

Interview: Ian Mkhize

A No, no, it has never pretended to be a non racial organisation. It is not even an african organisation, it is a tribal organisation. It is a Zulu organisation.

Q And did you find out that more as you were in it?

A Yes, I mean for instance it's taking a serious war against M^{kh}xenge and so on coz they said Mkhenga was Xhosa. And so it had these tribes, serious tribal connotations in it.

Q And when you left was it with any acrimony or did you just cease to be active?

A I ceased to be active and I, but when I, acrimony between Inkata and ourselves does only as far back as recently as 1983, when I became a member of JORAC which was immediately said to be pro ANC and so on.

Q Let me take you back - you were in Inkata, you lived in Hambanati? (Yes) Now how, what about the community council - how did you get involved?

A Oh yes, again it was under the same thing; that same old idea of you using the system to address the system, ja coz again that was about 1979 when I got involved in the community council. As I say once more it is one of the things I deeply regret that I was ever on the council that was used to this extent by the state.

Q At the time what did you think you were doing?

A I think I was doing quite some work for the people and then I think in terms of physical amenities and so on I believe we achieved quite a lot for the people of Tongaat, of Hambanati.

Q Was there for and against^{for} you to go in or did everyone say this is ok or some young people say no or..

Q In fact I was literally forced in by people both young and old. I said I did not want to get into the council. I did want to encourage some people to get into the council. I did think that as a negotiating instrument it might yield something but to personally get involved in the council certainly I did not want to. But as I say one was virtually forced in.

Interview: Mkhize

Q So you went in and you thought you could use the system to achieve...

A Ja, to achieve some requirements for the people in the area. As I say I think we achieved some of the things. We for instance to get a reprint/rerieved for Ha ? not to be removed, because it was going to be removed.

We got that high school, the sewer system working and that sort of thing. And I think some of the things did come up and by 1982 or so there were some feelings that Hambanati was going to be more or less like Soweto in terms of popularity, in terms of publicity in this area. Like they are I mean the way they are using Tebe ? and so on. And now it is not...starting to have very serious doubts about my involvement with this thing.

Q What do you mean it is going to be used...I don't understand what you saying?

A Ja, I was saying now, in the case of Soweto, considerable monies were being pumped into Soweto and in the process the mayor of Soweto, a man called Bibi Thebehari, Ta tebeha ? was being used to serve/sell the system to the people and this is how I felt I was now being used in 1982.

I was having very, very serious reservations at that moment; in fact I wanted to retire from the council in October 1982 but people again kept on urging me to stay in for a while, stay in for a while. Until I had to ... no longer heard their advice, their persuasion and went against their will.

Q Was it reading about Thebaha ? again Soweto that made you change or was it some of your own personal experience that made you think you must get out?

A It was both personal experience and what I was seeing happening on the Reef. And also I think by this time I had once now more recovered all my faith in the ANC. This hopefully is not going to be looked into by the Special Branch. (There won't be anything done with it for two or three years anyway so it's not any, ja) So I..but what I was saying about my involvement in the council, I know I am not answering your question, is that even as I was on the council by the year 1980 the, I

Interview: Mkhize

A received some messages from ANC, asking me to hold on as and saying that we were doing very good work in Hambanati and so on. And I was just wondering why...was it because we were confronting the system that pretty hard, I do not know. But certainly by 1981 even 82 we...what got these communications from ANC.

Q You sure it was from ANC it wasn't someone trying to confuse things?

A I am certain it was ANC because I mean later on I was to meet the particular ANC ^{man} who was writing to me.

Q So you felt that it was achieving what you wanted to do? Until what made you to have doubts? What...(go on..) I think maybe you have answered that and I should move on. What I am saying is you began to feel you were being used by the system, was it easy to pull out?

A From my point of view it would have been easy but from the point of view of the people it was very difficult. They wanted ^{me} to stay in. I remember at the meeting when I..at a public meeting when I wanted to announce my resignation one woman literally wept and all the ?. Her name is Mrs. Manda. So I withdrew for that day only. I didn't announce my resignation at that meeting but the following day I called in my fellow councillors and told them that I think I have really made a decision- I am leaving this thing. They took it well then.

Q And what about..what would you say ultimately if you had to sum up why did you leave,

A Basically it was on the issue of rentals, of the rent hikes. That brought the crunch. We were on the council, we had requested Koornhof to grant a reprieve in so far as rent hikes were concerned; the economy was bad, there was the drought and so on and there were real tough situations in Sobantu, Lamontville and so on.

Ross Williams
? But Koornhof wouldn't even grant us an interview until such time that the ?, the former mayor of Durban phoned him. It is only then that he found his way to coming to come to speak to us.

Now I said to myself if I am said to be representing black people, my people and I cannot have that impact and the only impact has got to come through the mayor of Durban, what use if this damn thing.

Interview: Mkhize

Q Let me ask this question to get right to the point. Did your whole experience from the council teach you anything about non racialism?

A Nothing. Nothing at all. Except that there might have been...

Q Let me explain what I'm saying. Did it teach you anything about the need for non racialism? I guess some people say to me I learnt about non racialism because I saw black policeman, black community councillors and I saw that people could be working against their own people so it is not just the white man that is ? . Now you are saying when you saw Tabahar you saw that ...it was black against black, you didn't want

A He was being used...

Q any part of it.

A Mmm.

Q I was just thinking about whether that taught you anything about non racialism in that way?

A No, I think by that time, one was fairly estab. lish^hed non racial believer. I do know for instance that one of the concerns of the Administration Board about our involvement in the council was that time and again we would see, look forward to the one Tongaat for all the people. We did not see any reason why Africans were only to be in Hambanati and other areas and so on.

Q And just one thing I want to ask about briefly you could maybe mention was ; did you, your experience with the Tongaat group, did you work with whites in any positive way there?

A Yes, I definitely...I did..I think Tongaat is a very strange place -you get all sort of people but I mean in its essence it is a very colonial environment. Very very colonial indeed and it is an enclave, very insular, extremely insular and it has no influences from outside, so you would get some progressive whites from other areas who would soon find that Tongaat was not for them or Tongaat itself as a company or as a group would vomit them as fast as they could.

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Q Did you work with any progressive whites?

Interview: Mkhize

Yes, I did, I mean there was a man called Lucy Inkotis, but when I say progressive I mean in a very loose sense of the word, liberal sense of the word. There was the one Dr. Lucy ? I learnt quite a lot from him. He was out and out for general progress of the people and a very non racial orientation.

Q What kind of work did you do with him?

A Personnel work. I did industrial relations work with him.

Then there was also a man called Brian Angus, I think he now works for this company that now makes Brooklax and so on - Beachams. Then I also worked with...

Q But working with these whites did that teach you anything in terms of how did the company deal with those guys?

A Yes, I mean they got a very raw deal. As I say, Lucy was expelled like a thief when he had not really done anything wrong for the, with the group. That was ...he was so forgiving this white. He was literally put under house arrest during the time that he had been expelled from the group. We were not allowed to dspeak to him. He was not allowed to speak to us.

Q Did they think he was helping to form a union or something?

A It is most likely that that was the thinking behind the thing. He was just demanding too much maybe for..they just thought he was no longer management - he was a kafir boetie or something of the like. He really got a throug hly raw deal. Now that was to follow me later.

Q Are you still with the group?

A No, I'm not. I also got a deal almost similar to, I was asked to resign.

Q Why do you think that was?

A The Tongaat Group was for incorporation of Hambanati to KwaZulu. I was against it and I was an embarrasment to them. They are very closely aligned to Gashe and so on. I was anti Gatshe, JORAC and so on. And they really asked me to resign and I just had to.

Interview: Mkhize

Q When you left the community council did you go right into JORAC?

A Ja, I..for a while I held both - I was in JORAC and the community council at the same time. And after a few months, two months or so, I left the council completely and became a JORAC man completely.

Q Do you hold an office in JORAC?

A Yes, I started off being Treasurer and I am now publicity secretary.

Q When, the company that kicked you out aren't they ones of those company's that, I mean the general spectum is seen to be a liberal kind of group?

A Mmm. Ja, in the Natal way. They...they do seem...they are more or less giving that completion of being liberal but you look into their wage structure, you look into black advancement in Tongaat you will get a shock of your life.

Q Does that tell you anything about liberals or about whites or about capitalists or what?

A It tells me something about capitalists. That eh, if you want the thing you call a white sepulchre that is now, you are now using the biblical expression, they are quite a sepulchre, white a tomb, painted tomb. That is your capitalism. It paints everything so white and beneath is such rot. They are skeletons. Or is it rather am I being too harsh?

Q What work are you doing now?

A I am not working at the moment.

Q I am just wondering what do you think about liberals these days? What do you think of, I mean I heard that Alan Paton and them were trying to start up the Liberal Party, did you hear about that? Were there any ? some of those?

A No, I think there is really no room for liberals these days. They are not going to be able to recruit anybody into their party because now you have got Inkata and which is going to ...which is attracting some black capitalists and so on.

SAAHA

Q Black liberals?

Interview: Mkhize

A Ja, black liberals. Black liberals, tribalists, generally speaking black confused people are going into Inkata. That's where they get a political home. Also for selfish purposes but most more progressive people are really getting into ANC via the UDF and so on.

Q How did, you talk about the ANC came back and reviving support; how did that assert itself to you? I mean did it, what did you mean by that?

A Um, I mean I'm..the ANC asserted itself fairly powerfully in the beginning of the 80s, in particular 1982/3 and so on and the only question was how can it assert itself to me? I think purely by involvement in JORAC, involvement in UDF, the old nostalgia became that strong and again I found myself living the days of the Freedom Charter.

Q And what would you see the future of SA? Do you think it will be a non racial future?

A Yes definitely it is going to be a non racial future. We are going to see to it that it is a non racial future. The first government under the ANC is going to be, it is going to be a non racial government. ANC I hope you do know that at the National Consultative Conference of the ANC some Indians have been included, some whites have been included and coloured has been included and that is that.

Q How do you feel about that?

A I..that is that, I mean the ANC is becoming a peoples organisation.

Q Becoming awhat?

A Becoming a peoples organisation.

Q Aha. And do you think that the whites that will be in the future SA in the government, an ANC government will they be white liberals?

A You mean in the government or of the ANC? Possibly, we can never tell. It is very difficult to tell but I mostly it will be white communists.

Q And what about if you can just say something about the killings of the community councillors because there is so much international press say-

Interview: Mkhize

Q saying barbarism, blacks killing blacks, you can't let them take over because of what they are doing. You were in that position, you know that people get there for different ways and maybe don't have the strength to pull out, what do you feel when you read the paper that a community councillors been killed?

A I think the message went out very strongly to the people in late 1982 and earlier 1983 that blacks just have to be out of the castles. That these are oppressor instruments. Now they tried, I mean country wide to plead for a reprieve for rent increases in vain and that sort of thing. So then when people in general, when they, the voice of the majority say to you listen you should not be there, you have no reason to be there; I mean I accept for self respect purposes if you want to vote yourself a business site and that sort of thing, really I, this moment there is no need for once councillor to be on the community council.

Q But again if you can directly address the issue of the violence. I mean do you think that that is how they should be dealt with? Do you..

A Look I don't think so, I don't think so but I mean having said that one realises the wrath of the people. I mean it is not a nice thing to see a person being burnt to death, that sort of thing. But people in such emotional stress tend to do all sorts of things. I don't agree with what is being done, make no mistake and I'll say Dudutu was emotional that day when he spoke on TV. But well, there you have it, It is more or less, it is the wrath of the people, blind anger.

I mean if there was any way to control this this would be controlled but at the same time this happens, so many of the leadership in the UDF are either in prison and that's a..or restrained from participating in any manner in the activities of the UDF. So it would be contempt of court for instance for Archie Gumede to say ... to issue a statement condemning the burning of the people and so on because they would be associating himself with the UDF.

Q And do you think that despite whether it is good or bad or moral ior immoral, do you think it is effective? Despite the criticism of the burnings do you think it is effective in terms of making people realise which side is which and that kind of thing?

A Ja, it is, definitely. It is effective but I say once more...

Interview: Mkhize

A I personally would not, would never see myself looking at a person burnt. I felt sick that day, very very sick.

Q Which day?

A The day when I saw that Duduza woman being burnt to death on the TV.

Q And Alan Paton, do you think there are any good liberals left that you would admire? Or do you think they've been passed along in time or how do you feel about the liberals?

A Well they are...I still have a lot of faith in Peter Brown. There is Colin Gardner of the University of Natal Durban, no Pietermaritzberg. There is Tony Matthews...Sorry man...

Q And what about Alan Paton himself?

A I have pity for Alan Paton. I think he has become rather senile and possibly at that age or one tends to live in...

Q to live what?

A All sorts of worlds; If you remember Paton at one stage he marched with African as a...when it was the commemoration of the Great Trek, he was with the Afrikaners, with the Nationalists. He wore a beard and it was just that experience that turned him away from appreciating Afrikaner nationalism.

Q Turn away from it?

A Sorry, ja. Exactly just because as they were marching to..as they were marching to what you call it, full Voel ? ugte hoogte...then they... were a number of racist slurs that came from the Afrikaners and the Nationalists that made him think twice there. He asked himself what am I associating myself with. Ja.

Q What did your parents do?

A My mother is a teacher. My father used to be a driver. By the way I was brought up by my mother; my father divorced my mother so my father had no influence on me.

Interview: Mkhize

A Have you read Paton's book "Hofmeyer."

Q What ?

A Paton's book Hofmeyer.

Q No.

A If you have time to read it it does have quite some insights into the racial situation in SA. But I am sure you have so much to do.

Q No, I'd like to read it and in fact when I interviewed Paton and he told me that Bram Fisher wrote him a letter when he was on the run in hiding, saying that he read that book. So it is the only time that he really, you know was interested...poles apart. It was interesting.

I guess the last thing I want to say when you said the future of SA with the whites, do you think that blacks have any more time for white liberals?

A Certainly not for white liberals but I think for progressive whites. But again progressive whites who have a definite direction and that direction is socialist.

Q Why don't they have any time for white liberals?

A I think....history has it that white liberals have wasted people's time. So if you think Hofmeyer only was a liberal; Smuts was in some way a liberal with a very small little l and so on; and if the, if resistance had started during that time resistance of the nature that we have today we would have established a non racial SA. In other words liberals with a small letter l have done a lot to lead blacks up the garden path and so on.

Q What is your next job going to be, do you know?

AA I don't know, are you going to offer me one? I am going for an interview just now for a job here with Dustoc. It is not likely that I am going to get it but I am going to try.

Q And what happened, I didn't ask what happened between you and Inkata?

Interview: Mkhize

Q What has been going on? Did they attack you?

A Ja, well they have attacked our house, burnt my car and they have attacked my house twice, burnt my car and so on.

Q Since when. When was the first?

A August 1984. So about a year now that I have been home. Less.

Q Did they burn your house?

A Yes.

Q And are you married?

A Yes.

Q And children?:

A Yes.

Q How many?

A Four.

Q And why did it start? What lead to the tension between you and Inkata?

A I think it was on the issue of incorporation more than anything. The resistance of incorporation of our township into KwaZulu. Sorry I have got to go for this interview.

Q I know.