pots - pot plant garden - his father had a garden - this is one of the other youngsters - he brought me plants, he brought compost, he brought good soil, because he thought ja, there's the chap who's interested, I've got them at home - when he had - I'd germinated some apple pips and an avocado pip - I'd given them to him for his father -

You see, there was this sort of human level of interchange - of course he was a prison guard and he would do what he was ordered to do, but when I left these youngsters all came - deserted their posts to come and say goodbye to me - a quite different calibre of young man affected by the struggle and also by the years of contact with us - not just me, us - that's interesting, you know -

It's different from the man saying : You, you're a traitor - Nelson Mandela we can respect - you see - O.K., use it how you will.

J.F. Who was - who were the whites in prison when you went in?

D.G. When I went in?

J.F. Ja.

D.G. Jock Strachan, R.H.L. Strachan, called Jock - Ben Turok and Jack Tarshish.

J.F. _____

D.G. I don't know - he's going to be here later this month.

J.F. Strachan?

D.G. Mmm.

J.F. Ja, he wanted me to interview him but I just - (.....) interviewed him already, I understand.....

D.G. Well, I hope you'll stay away from Rowley, the bastard.

J.F. And can you talk a little bit about - again I'd be interested in this just on its own, but to stick with the kind of non-racialism thing that I'm looking at, how as different whites - different prisoners came in - you got a sense of how non-racialism was faring during the BC era, maybe starting with I guess from (.....) to ARM to the various people who came in - just talk a bit about - I guess those people came in, just from what Ra. in said to me, you certainly were always asking people what was going on.

D.G. Well, we didn't have newspapers or radio news for 16 years - from the day we were - I was sentenced to I think September, 1980, so it's June, '64 to September, '80 - I think those are the dates - we had no news - now prisoners make their luck a little bit, so we had some, and our main source of news was comrades who got sentenced - and at this point I make my standard joke.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

D.G. You would hear of somebody on trial, a white, and you didn't know whether to hope for him to be convicted or not, because if he were convicted you'd get news - if he was found not guilty you'd be very pleased for him but very sad that you weren't getting news - along the same lines when French Beyagh, the Dean of Johannesburg, Anglican Dean, was on trial we sent out a message, does he play bridge, we need a fourth (Laugh) - this joke apparently went all over South Africa - he was acquitted and left the country (Laugh) - we never did get our bridge four - anyway -

Changing attitudes to non racialism....

J.F. Was it something you asked people - did people - surely people must have come in and said to you : Denis, you're a symbol, you're important, people are talking about, people know you exist - was - that's just was the reality.

D.G. Oh, I must tell you that when I heard as late as Karl Niehaus or Rob that somebody - was it Sam (.....) Municipal Workers Union man in Johannesburg and others in making public speeches would refer to people like me as part of the struggle, as heroes of the struggle - it's embarrassing to use these words but that's what I was told - and I didn't hear about these things for years - you know, there was a long hiatus, but as it came up....

J.F. It would have been as late as Rob that you heard that?

D.G. Ja, I - I reckon - I'm not sure of the dates - I didn't sort of keep a diary of - even a mental diary of when of these things - no, round about '76, '77 - round about there I began to hear it - I must say I felt relieved that the things that we had stood for, and I don't mean just whites - I mean we had stood for - were the things that mattered, were the leading ideas in South Africa as the Freedom Charter became more and more the accepted document - there was no question of the acceptance of the policies of the A.N.C. enshrined in the Freedom Charter, and in particular the question of non racialism, black and white together - South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white -

These freedoms we all fight for side by side until they've been won, you see - it was a tremendous sense of well, relief, because we'd known about BC - we'd heard about it - I don't think I ever misread its significance - I thought it was important - I thought that it would lead to something more, as it in the end had to - when I got to be able to read some of Steve Biko's writings one way or another it fascinated me to see the way his

D.G. his own thinking had shifted as the experience of BC had moved on, that local community projects were not enough - the issue was political rights...

J.F. Did you read that after you got out?

D.G. No - various oddities happened - university courses changed and so on, you see - I don't want to make too much of that because people constantly need access, and one doesn't want to close loopholes for them - but I would hear it from people who were coming in as well, you see, and these were things I've had confirmed by former BC people who are in A.N.C. now, you see, and have talked to them about it, and who don't quibble with my interpretation - they just take it further in terms of providing the details of when their own consciousness began to move, you see -

I was so relieved but I'm - I don't want to use the word gratification because it's the wrong word - it means almost like sort of sitting above and waiting for people to be grateful for - for having received the word - that's not what I mean - I mean feeling that it was all worthwhile, but I want to make a further point -

The struggle for liberation is not an easy one - the longer it goes on the more difficult it's going to be to overcome the legacy of the past - I know that in day one after a seizure of power, for example, if that's the way it comes about, people are going to look at us and say : But look, look, there's already a backlash against whites, why aren't you controlling it - do you see - I mean in South Africa -

But people from outside in the world are going to say it : See, it's just like we predicted - and at the same time they'll be introducing economic blockades like on Nicaragua, sending in troops and saying : You see, your system doesn't work -

I'm saying - I have a dream - I know Martin Luther King had a dream, but I have a dream - and I want to live to be just over a hundred - that's two generations 25 years each, you see - when I'm nearly 80, 25 years from now, there'll be a congress somewhere - there's always congresses and conferences - and they'll call on some old veterans and say : How do you see our country now - and I'd say we made a very good start -

Nearly a generation and a half of children have been brought up free of apartheid education and indoctrination - we're building our economy - we have good relations with our neighbouring states who are also developing - poverty and hunger are gone - nobody's living well but nobody's dying of starvation - so we've made a good start -

25 years on I'll be just over a hundred - there'll be another conference and they'll wheel out the old veterans in their wheel-chairs and they'll say : What do you say - and in my quavering old man's voice I will say : Why was it necessary to have to fight for this - it was so obvious, because we've done it -

And the reason I'm telling you this dream is that it's not going to happen overnight - you don't overcome the poverty, the degradation, the lack of education, the illiteracy, the lack of skills in vast numbers of people, the lack of doctors and nurses at the wave of a magic wand - it takes time - it's a process -

D.G. and it's part - in that process that the problems of racism will be overcome - conscious attitudes are fine - there's got to be the living reality in day to day experience that people are simply people - I hope it doesn't take as long as 50 years, but I know that in 50 years it will have been achieved, and 50 years is nothing -

It's nearly 50 years since the end of World War Two, and it's like a living memory for me, you see - it's nothing in time - in history - it's not going to be easy, and I say that because I don't want anybody to turn round and say : You were a damn fool, you couldn't even see the reality - there're going to be rivalries - there're going to be, but they'll be nothing compared to what we face now because we'll be solving the problems - sorry, I've diverted you.

J.F. No, I think that's really important, but what amazes me is how many people are aware of that - young black South Africans that I've interviewed in the townships who would speak - in fact there's someone in the book that I quoted saying we know that there's going to become - someone who's going to come and try and destabilise us - and I think the fact that people are already aware of what - that the struggle continues is actually very important and in fact, as you say, it fits right into the non racialism theme, because it's not a question that the power is taken and then non racialism dawns - it's a process....

D.G. That's right, yes - and also, you know, I must make a point I've made throughout Europe where I've travelled - those countries I've been to - I'm always asked about this black on black violence - but I want to make a simple point, not analyse it in detail - when the nazis occupied Europe there were French who supported the nazis and French who killed French -

There were Norwegians who supported the nazis - they even have given us the word quisling into our language...

J.F. The Norwegians?

D.G. Quisling was the Norwegian who governed Norway for the nazis - Vidk n Quisling - there were Norwegians who killed Norwegians, and when the nazis were defeated throughout - generally - the quislings were dealt with - nobody said Norwegians are funny people - you see they white, they fight each other - nobody said to the French who dealt with the collaborators and shaved womens heads and put in prison others : See, the French are funny - you see they whites, they fight each other - it's an important point -

Occupying powers who can offer short term privileges have always been able to find people to work for them - now a black policeman earns the same pay as a white policeman - he's highly paid, and he pays the price in terms of exclusion from his community, and now he risks death - why say it's because they black....

J.F. That's exactly - my exact - I was at a conference and I said my father was Dutch and he was in the Dutch Resistance during the war, and when I grew up in our family and I heard about World War Two there was no weird - one understood why, as you say, it was the same thing I said that young women were marched through the streets of France with their heads shaved, and the thing I was pointing out is just for being a nazi sympathiser let alone an SS soldier....

That's right.....

J.F. and the idea that if a black soldier is - or black policeman - a black soldier is necklaced like at the Victoria *Mxenge*.. funeral, or a black policeman is killed, that it's somehow savage and black and African and weird and macabre is - and they never said it in Europe - it's interesting that you said that.....

D.G. The point I'm making really, Julie, is this - people from Europe - whites - but also they colonised America and so on - have written the history of the world, and racism is built into their literature and their language, and for them Africa is still a dark continent peopled by dark mysterious people, and they reveal their racism -

When I get asked a question like that at - in public - I say : Please, I want to ask you are you a racist - and they say : But no, I'm here, I'm in support (?) but think about your country - think about Europe - you've had an 80 years war, a 60 years war, a 30 years war - World War One, World War Two - you fought 500 wars since the end of World War Two - is it because you're white - am I being racist when I say that - you reject that way of thinking -

People go to war over real issues, real material things, and until you can rid yourself of that you will never understand - it's very important, that - it's really built into our language or built into our ways of thinking - black is evil, white is pure - I mean there're dozens of examples from religion, from - and you fear the dark if you're white - people fear the dark -

If you are white you equate that darkness with dark things and dark people - you've got to rid - we - we have to rid ourselves of that.

J.F. I wanted to kind of come to a close by asking you about how you view the non racialism now with how it was before you went in, but I think first I should let you talk about the release - the lead up and all of that.

D.G. Do you really want that - how does it fit your non racialism theme - I don't mind talking about it - I've done it many times... (Tape off) - later, just to go back to your theme of what I had heard and of my own - the way I was seen and so on - there were young white comrades who came to prison who said that they had found it easier to get involved because they knew - well, they were speaking to me so they said : Because we knew of you and you had taken that path before -

I knew then when we started getting newspapers - Fridays we would always look at the Rand Daily Mail to see what publications had been prohibited, and so there would be stickers released, Denis Goldberg, Long live the A.N.C. or whatever, you know, so I knew that my name was being used - not very much - people didn't - comrades who came in didn't often talk about it - there's a - well, whatever -

But you know, I began to understand that the symbolism was a real one - Guy Berger told me that in fact it was often used - my name was often used - or me, my name, whatever - Karl told me - Karl Niehaus - so that when the question of release came it was very difficult because in its simplest form I was tired of being a passive symbol - I needed to be active - I wanted to be active -

I knew that there had been a considerable effort mounted to get

D.G.

.... my release before Botha's offer was made to Mandela - by September, October, '84 I knew this thing was going on - now one of the things I always urged myself to do was never to expect release, because the let down when it doesn't come off is tremendous -

Just let me say on this - after I came out I had a letter from a friend who was allowed to visit me for a time in Australia - she'd emigrated with her family - to say she'd met a young SACTU comrade who'd been on tour there and he wanted to know - her accent was very South African - wanted to know what she was doing there - what's she doing around anti apartheid movement, what's her connection - well, her connection was me, you see -

Oh, he said, when he thinks of comrades in prison he thinks of Denis because he's alone - the other comrades are together - now technically of course I was not alone - I had white political comrades with me, but not of my generation, or not the comrades I went to prison with, you see, and I - this young man died in odd circumstances in Botswana - he was in the frontline -

This young man I'd never known - never heard of him, but he'd heard of me, and he was obviously expressing a view which comrades in the A.N.C. held - it must be tougher for Denis because he's not with the comrades that he'd gone to prison with - now I find that fantastic that people should have such a sense of comradeship, really -

Not just touching - moving - so that all these sort of things, you see, were part of the heaviness of my decision finally to accept release - partly my expectations had been built up because I knew it was on, and there were funny things happening in the prison - like a prison warrant officer searching my cell, as they often did, but there was a whole squad of them there, and he said : Denis, you going to find it very difficult to live outside - I said why - he said : No woman will live with you - I said why - he said : Because everything's got its place - he should see my home now (Laugh) and my room - it's everywhere -

But your ruler stands there, your spectacles here, your shoe polish in a bag hanging on that hook there, you know - but the important point was he was saying to me when you're out, not the other detail - now if this was a calculated psychological ploy starting in what, December, November of '84, what are they doing it for, because I hadn't planned it that far ahead, their offer to Nelson, of that I'm sure, you see -

So that there was a sense in me from many indicators plus what I'd heard from outside, and a strong expectation - then came the offer to Nelson and its extension to the rest of us - I was quite sure I was not going to accept that offer, quite sure of it -

I wrote a letter to Botha - I should find you a copy of that letter - a letter to Botha saying I was not going to discuss my own position - I called on him to release Nelson and my other comrades because they could not solve the problems of South Africa without the leadership of the A.N.C. - I explained why the armed struggle, what the policies of the A.N.C. were, and without once mentioning the details - detailed headings of the Freedom Charter - talked about a South Africa that I believe in, and called on him to take a leap into the future -

D:G. You've got the power and you've got the keys in your hand - literally the keys - open the doors, let's move into a new South Africa, you see, but I was not asking for my release -

Now among the people involved in trying to get my release was a committee set up by the members of the kibbutz in which my daughter lived - when she joined the kibbutz she said she wanted leave every two years to be able to go and see me, but members of the kibbutz are not allowed leave every two years - it's every five years or something holidays away, you see -

So this had to be a special condition for her - once she was accepted as a member the kibbutz, not she, the kibbutz said : Why do we not set up a committee to try and get Denis released - because the problems of a member of the kibbutz are the problems of the whole kibbutz, you see - and they set up a committee and they have (Laugh) a man who's like a mad bull in a china shop who then set about trying to forge the channels to get my release -

I mean he was able to get to London and get letters to Thatcher and Rifkind, who was in the Foreign Office, in all sorts of ways, so that when Botha was here Thatcher raised with Botha my release, you see - they find people who knows people who can get things done -

I mean some of the details I discovered afterwards of course - but I also had a very strong impression that while there might not be formal sanction from the A.N.C. on this, they were certainly not opposed to it - I'm putting it that way because I think it's the diplomatic way to put it -

I don't know what the exact position was and I've never bothered to find out, but I know that there were very senior comrades in the A.N.C. who knew about what was happening -

He was supposed to come and see me in December of '84 - he broke his arm and couldn't travel - as soon as he heard of this offer, his arm being healed, he got on a plane and came to South Africa - he was allowed to see me, and he used every emotional trick in the book to try and get me to agree to release - my daughter's needs, my wife's needs, my son's needs, my own needs - and I must say that part I found easier to - easiest to resist -

What I found difficult to resist was my own tiredness and of wanting to be out in the world and wanting to be active, and that really is the basis of the decision - I find it very difficult at this moment to give weight to each of the factors, but I've never once thought of not being involved - I've never once thought that the armed struggle is wrong -

When it came to signing that undertaking I refused to because it would include the word, or the phrase that I would renounce violence, but that phrase is not in the undertaking at all - it was in Botha's speech, but not in the undertaking - and as I read this and coupled it with my personal need to get out to live, to be active - the two are synonymous for me - always have been since I've been politically involved -

I came home once from a meeting and Esme said to me : How did it go - and I said : It was like wine, you see - because it was, and that's what I found political activity always to be, exciting, interesting, worthwhile, not just kicks -

D.G. What the undertaking said was that I would not be involved in the planning or instigation or participation in acts of violence for political ends - and I suppose rationalised it to myself in terms of when I was captured with my comrades my task was to produce arms for an armed struggle - I don't need to produce them any more - our guys are working with professionally made stuff, trained by experts - they don't need an amateur - a professional civil engineer turned amateur military engineer to make the stuff for them, or teach them how to use it -

Got enough trained people trained, as I say, by experts - I did say rationalised, eh - I've never doubted the necessity for the armed struggle - the moment I was released and could speak openly that's what I said - I think the armed struggle must go on, I support the armed struggle, that's my position - and after all I am in the A.N.C., which is the leading organisation in that armed struggle - says something about my attitude to armed struggle -

The difficulty, I knew that Nelson and my other comrades had turned down the offer - how do you go against it - how do you avoid then feeling a sense of betrayal - well, in the end I relied on their understanding - I wasn't mistaken - that's all - it was easier to decide to join Umkhonto we Sizwe, it was easier to decide to stay in Johannesburg and go underground, than to agree to be released -

I must say I felt that if people did not understand - people outside in South Africa - then it would really be their problem, not mine - if I had, and looking to the future, if I had misjudged it, and it would have been assume - let's assume that there would have been reluctance in the A.N.C. to have me as a member, full active member again, it wouldn't have stopped me being active at all one way or another, you see, in support of the A.N.C.

It's much better to be in the A.N.C. - that's the way it's worked out, as I hoped it would - what else to say about that period - I said to you earlier I didn't regret that - those days in prison, all 7,904 of them - I'll tell you why -

When we went to prison - when we were taken to prison the armed struggle was new - we were amateurs - we did what we could - I think we changed the course of South African history, and it was important to do that at that time.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

D.G. And at that time in '61 when the armed struggle was started, in '63 when we captured at Rivonia, we knew that one day that regime could be toppled - we didn't know when - they looked so solidly in power, absolutely solid, so self confident, and such power at their disposal - well, when I was released at the beginning of '84, February 28th., 1984, what a day, you could see they had a crisis on their hands - a year later they don't know which way to turn, and they ripe to be toppled - it's going to happen -

- D.G. that's why it was worth it - it was necessary to do it and we did it because it had to be done, so I don't regret it.
- J.F. When you said that you felt like a sense of gratification, or that's the wrong word, to hear what - whether - what everyone was sensing, that there was just such a - that your name was mentioned...
- D.G. No, not my name mentioned - the fact that a white....
- J.F. Ja, th at's - I was going to say that with Rob - I think actually when I was in South Africa the thing that hit me first was that Ahmed athrada was mentioned, and then I noticed your name mentioned, and it just struck me that this was really such a non racial - and I'm talking about meetings in Soweto - saying that gratification is the wrong sense - but did you feel that same sense to know that after your decision non racialism had triumphed - did you worry that it might be a blow to non racialism that....
- D.G. No....
- J.F. That anyone would say, look whites - look at these whites kind of thing.
- D.G. I knew that the regime would try to capitalise - I relied on the political understanding of black people in South Africa in the liberation movement, whether in the A.N.C. or in the UDF - I think I read it right from what I've heard - there might be individuals who resent the fact that I'm out and Nelson is still in - might be so, I don't know -
- But I do know from people from inside South Africa who've come through here - comrades and people I'd never met before who've said : Oh, but we did understand - we were worried, but once we saw what you were saying, and you were reported in the South African press on what you were saying, we had no problems, because you were still actively engaged, you didn't get out to make a life of comfort for yourself - words to that effect - I'm not quoting.....
- J.F. That's exactly what I've heard as well, but was it political understanding or human understanding - to me it seemed that it was a comradeship that triumphed, that people said : Look - mainly what I heard people say was the thing of what the guy said in Australia that he - he was alone and that it wasn't in fact - the easier different cult comparison (.....) but still that it was on that level, which to me is a more human understanding
- D.G. O.K., but on looking at it on the political level as well I said non racialism is a conscious choice, and what it is saying is : This white comrade was put in a position where in the end he accepted, we would rather he had not - that does not mean that white comrades are not accepted - that's political - that's the point I'm making -
- Perhaps I shy away from the human level of understanding.
- J.F. I think they're both - I think what you said is actually the most important and maybe that's a better way of putting it.
- D.G. The point being, you see, that I've never felt in myself that I was betraying - I was wondering how it would be received, do you see, because I'd never had any doubt about where I stood, that's all.

- J.F. And did you know you were going to only stay in Israel a short time?
- D.G. Oh, yes, I never had any intention of settling there - my daughter lives there - it was easy to fly there - I could have flown to London and then to Israel, but I knew that once I came out I wouldn't get away from London, you see.
- J.F. How long were you there?
- D.G. 19 days - no matter how many times I said to journalists : I'm not living in Israel, I'm here to visit my daughter and I'm going on to London - they would say I was settling in Israel - I don't know why but that's what happened.
- J.F. Have you been back?
- D.G. No.
- J.F. Would you go back?
- D.G. Ja, and in fact at a conference in Europe at which both the PLO representative spoke and I spoke on behalf of the A.N.C. over coffee I said to him : What do I do - he said : Go - don't be embarrassed, go - your daughter is there, go and see her, but go and see what the position of Arab people is as well - so I said : I don't need convincing, I know - he said : Go and see your daughter, we don't want to stop people going there, certainly not people like you - was PLO representative for Western Europe - could probably find his card somewhere in my - one of my untidy places at home -
- So I - I could go - I just have no occasion to - also I know that I could not avoid being politically involved if I got there - I might say one of the consequences of my being there just for that short time, one of the indirect consequences is a re-emergence of an anti apartheid movement there - it's not a waste -
- Nobody is going to break the link between Israel and South Africa, white South Africa, other than Israelis, and you not going to do that by not feeding them material, information, encouraging, pointing to the anomaly in terms of the history of Jews, that there's such an inconsistency, this anomaly, that they've got to break that relationship with racist South Africa.
- J.F. Can we conclude with.....
- D.G. I might just say one more thing about my release - when I recall the period and my doubts and hesitations and so on I relive them, but I don't have a regret about it - all I wish it that there were 30 hours in the day so that I could get six hours sleep, because I am fully involved and fully engaged, and that's what I wanted to do and I'm doing it.
- J.F. Can you conclude by talking about how you feel now about when you came out what the non racialism felt like to be back into things, if it felt - how you would compare it with the level in the '50's and '60's in terms of relating to the A.N.C. I'm saying - not talking about London (?) - that's another story - just in terms of relating.....
- D.G. What do you mean by that?

J.F. I'm just saying you've talked most of the interview about what it was like when you were politically active and before you were in prison, and since coming out did it feel like the exact same - since coming out you have like JODAC and EJC and all kinds of things that one hadn't seen since the Congress of Democrats and is on a level that's many, many degrees larger.

D.G. Well, I talked about these young Afrikaaners - that's a starting point - the young Afrikaaner prison warders - I'm not saying they not racists, but they're being forced to rethink their position - my belief is that it is in the intensity of the struggle itself that people are forced to re-examine their positions -

When the racist president Botha says the state can no longer provide protection for every single white, you've got to arm yourselves, people do arm themselves, but at the same time many are forced to think and say : My God, we've got to be policemen - we've got to walk around armed -

The advertisements in South African newspapers for protection devices, protection services, for armaments, for sub-machine guns etc., etc., etc., indicates the depth of that uncertainty - fear, if you like - but when there is an alternative which they've been brought up to fear and have lived to ignore because they were protected and safe, and that fear now becomes actual, then they have to think : Do we want to live this way - we can fight and die for it but that South Africa of the past will never return - you can see it's changed - even -

It's not adequate that there're black women working the checkout tills in the supermarkets, it's not adequate that the Immorality Act, the intermarriage clause has been repealed, it's not adequate that some rich blacks can go to hotels, international hotels and restaurants, but it forces an ideological shift about sitting down at a table, or near somebody -

That without the sense of a society in - disintegrating would not be enough - it's the disintegration of the society that's important, and it is disintegrating - living standards for whites, white workers, civil servants, are falling in real terms, but also at the end of '84 for the first time ever, perhaps in the 30's, I don't know - in recent times anyway, the government actually cut their wages in numbers - you know, the number of rands they get paid - they get a 13th. cheque of one months pay - they cut it in half at a time of rampant inflation -

What are they fighting for, what are they dying on the borders for, or (?) the operational zones, what are they now dying in the townships for, and they are dying - white policemen and soldiers as well even if not in large numbers, but large numbers are being crippled - when I go back to dying, every town, white town in South Africa has a heroes acre in the graveyard for those who've died defending South Africa against the total onslaught -

There's not a town in South Africa that doesn't have a white boy in it - parents want their boys to live, you see - what are they fighting for, because they not going to go back to the old ways - hence some of the splitting in the white front - you've got to take into account of course of big business and its attitudes, where the old system of white supervisor highly paid over many black workers also is not adequate, not even in the gold mines, not since 1973 - go back and read the company reports from 1973

D.G. onwards, the gold mining companies - you must decode them - the need for the effective and efficient deployment of our total labour resources in the colour bar in skilled work on the mines - that's what they talking about - 40 percent of whites work for the state in one form or another, the rest work as supervisors - who does the work, who does the skilled work in industry and commerce - you've got to educate black people, a percentage -

Like in the United States where a former president of Harvard, and on many commissions of enquiry, you know, says you need to educate five percent of the population to a higher standard to run the country - it's an elitist kind of education, but the rest must be able to read and write sufficiently to be functionally literate, that's all, you see, and it's true for South Africa -

There're blacks doing personnel work, doing junior management jobs, clerical jobs, which were always reserved for whites - that's in the interests of big business, but it creates a contradiction, you see, because you want them to behave like adjuncts of the ruling class, but they're excluded by racism - racist society in South Africa, so where do their loyalties lie - they lie where the loyalties of NAFCOC lie - National African Federated Chambers of Commerce, who went to Lusaka to speak to the A.N.C. -

No matter if they can run businesses, not matter they can have an African bank, they still do not have a vote, they still second class citizens, you see - that partly is the business aspect of it - but more and more whites are saying - not only those right wingers who say fascism and shoot it out - more and more are saying I don't want to die - I'm prepared to come to terms with the reality that's the black majority of South Africa -

And when I saw on television those busloads of white people going into Alexandra Township for the funeral, that too is the future of South Africa, you see, of people who are prepared to risk their skins - they could have been shot at by the police, or teargassed or arrested, but they did it - it's a different calibre of one or two people getting involved in Umkhonto we Sizwe or in A.N.C. activities - there were hundreds there -

And when the UDF called a meeting in Johannesburg to call on whites to join the struggle for liberation they had over 2,000 people there - well, Congress of Democrats could never get 2,000 people to a meeting in Johannesburg, or very seldom - I talked about Chief Lutuli in Cape Town - that was a rarity - it's the intensity of the struggle -

And in a revolutionary situation, I don't know who I'm quoting, ideological - ideologies can change overnight - suddenly what you couldn't see, or you saw as absurd, suddenly becomes right, and it's happening - it's happening -

Now since I've come out - no, while I was still in prison reading newspapers the mood of the reports on UDF meetings and rallies and so on, it was like a replay of the '50's, really, in the Congress of the People, and I've seen the video since of the launch of the UDF - it was just like that, but there's a difference - there is an armed struggle as well - now the media can go on talking about it as low level and ineffective and what have you - that armed struggle is destroying the economy of South Africa - why -

D.G. Well, there's an arms embargo - there're loopholes, but loopholes take a lot of money to get things through - they've set up their arms corps to produce armaments and military requirements - it employs roughly a hundred thousand workers in the most technological of all industries in South Africa - they produce nothing which can be consumed - it's inflationary - inflation's running at 18 percent in South Africa now - three percent in Europe, one percent in Germany, Japan, so on - the military -

The arms corps is part of that problem, plus the billions they've invested in building it up - they haven't got money to buy off blacks - they keep pushing up rents in black townships, which has a political effect when the things are not unrelated, you see - and every young white spends two years in the army - they're not producing - they can't afford that - forcing them to employ more blacks in areas of importance in commerce and in the state - it's not doing them any good for their system -

And that armed struggle is having that effect - and that's the point about people's war - it doesn't, certainly in the early stages, envisage one army in the field defeating another army in the field - what it envisages is a political situation where the armies of the state cannot be deployed - costs too much, people don't want to fight on, it's not worth it - what are we fighting for -

I mean destroy every armed person and activist in South Africa today - could you imagine going back to 1950 and apartheid of that kind - you can't - their world has gone, and the world that has gone is the world that Hilda Bernstein was writing about with such affection - that's another problem with her book - something I think she might not have seen in the book was what she's mourning and regretting is the world of privilege of white South Africa (Laugh) - sorry, I came (?) out in the end.

J.F. And maybe you should finish up but specifically - you talked about a lot of the arguments about why the state is clearly toppling, but if you could finish with, because you've been speaking so eloquently about non racialism, as to how you see, specifically looking at the non racialism level now as opposed to when you went in.

D.G. Ah, it seems to me that with some anomalies like the National Forum, which insists it's non racist - non racial - and of course Buthelezi, who would say he's not a racist but a conscious tool, I believe, of the regime, in creating divisions where they shouldn't exist, when African nationalism had emerged and he's consciously seeking to destroy it - that's also non racialism or racialism - that's why I'm mentioning it - but in terms of white and black from my reading of the situation, because I haven't been out of prison in South Africa - I left, from prison came out straight away....

J.F. And they just put you....

D.G. On a plane - they - yes.

J.F. Did you get even to see Pretoria as you whizzed by?

D.G. Oh, we went on the highways direct to the airport in convoy with security policemen - I was surrounded by security policemen, taken into a VIP lounge, probably the only time ever in my life, now - up to now or in future - was able to see Hilary Kooney, my

D.G. visitor and her family - they took my luggage through the luggage checks, they took my passport, they changed my money for me, they put me on the aeroplane - gave me my ticket and put me on the aeroplane, and if I was not the last passenger I was the second or third last to get on - that was it -

It seems to me that amongst young black people - this is the point about education - once you can read you don't read only what your masters want you to read - there's a degree of political sophistication and theory, I believe, far surpassing a very high level in the '50's - I'm saying in the '50's it was high - it's much higher now -

I'm judging by letters to the editor of the various newspapers, letters signed with African names - if you read them now and compare them with the '50's, strikingly different, you see - might be one person but I don't believe it, you see - no, it's not so - so that from the side of blacks in the UDF it's clear that the concept of non racialism, of a non racial South Africa is fully accepted, and I base that on the Freedom Charter, which is not the programme of the - or the declaration of the UDF, but most of the organisations affiliated to the UDF have adopted the Freedom Charter, and that's clearly - it clearly states a position -

From the side of whites I think, you know (?) you get to the stage where people who do not come out of the old left - I mentioned to you - this to you earlier - but come out of a new situation in which they've been looking for answers to the problems of South Africa and have found them in non racism - some of them have gone to prison - those are the ones who've been caught - many are active in legal ways - many are prepared to risk their liberty through their protests, through going to Alexandra to a funeral - many are prepared to risk physical injury in protests when they confronted by police with teargas and batons and guns - that's a new thing -

It's a new qualitatively new - I think the level must be higher now amongst whites of acceptance of non racism - when you find students of Stellenbosch University in effect demanding the right to speak to the A.N.C. - Stellenbosch University is the cradle of Afrikaaner nationalism - it's not the majority of students, I'm not bluffing myself - ja - ja, I think it's higher -

I think the prospect of a non racial democratic South Africa, a united South Africa, are better than ever before - it's interesting, you know, we say a united democratic non racial South Africa because we won't accept a federal structure - now federation in itself is merely a form of state structure of organisation, and the United States is a federal structure, so't the Federal Republic of Germany and so on -

But South Africa has its own history, and federalism in the South African context means the perpetuation of white power, because it means acceptance of the bantustans as separate states for blacks and blacks only, so that even a word like federalism has a racial content in the South African context, and a unitary state in the context of the present South African situation has the context of non racialism in the congress programme and its vision for the future, and the same for the UDF - a unitary state means a non racial state as against a federal state which will be racist - so on the question of the level of non racism too

D.G. many businessmen, too many politicians, even those in Progressive Federal Party who want a federal solution, haven't yet achieved a non racist outlook - all these things have to be balanced.....

END OF INTERVIEW.