

- J.F. Can I just start by asking you, as I do with everyone, for a bit of biographical background - where you were born and when?
- F.M. It's - on the 8th May '42. In East London.
- J.F. And what did your parents do?
- F.M. Nothing in particular. Actually I've never known my parents - my father died when I was too young - and my mother as well - so I grew up under what in Xhosa you would call (.....*1) - younger brother of my father. The English would call that an uncle.
- J.F. Spell that Xhosa word...
- F.M. (.....*1) - you'll get it from Willards (*2) - and Willards will tell you.
- J.F. O.K.
- F.M. Ja. No, but it actually means an uncle.
- J.F. And was that in a township in East London?
- F.M. Well, it was a township called Cambridge township - and then - I spent some time in an orphanage in Queenstown - then back to East London and just outside East London around Berlin. So I spent my time. Later on I went to Pilton to do Junior Secondary School. I was back in East London where I did Matric - J.C. and Matric.
- For a short while I was at Fort ... and I was instructed by the ANC to leave the country because many people were being arrested - especially in the Eastern Cape. I'm talking about '63 now - '62/'63 - then I went abroad - via Botswana and Dar-Es-Salaam. Dar-Es-Salaam - ANC got scholarships from the GDR. I went to Leipzig ... studied history there. For ten years I was in Leipzig. Came back to Africa - first Morogoro, then Lusaka, then Luanda -
- I was involved in the various departments of the ANC - and ultimately in the DIP - the Department of Information and Publicity. Talking about '77 now - '75, '76, '77 - M P Naker died, the editor of Sechaba, and then I was appointed editor of Sechaba. Since then I have been based in London - had to travel a lot all over the world, I suppose - Asia, Europe, Africa, Caribbean, and, of course, America, United States. That's perhaps all I can say - I mean, there's nothing interesting or exciting...
- J.F. The circumstances that you grew up when you were quite small, I mean, to say, before you were a teenager - was that all in a kind of urban setting and even in Queenstown (...?...) that was in a kind of town or city?
- F.M. Yes, I spent most of my time in the urban areas but I also spent some time in the rural areas.
- J.F. Were there any influences politically on you, I mean, was this uncle at all political or were any people that you dealt with?

F.M.

No, no, no - those were religious people - very religious. My brother was arrested during the Defiance Campaign - spent some time in jail. He was an ANC member - and my aunt was also an ANC member. She was not that active - but she was proud to be an ANC member, so there were those ANC influences even from early childhood.

But I got more involved when I was doing JC - through friends and through other comrades who are now with us here abroad. They are now old men and they have spent many years on Robben Island. And it was more through practical work: writing slogans on toilets, communal toilets, and in bus stops and things like that. Dangerous work in those days - and even at school when we were involved in that and leafletting. And of course attending political meetings. Talking about the late '50s now ... towards the banning of the ANC. And - ja, that's all.

J.F.

Let me mention one thing - I should have said at the beginning when you asked kind of what the ambit of this was. There's two kind of aspects. One is that I think any experiential material, anything in terms of experiences or anecdotes that would illuminate things, anything we're talking about, would be useful. I mean, you kind of sketched more abroad there so might ask you a few questions about any particular experiences. The other thing is that I'm asking you about your political history. But the focus of what I keep coming back to is the non-racial aspect, O.K.?

F.M.

Ja.

J.F.

So, with that in mind - when you say the slogans, I mean, would that have been the first kind of political work you did? Were you instructed to put slogans on walls, to paint them? - or ...

F.M.

Yes. That was more the political work we could do as students and as young people who were energetic, full of life. We could run around at night and all these other things. And distribution of leaflets, of course. That was the type of work we were asked to do.

J.F.

But what attracted you to the ANC, I mean, you had a brother who was in it and he was arrested in what? like '52? early '52?

F.M.

Ja, Ja - Defiance Campaign - '52 - I mean the Defiance Campaign - ja. Yes, he was - he was involved - not very much. Later something unfortunate happened to him - he got married and he had children and therefore he was not that involved. So in that sense he had to take care of the family and all that things and he didn't become actively involved. Unfortunate, of course, I don't mean it in that sense.

I got involved with quite a number of friends. In fact, many of the people I was really involved with, they spent ten/fifteen years on Robben Island. Talking about Steve Tschwete, Dumba, about many others from East London.

J.F.

I guess what I'm getting at is that there's been a lot written in perhaps not what you would read and respect but what has a lot of circulation in the west - about the '50s, or even about the '40s and '50s - about the kind of ANC and the PAC ... kind of, I mean, may be, may be it's mythology more than reality - I mean, some of it doesn't particularly ring true to me just from what I know. But I think that it would be important for me to ask you about that.

I mean, one thing is the whole difference between the ANC and the PAC and the idea that ... I'm interested because of your age and the time you were involved. I mean, there's that kind of historical line put out and it's mixed up perhaps in America and Britain like Gerhart ... that the PAC was the real, the militant - somehow that the PAC was pushing for a clear-cut nationalism that would attract the masses and that, according to Gerhart, a more non-racial of the (.....*3) than the multi-racial idea would confuse and alienate people - and I bet this was the PAC's great attraction.

Now being in the Eastern Cape, you know, you must have seen that people just a bit older than you having come out of the youth, or going, or being in the Youth League. Do you have a sense, thinking back, what the ANC represented and the PAC represented?

F.M.

Well, the PAC was actually not a militant or revolutionary strand. It was more of a right wing deviation from the ANC positions because the ANC was now getting involved in a broader sense with the other national communities: the Indians, and the coloureds, and the democratic whites ... the Freedom Charter being the embodiment of the aspirations of the people and the PAC was, so to say, refusing to move with the times, and in that sense it became a retrogressive step.

In a sense the PAC says it is continuing the tradition of the Youth League. But, actually, if you look at the PAC - now I'm talking about the late '50s, now early '60s - one year, actually they existed for one year in South Africa. If you look at the PAC at that time it was not really a continuation or a reflection of the ANC Youth League - if it was a reflection, it was a reflection through a broken mirror, because in 1944/49, when the Youth League emerged, it was pushing for militant positions within the ANC - pushing the old guard, so to say, to take more drastic and revolutionary measures and, so to say, the Youth League was a driving force within the ANC. But the PAC was not, not in the '50s, late '50s - it was a retrogressive step in the sense it was no continuation of the policies of the Youth League.

J.F.

So that, that is the theoretical, that's the descriptive sort of part of it from the point of view where you are now. But for someone who was a teenager in the '50s, what was the perception? I mean, what I'm really trying to get at in this work is the leap between the reality of oppression and exploitation in South Africa at the hands of whites. I mean, that's what one hears one's daily experience was as a black. You're saying to me to be non-racial is progressive. I mean, how did you at that stage accept the idea of whites being involved? Was it because you knew particular whites in the Eastern Cape and were working with them because somebody, Govan Mbeki would give a speech and you would think, well, he must be right or what? How did it come?

F.M.

Oh, I see. Well, in South Africa generally, in the Eastern Cape in particular, there's a long tradition of ANC existence - the ANC is rooted within the people and the people regard the ANC as their organisation; their daily life; what they're thinking about; embodiment of their aspirations. When you grow up in that atmosphere joining the ANC becomes a logical step. I mean, there's no doubt, there's not even thinking about it. And when you get involved in the politics of the ANC, really about the freedom, you might not even understand it properly - but people reading and discussing it with friends - what does this cause mean? How do we do this? And all the other things. It was through that constant discussion and involvement in the political world, and of course reflection and constant discussion with friends and other people, that we got involved in the ANC.

Then there were no ways, I think, clearly to have known at that time simply because I was young, I mean, that I was not that involved. But of course one used to hear names and of course people like Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo, though were not (leaders?) at that time, were always an inspiration - and whatever they said we would just follow it. I mean, it was clear that was the only correct course to follow.

With that inspiration from the leadership of the ANC, from the people around and the general atmosphere and the involvement of other national groups in the struggle; the Indians, the coloureds, and the democratic whites - one feels the ANC as the real or the only thing one can join in South Africa at that time.

J.F.

Do you ever remember discussing with friends that so-and-so is joining the PAC and why was it any better? Did anyone say: Look, I don't like this idea of appearing with the whites - let's just break with them? I mean, certainly some of my consultants say in terms of all the political debates now, let's just have debates - I mean sure, I understand the *rootedness* of the ANC in the Eastern Cape, but was there discussion and debate about the issue of whites - of cooperating with whites?

F.M.

The PAC in Eastern Cape, in East London, specifically, I think it emerged during the summer of 1960 before it was banned when young people started stoning the prison (.....*5) - it was Fort Glamorgan - and there were some incidents in the Transkei where five whites, I think, was killed and so forth.

And at that time the ANC was discussing the question of armed struggle. There were armed struggles all over - in Pondoland and in other areas. But that was not the policy of the ANC - we were clear from the beginning that the ANC can't do such things. Of course, as young people we get involved with young PAC supporters or fanatics but it ends up in unpleasant discussions - unpleasant circumstances.

No, I never really had any problems with my belief in the ANC as such. As PAC people were there but they were weakened, inconsequential.

J.F.

And how did - I mean I keep pushing this point, but I just feel like I haven't adequately perhaps led you through an experience or some juncture in your life - Let me understand how - well, if you say no theoretically, I understand that whites are part of the struggle and even though I've never met a good one, you know, let this, this is - I won't accept the other thing - or was it just that I don't think that I support the PAC or whatever the ANC is, so this is OK?

F.M.

No, I mean this, it was not a question of just accepting whites as such - I think one has to understand the struggle in South Africa in a very, very concrete manner. I'm talking now specifically about the deep internationalist feelings amongst the African people - this is not known by many people.

The African people are not just anti-white and rebellious in all instances. In their struggle they have very, very deep sentiments of internationalism, non-racialism. Under those very conditions - even if you look at the ANC national anthem, *NKosi sik elela*, - talks about Africa as a whole - not about South Africa. South Africa is not even mentioned actually in *NKosi sik elela*. So the ANC, even before the formation of the ANC, - the Africans have that broad outlook - Africa perspective, if one can put it that way - black people fighting against colonialism and this is embedded in the thinking of the African people.

Not saying all Africans are like that - there are those who are nationalists, fanatics, and so forth. This is typical of people everywhere in the world - I mean that different traits and tendencies ... But basically the deep human feelings of the African people are obvious in their everyday life. And coming from that environment, so to say, and meeting other people who are like-minded and getting involved in a movement like the ANC - it's natural, automatic, that you develop along the same lines.

J.F.

If I can just ask you a bit more specifically about your involvement - when would it have been that you first got involved concretely, I mean, recruited or getting (.....?) up, putting up slogans ...

F.M.

Don't like to speak much about myself actually - but it seems you are forcing me. It was around '58/'59.

J.F.

And what kind of slogans were they? I mean, were they just saying ANC - just putting ANC - or...

F.M.

No, against Bantu education, against bantustans - Bantu authorities it was called then - and against school boards, and informers and things like that. These were things we were getting involved in, that is, local issues which affected us. And East London being not far from the Transkei, the problem of the Transkei was looming large in the thinking of the people.

J.F.

Did you grow up with a feeling of yourself not only as African but as Xhosa? Was that important in your background? I mean, did they stress that in the environment that you were growing up in?

F.M.

Well, I mean, you grow up speaking Xhosa, everything, customs and traditions - you go through everything. I mean, if you are a man you have got to get circumcised at a certain stage: which is part of Xhosa cultural life - I mean, there is no problem in that. And it doesn't conflict with your broad Africaness. I suppose it happens everywhere: if you are in Zululand it is the same thing; or in a Sotho speaking area. No - I don't think that has ever been a problem.

J.F.

Did you have contact with people who are coloured or Indian? I mean, in the Eastern Cape it's not as common to see Indians as other places. But, I mean, did you have? - you said you didn't have much contact with whites - what about coloureds and Indians?

- F.M. With coloureds yes, because the locations tend to overlap. I mean, at times they don't know where the African location stops and where the coloured location ends. And in that sense there is always constant - ja - touch.
- At the schools, of course, we would go and play rugby in a coloured school and all this - but you regarded them as coloureds.
- J.F. Did you regard them as brothers in the struggle? Or was there a feeling that they wouldn't join in? I mean, even today on the front page of the Guardian they said, well, the stay away wasn't as successful because the coloureds didn't support it. I mean, it's always very facile to say that - than to make, draw that conclusion. Was that a factor back then?
- F.M. No, well, at that stage, it was not a problem of politics - perhaps socially. If you are seen with a coloured girl-friend you are in trouble. They will beat you up - or vice versa. You know, that type of thing. Those were the conflicts which were the most - social problems than anything else.
- But at that stage, in East London the coloureds were not very, very dynamic. Well, perhaps because of the size of the community. I mean, there are more coloureds in Cape Town than in - in the Eastern Cape. So - but - they were a revolutionary force - and the coloured leadership was allied with the ANC ...
- J.F. Was what?
- F.M. Allied with the ANC, in the broader sense of the term.
- J.F. And you're saying that again as it's given there's something that is more descriptive than experienced. I mean, did you experience that? I mean, did you have to come to an understanding of that? Did you go into it with prejudices? Did you grow up with the feeling that they wouldn't necessarily be part of the struggle and then actually see coloureds and Indians on a platform somewhere?
- F.M. Well no, as I said, I mean, there were quite a number of areas where there were contacts, I mean, besides the political - socially - in rugby, in sports events or something like that.
- And, generally, while I'm talking about the ordinary man now in the street, the Africans regard the coloureds as their nephews and nieces - you know - that type of thing. That is the thinking of the people. So there wasn't that hostility in that sense because you were dealing with your nephews and nieces. And besides that, there's been a lot of intermarriage between coloured and African - at least in that part of the world. I wouldn't say there was prejudice - no.
- J.F. That still doesn't mean that they had proved themselves politically. I mean, you can be - you can socialise but then find that one group wouldn't support a stay-away of something like that. I mean, I'm saying that you, besides growing up with the social interaction, did you, once you became political, did you immediately assume they were political and supporters of the ANC? Or did that have to come through the way you saw whites being ...

- F.M. No, by the way, you should remember at that time - talking now up to 1985 - the ANC was an African organisation. The coloureds had their own organisation, and the Indians, and the whites, and all this sort. So it was more of an ideal - idea - the question of unity - in the sense that they wouldn't come to an ANC meeting. But they were meeting the top leadership of the ANC: planning together and working together at a high level. But for us at the lower level, we knew that the coloureds had their own organisation. They're fighting, they're doing something and we were doing our own thing in the ANC. But we had the same aspirations.
- J.F. The other factor you have, especially in the Eastern Cape, is the obviously - the lack of interaction between different black ethnic groups that you have, say, in the Transvaal. I mean, basically, it's overwhelmingly Xhosa area, right? Did that mean that you didn't have much exposure to people who came from other ethnic backgrounds? Did you ever work with people who were Zulus, or anything else?
- F.M. No, not at that stage. I was too young to travel throughout the country. And, besides that, the pass laws are a problem for Africans. They are restricted to a certain area and you need a special permit to go to Johannesburg or something like that. And the money again - you don't have money to travel and all this, so - no - I didn't have much contact with the other ethnic groups. But in East London there was a Sotho community - people are Sotho-speaking and - that has never been a problem.
- J.F. So, when you thought of the ANC you didn't particularly think of Xhosa leadership? I mean, were there others who were non-Xhosa who you thought of when you thought of ANC?
- F.M. Oh, ja, ja. I mean, the ANC was a national organisation. I knew, I knew it was all over the country. The leader of the ANC was Albert Luthuli - was from Natal. And, even when I was young, I mean, we used to sing (Sikogali *Moroka, Moroka* lead us?) and - no - that has never been a problem. I've never really known what tribalism is.
- J.F. Now when - when did you - did you just tell me about the years that you studied. Were you in the African Students' Association?
- F.M. Ja, ja.
- J.F. You were?
- F.M. Ja, ja.
- J.F. Which was when? When you were...?
- F.M. It was formed in 1961 I think - ja - '61/'62. Then I left '63.
- J.F. And so were you in it in '61?
- F.M. Ja.
- J.F. And you were - that was when you were group coordinator did you say?
- F.M. No, no, no, that was at Welsh High School.

- J.F. Oh, at high school?
- F.M. It's an African high school in East London.
- J.F. AH, ah. But in, in high school when, when you would - I mean, can you just tell me a bit about once you began debating more the issues involved? Did, did any of these things I'm asking about come up - especially in '59, '60, '61 when the PAC had come on to the scene - in the context of the, of the African Students' Association or more sophisticated analysts? Did they talk about not just PAC as destructive and not ANC and therefore to be opposed - but did they talk about this theoretical issues being brought up? Was it ever discussed - the kind of non-racialism versus white - about black exclusivism?
- F.M. No, not at that level. I mean, in the African Students' Association we were dealing with practical problems which are facing us at school and in the surrounding area, contacting other students at Hilltown, Lovedale and such other high schools. And dealing with the special disabilities imposed on the African students as such. In that context it was a question of mobilising the youth - and the students especially - for the struggle and in the spirit of the ANC.
- Of course there were questions, there were discussions on all the issues which were cropping up. Question of bantustans, as I've said before - that is the Transkei about to be independent - the question of mass removals - the whole political crisis in the early '60s - the referendum - Commonwealth problem - South Africa coming out of the Commonwealth - Question of the Republic - and question of a national convention which (tape finish)
- J.F. convention?
- F.M. Question of a national convention to discuss the future of South Africa. These were issues which were being debated hotly within the students' circles. And Bantu education of course. The future of education in South Africa.
- J.F. And was there contact between the African Students' Association and the PAC students' group? I forget the name of it.
- F.M. ASOSA(?). No, no. In the first place there was no ASOSA at our school and in environment. Anyway, I don't think there's ever been any contact anywhere.
- J.F. Yeah, well was there people here with the debates, you know, was it on the campus or at the school - any sense that there were people who felt differently - the ANC (....?)? What I'm trying to get at is whether it was just seen as a different rival political movement - or whether non-racialism was the big issue? I mean, if you read the history books it was about black nationalism versus non-racialism and anti-communism. And I'm just trying to find out if on the ground in terms of people's experiences your experience was one of feeling that you were supporting a non-racial, not anti-communist movement or whether that didn't enter into your debates.

F.M.

Oh, I see. No, actually we never regarded non-racialism as opposite of black nationalism. Black nationalism was part of our thinking and non-racialism was also part of our thinking. That is, if one can rationalise now one would say perhaps black nationalism is a step towards national or towards non-racialism. But it's not exactly like that, I mean, you can be a black nationalist and also non-racial.

There are also black nationalists who are exclusive in their outlook - but I don't think the two should be seen as opposites. Especially during our time, I mean, those early days we were involved in the movement because we were against apartheid. We're against apartheid because the dignity of the black man has been - was threatened and trampled under foot. So, the divide was not between black nationalism or non-racialism - it was just a question of black nationalists using the grievances of our people to portray and project their exclusivist positions - we'll go it alone.

J.F.

Did that hold no attraction for you? I mean that idea of we'll go it alone. I mean, when you read the kind of romantic history of Biko, you know, "Black man you're on your own." I mean, it's, it's put in a way that seems to clearly have an attraction for blacks - and indeed it did at a certain juncture in history - but at that time - when you're on your own, why didn't that hold any attraction?

F.M.

I think it didn't hold any attraction simply because the PAC was very weak in East London and Port Elizabeth. It was not a force and therefore couldn't really attract any people.

J.F.

Do you remember March 21st 1960 - Sharpeville Day? Do you remember what - hearing that the PAC had jumped the gun and done this pass - protest and the black struggle ramifications? I'm just wondering how that was perceived in the circles you were in. You know, the history records the PAC had it as a PAC Day - and then you read about how, you know, it was planned. But what was your experience of it?

F.M.

Again the problem here - this thing was happening very far from our daily lives - in Cape Town, in Vereing, and all these things - didn't really have a direct impact or immediacy.

All I remember is going to school through a long street - I've forgotten what it was called - Church Street I think - and the two rows of policemen armed to the teeth. And as students, walking alone - you had to go through this row for about thirty minutes or so. This row of policemen - all white - armed. That was a harrowing experience. And they were panicking - they thought anything could happen in East London and what not. And that's their problem and it shows how little they know of the Africans because they are not in the locations and all these things. They don't know how the Africans feel and how the Africans think and how well organized they are for this or that occasion. Anyway, that was one practical experience I had during those days. And of course there was a constant search for passes - and now it was not only for passes - it was a state of emergency - people were being collected and arrested and so forth.

But there was a militant paper in East London. It was called ('Indaba a Tsimunti8?); which was a sort of unity movement paper. But it was good on questions connected with the Transkei and the problems in East London themselves.

- J.F. Do you remember - was there much unity movement in the area that you were in?
- F.M. There was some unity movement activity which was perhaps shown through this paper - and of course Queenstown, Transkei and those areas - they were - they were very - they were active to some extent.
- J.F. And was that - was that coloured based there? Or was it not there?
- F.M. Well no - African intellectuals. At least those who produced ('Indaba a Tsimunti'?) - anyway the editor is here in London - if you want to see him. But I suppose you won't have time.
- J.F. No. We have those people in Harare anyway.
- F.M. Oh, I see.
- J.F. But what was the perception of Unity Movement? Was that yet another rival group or was that an historical group or was that just another activist group? I mean, how did you see them - your image of them?
- F.M. You know, well, they were not our age group in the first place - they were older people - though one or two were young. But we didn't really take them seriously because they were not involved in any politics. They were a talk shop - but these elderly people in the Unity Movement - because they were with Govan Mbeki at Fort Hare, or they knew him here and all this - so I suppose they had links with them - not at the political level perhaps - perhaps at a social and other levels. So they were not that hostile perhaps to the leadership of the ANC. But at a lower level they really thought that they could do something.
- J.F. But you didn't?
- F.M. No, no.
- J.F. The other thing about perception of the PAC that even Gerhart brings up and even some of the, you know, defenders of the PAC won't even bring up as a factor - is that from early on there was suspicion about the Africanists somehow being either willingly or unwittingly allied with the State aims. You know, rumours that they were planted with the assistance of the US to lay the CIA links - to (.....?) sense that they played into the authority's hands with their hasty actions etc. I mean, was that something that people talked about? Was that not thought of? I mean did anyone ever go so far as to say the PAC is a tool of the system? - the PAC is agents of the State? or was that (.....?) or did you see it as earnest, sincere but not the same point of view as you?
- F.M. Well, there was talk that Lebal (O I think was working for the United States Information Service - working there.
- J.F. Did he have a job there?
- F.M. Ja, he had a job there.
- J.F. He did have a job there?

F.M. Yeah, he was working - and I think that's how they got the hall because PAC was formed at the premises of the United States Information Service. I think it was through that contact. But, of course, something like that, I mean, causes problems in the political movement - start asking questions - questions you can't answer. But I don't think at that stage there was a direct feeling that they were a wing of the South African Defence Force or security. With the vigilantes today one can say it without difficulties, but I don't think the PAC would be - was conceived in that - in that light.

Most of that, I mean, some families were divided - I mean, brother in the ANC, a brother in the PAC, a sister in the ANC, brother-in-law in the PAC - I mean, it went through families and they would sit together and eat but they wouldn't talk politics - you know, that type of thing. So it was that complicated situation but I don't think we conceive them as a wing of the South African - there might have been informers or people like that - they were merely informers.

J.F. They were merely informers?

F.M. Ja.

J.F. So you saw them as informers?

F.M. Oh ja, I mean, informers, ja - every informer was known because in those days they were stupid, they were boasting - I mean, in the location they had the best clothes or best I don't know what. An informer was obvious and when he's seen with the police and what not it's known.

J.F. No, I thought that you were saying that the PAC was informers.

F.M. No, I mean those individuals - those individuals in the PAC - not that the PAC was - and broke security - a wing of the security service.

J.F. But what about that - the ideological question of the PAC being closer to the West - to the PAC criticizing the ANC for its alliance with the communists and the kind of whole anti-communist thing? Was that something that was discussed? I mean...

F.M. Oh ja, I mean, the whole question of the Freedom Charter being - document adopted in the Kremlin and all those other things. They were accusing the ANC of all sorts of things:- anti-communist - ANC - lackeys of communism and all these other things. That was discussed quite openly but, of course, at that stage I must admit that we didn't know much about - I mean, as young people, about communism and those other things they were talking about.

All we were saying was, look here, if somebody is trampling on your foot you can't start saying No, you are still coming, you want to travel on my foot. You remove the one who is trampling on your foot first; then you'll see that one who's still coming - because that is how we perceive it.

J.F. What do you mean - still coming?

- F.M. Say there are two people - one is coming to trample on your foot and one is trampling on your foot. You don't start complaining about the one who is still coming - you complain about the one who is actually hurting you. That is how we argued those days - in our own way.
- J.F. And the concept of communism - was it totally unknown? alien? Or was there in fact some cause of it? I mean, in 1985 suddenly the SACP flag was raised at the funeral and it was a big shock to some people but to other people it had been evident that there was - there were roots in South Africa of the SACP and it wasn't something that came out of nowhere. I mean, did that go back to your day? Was - was communism known at all? Was SACP a concept that you could deal with?
- F.M. No, I wouldn't say that it was known - not in my generation. Partly because the SACP was banned in 1950 and dissolved itself and in '61 or '60 it reorganized, reconstituted itself under Braams. So, it was also at its early stages, if I may put it that way, I mean of course, in the new form. And it reconstituted itself in '53 I think - and then in '60 or '61 it came out publicly. So, from that point of view, I don't know I suspect the SACP was reconstituting itself and reorganizing itself. But of course the older generation, they know the old communist party, '40s or '30s and which - I mean, I was not born at that time - and we would get some books and pamphlets and things like that about Marxism and what not - but we didn't understand all these things. Proletarian - what is that? Now we know the workers - and what does this mean - working class dictatorship - working class leadership - you know, that type of - those were all complicated concepts for us.
- J.F. They were complicated but were they threatening? I mean, that they - history says that it was this rejection of communism that spurred the PAC to form. I mean, in your circles was there a rejection of communism?
- F.M. No, I wouldn't say it was a rejection of communism that made the PAC popular - perhaps it was the feeling of the blacks in South Africa - their bitter disgust with the system and their defiant spirit which was misused by the PAC in Cape Town and Vereeniging. But I don't think in the African people there has been mass rejection of communism. It's just that people don't know or didn't know - now I'm sure they know more about what communism is, and partly because of the policies of the ANC which is working in alliance with the South African Communist Party. President Tambo has talked about this quite openly and now people know more about the party than in the '60s I think - well and the party has had let see since 1960 - twenty five/twenty six years of public appearance under - in underground conditions of course.
- J.F. Just to take you back for a second - I forgot to ask you - you were only ten years old when the Defiance Campaign was launched - but was that exactly when your brother was arrested?
- F.M. Ja.
- J.F. Do you remember what that meant to you?

- F.M. Ja, ja. There were demonstrations all over. I mean, as ten year old kids we were singing 'Sikogela n'oro a n'oro a lead us' (?) you know, which was a popular song at that time, a freedom - I mean, a freedom song. And - ja, ja, ja, - I remember quite a lot ...
- J.F. And so after his arrest, I mean, were there any particular time - was there any particular event or anything that strengthened your commitment and experience that you had in the '50s - as you were getting politically more mature?
- F.M. Ja, I mean, my uncle was shot - died. You know, there was shooting during the Defiance Campaign in East London and people were revolting and rebelling - burning schools and things like that. My uncle was shot and he died during the Defiance Campaign and ...
- J.F. Was that the one you had been living with?
- F.M. No, no, no, no - Uncle (Falou?) - My family's very complicated - I blow from my mother's side - my mother I mean now - my aunt's - Oh God - it's so complicated.
- J.F. He was demonstrating and the police killed him?
- F.M. No, no, no - he was drinking tea at home. And - you know, the African houses in the location - it's only zinc - and the bullet came through the zinc.
- J.F. 'cause they were just shooting people in the street?
- F.M. Ja, at random. Everybody. I don't even think he was involved in politics as such. But during the Defiance Campaign many people, even those who were not ANC, were involved.
- J.F. And then what after that? Was there anything you got drawn into as a political worker? Was that the slogan time?
- F.M. No. Well, I was still too young - ten years - eleven years - you don't know what ...
- J.F. No. I mean, for the rest of the '50s. What would you pick out that this is when you got involved or this is what you were herded into?
- F.M. Oh no, well, after that I went to the countryside and schooled around East London - then around King Williamstown - and it's only when I went back to East London that I became involved.
- J.F. And that was when? When did you go back?
- F.M. '58 - '58.
- J.F. I'm just wondering if there's anything you could pick out that helped shape you in any way logically (...?) or if there was any kind - something, anything about the structure of South Africa that you picked up in those years that stayed with you that helped you form your analysis later. If there's any, you know, - whether it be organisational or just about the conditions of life.

F.M.

Perhaps this might be important - but this story has always struck me. I can't forget it. Perhaps it's not important for your interview - I don't know whether you know Jan Steytler - he was a leader of the Progressive Party, I think - used to address meetings in East London. And we used to go and listen to these meetings.

One time, in the town - town hall for whites - but some blacks used to go. One time he was speaking there - and another professor, I think from Rhodes University, was speaking. Professor was speaking about the economic problem - Eastern Cape rural areas - and I suppose urban areas as well - and what this means for the African population - and how the Africans should budget and these other things out of their meagre resources. Anyway, there was a lot of argument, intellectual type and all this, - how about this poverty datum line and things like that. So one African worker - in his overalls - was dirty from work - stood up - he asked this professor whether he has ever slept with a hungry stomach - whether he has ever had problems sending children to school and this and this and ?.. Normal questions which an African family would ask. This professor said no. He said: How can you come here and tell us about how to budget and how to do this and this and this. You should be listening from us.

We were young and we clapped. We thought that was a brilliant answer - in fact it is - at that - the picture of that African worker is still with me up to now. I mean, here is this learned professor with a string of degrees and all these things - African worker who has never seen the university and perhaps will never see it - I'm sure he'll never see it. He's capable, in very simple words, to tell the professor: Look here. We are the people who can talk about these problems. Later on I thought about this - I said, perhaps this is what is meant by working class leadership. Not only that, but the Africans are in a better position to explain their problems. It's a very unimportant example but I can't forget it. It sticks in my mind all the time.

J.F.

When was that about?

F.M.

'58/'59. '58/'59.

J.F.

Did you ever hear Mandela speak?

F.M.

No, no.

J.F.

Did you hear other of the ANC leadership people speak?

F.M.

Well those around East London and Port Elizabeth, ja. But when the ANC was banned we heard that Mandela was around in East London - we never saw him. Sisulu also came there - but they were doing underground work - and it's only top leadership of the ANC who saw him.

J.F.

And the underground - the M plan being in the Eastern Cape - was that something that you were aware of?

F.M.

Oh ja, ja. To some extent - but not much, I was involved, street planning and all this. Actually, what is now street committees is something similar to what the M plan was about.

- J.F. In practice, what did that mean? You know, was there a street committee? Were you there? Were you involved in organizing it or what?
- F.M. Ja, well, I was not much involved in organizing but I was one of those who were being organized. So in that sense I won't tell you much about what was happening at the level of committees and all those. But there were cells throughout the town and they had contacts at certain levels - and they were discussing, planning and doing whatever they were doing - distribution of literature. It is at that level where I would come in to be told that this has to be done tonight and what not - go and paint slogans - and your clothes are full of paint - you have to burn them tomorrow morning - following day. Parents ask where are your trousers, your shirts, and all this - you can't tell them - and they don't have money to buy new ones. Perhaps those were small sacrifices one had to pay.
- J.F. I'm afraid that will pick up - sorry - you're going to wreck the recording.
- F.M. Oh, sorry.
- J.F. OK Let me just ...
(End of tape.