

J.F. So, are you saying that that was underlying - that there was a...?

D.P. (....?) projection on my part because I always knew of of the uneasy-uneasy situation I was in. You know, that I - you sense that weren't - right - you you you - the whites that you were with were better off and more articulate and, in a sense, a little bit superior, you know. And and the African - as kids were much more under-privileged and much worse education and slightly inferior - that - and and you were in the middle sort of thing. That that sort of feeling was there in the beginning, you know, and and you would be a little bit patronising towards African students - and sort of try to to to live up to the expectations of the whites, the white students, you know.

Later on it it I sort of rebelled against that, you know, sort of accommodating myself to whites, to the whites I was with, and force them to accommodate to Indian culture, for example, Indian cooking when I started living in a communal house - made them sort of appreciate Indian cooking and and and my mannerisms. And if I wanted to sort of express myself you know, I fo-, I thou-, I saw that as a way of - ja - bringing them, you know, of opening them up to to something different.

Well, at the same time - ja - in prison that was the real real test for me. Because in prison I was with African prisoners you know all the time. Starts skipping - there are so many things.

J.F. Ja.

D.P. You see, in 1978 when when I went to UCT I stayed in a hostel and most of the students there were African students. In fact, that was my first real experience of living with African students, you know. And I really, I felt much more closer with them than the coloured students who tended to be a bit more elitest and less interested in politics perhaps. Ja. And whereas the African students were all automatically interested in politics to a lesser or greater extent and I felt quite close to them and I mixed a lot with them you know. I felt myself wanting to get to know them - wanting to to understand them. And of course at times there was there was this communications gap, cultural gap at times, whatever. But basically I got on very well with them.

But then when I got to - ja - I think, prison was the first time I'd actually lived with people in very, very close daily basis and you had to; you were forced to interact. And there I was very conscious of being an Indian, of being different. And wanting to be accepted - ja - I was very conscious of that. To a lesser extent in in the the hostel I also wanted to be accepted. But more, very, very much more so then because I was politically conscious and I was - ja - I was much much more politically motivated having been, you know, on trial and everything.

And and of course the the the other prisoners were very accommodating, you know. Curiously enough, when they were when they did feel anti- or pro-African, right, because obviously they they realised that as Africans they were most oppressed and that would come out. But they would not direct the criticisms at Indians - they would direct it at coloureds. And knowing that I'm an Indian and I'm present they would say: Oh these coloureds, they'd never get involved in political activity - they're reactionary etc.

D.P. Yet they were they were ANC supporters, you know. Progressive when you come down to political analysis - they were progressive - they had a class analysis, and I mean, very radical, class analysis. But at times they would lapse into this you know - but they would never criticize Indians. Partly because well Indians are a bit more visible in terms of the history of political struggle - in terms of (...?), and congress, and , and that sort of thing - Gandhi and all that. So that at that level I can understand that - but but I think if I wasn't there they would they probably have criticized Indians as well, you see.

You see, but it's it's all very contradictory because at other times, you know, you would see prison warders lining up all the prisoners: Indians, and coloureds and Africans and they would just say: Ah look at that - we all are oppressed - and - Look how they're treating us, you know. Well look at the good example of people who are together in common oppression and that sort of thing. So it it'll shift according to whatever the mood is or whatever - ja - they they they're confronted with at that particular time.

J.F. These were all political prisoners?

D.P. All political prisoners, ja. All ANC supporters - fully ANC. And that's when I began to realize, you know, what people say and what they read and what their intellectual understanding is - where that takes them to - what their gut feeling is, you know, you, it can be two very different things. Ja. It it you see, there was this one guy in a (...?) you know who was now in exile - I mean, he was a very clear clear thinker - very impressive, very articulate. And when he came out of prison he he was fighting because he thought were being racist in their criticism of Jan Theron - because he was with, acting for Canning Workers Union, you know. And he really fought for non-racialism and he really he had he had this deep intellectual appreciation but he he was the one who would lapse into this Africanism, you know, at times. I don't know, I don't think you should quote this.

J.F. No, (,,,?).

D.P. But but you know, like when we were discussing something, I don't know, and he was in this Africanist phase and I would say: You know, it contradicts the CP position, etc. And he would say: Well, I'm not a member of the CP, I'm an ANC person, you know, and be Africanist, you know. So so he'd just quoted me so clearly how there's there's a shifting not allegiance but consciousness, identification. People are - ja - because deep down people have this intense experience of of African oppression and they more read about and see at a superficial level non-racial unity - at meeting - it's very superficial.

Ja. It is actually - it's still very superficial because we come together at meeting and we come together in organisation but not on a day-to-day basis - more on a leadership basis, you know. It's obvious that that it should be like that because of the of rigid separation in the group areas. And the daily experience of people is not non-racial even for the - perhaps for the most committed activist probably not - but for rank and file activists it it's really not that close cooperation.

- D.P. In Cape Town you see it clearly, you know, sometimes the coloured activists would lapse into: Ah, these African people, they're mad; you know what they want to do now, you know. They can't understand what's happening in the townships, it's such a rigid separation, you know. And likewise you know I'm sure in African community - I'm sure in the African community there's anti-coloured feeling which arises at times, you know. But when we come together we come together because we want to be together but there are these obstacles you know, this criminal separation of people and - ja.
- J.F. Let me pick it up in chronology and then we'll...
- D.P. Ja, I'm sorry I'm ...
- J.F. No, no, no. I want I want - that's exactly really important stuff. But how, well, how did you get from the awareness of the class analysis to - did you have an organisational base? Did you get involved in Grahamstown? You'd begun reading, you'd begun kind of opening yourself up to a class analysis. What would that have been? - that was '79?
- D.P. Ja.
- J.F. And then - can you just tell me your kind of political progression up to the time you were detained?
- D.P. OK. So when I - '79 ? started reading - formal reading group end of '79.
- J.F. Who - was it - your reading group - whites and blacks?
- D.P. Ja. Mandla was in there and Mike and one or two others. Ja, whites, Africans and coloureds. Actually it - like a real sort of congress group - everybody was represented. And then in 1980 when I went to Rhodes - for some reason or other, I can't figure it out - but people saw me as a political leader. Now I really can't figure it out why they they would - anyway and then. So so there was this talk going on to form a black students' society, you know, and I was drawn into the discussions for the formation of this - into the planning group etc. in Rhodes in the first month or so. So the dominant feeling was it's not to be a black students' society and and I slipped into that, right, - because I thought it was expedient - because this was the dominant mood: Black Consciousness.

And then there was one guy who - very, very much influence - or not influence - it was unity movement activist - who was later detained with us - proved to be very committed and trustworthy. Anyway, he was also part of these discussions. And he was a very character and he, as we were discussing I remember he just came out: Bugger this black-white thing: it's basically a struggle between rich and poor and, you know, there are rich blacks etc. etc.

D.P. And I remember just immediately switching. It must have sounded, looked very opportunistic to the other people this switching. I thought: Fuck it. Here' this guy who's speaking my language, you know. And I just supported him and that sort of destroyed the unity for a while.

And then we eventually formed this student's society called Phoenix: Phoenix Cultural Society. But mainly black students but we were non-racial - strictly. And we had a few white students as well, And that became my political home for the few months I was at Rhodes. And we had this continual debate with BC people - the non-racial people. And the BC at that time was very crude - sort of black-white stuff, you know - not the more sophisticated version you get today.

And then we just engaged in a lot of demonstrations: Free Mandela demonstrations and sit-ins. That was the time of the school boycotts in in Cape Town which, you know, really impressed us - also in Port Elizabeth. And we supported that. And for a while I got hold of banned literature. And I was also impressed by the one particular article from an ANC journal on non-racialism where they had Lee and Jenkins - guys that had escaped from from Pollsmoor - not Pollsmoor - Pretoria Central. I remember that - there was a very striking article and I thought: Fuck it, you know, I must photostat this. Just - not because of ANC so much but because of the non-racial image that it projected, you know. Because I - and here I was in 1980 fighting the BC analysis, you know - and and that's - and I took that and photostatted it - hoping to distribute it to all my BC ... Oh, I see, I think I forgot to mention that in East London Steve Biko's sister was very close to ...

J.F. Bandi.

D.P. Bandi, ja - you've met her?

J.F. Ja.

D.P. Ja. And we we used to discuss a lot and well she worked for Race Relations as well and all that. So I thought: Fuck it, I must show her this article and see whites are in this town - because there were these guys with guerrilla uniforms on and everything. And ja, I think basically that all my illegal activity - literature - banned literature - was geared to countering the BC position, you know. I I - ja - I just thought it was so dangerous for the future to - just for a blacks only struggle. ?

And and - ja - it's - so, you know, and I saw the ANC as embodying that - embodying this non-racialism. But but we never knew a lot about the ANC and the CP. It was all hearsay or the (...?) we came across. And for us the ANC represent this radical organisation with a clear class analysis, you know. We didn't know what - all the contradictions and the nationalist elements or whatever. It was it was only organisation with a clear for us especially, ja, for all of us, non-racialism and class analysis was inseparable, you know. That was our critique of BC - on a non-racial and on an economic plane - and and the ANC represented that to us. ?

J.F. Us is who?

D.P. Guy and Mike and other students around. Ja.

J.F. Blacks and whites?

D.P. Ja, well those blacks who were with us in that. Ja, ja, ja, ja, Ngudgema(?) was another person who was arrested with us. He also - ja confirmed that to us because his brother - his brother or his father, I'm not sure now - one of his relatives was a key figure in the ANC. And he had this position, you know, and he also supported us with the Phoenix thing - non-racialism - which also really strengthened me. Here was this African guy, quite quite old, and he supported the non-racial position. So so it strengthened my drift towards an ANC-type of analysis.

J.F. And this this article that you were so taken with that had to do with the Jenkins - was it just an article about the escape?

D.P. It was an article, ja, about the escape; how they were part of the ANC army.

J.F. It showed them in in army?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. Just as (Greeks?)?

D.P. Greeks I think it was - it proves to be - it's proven to be now, hasn't it?

J.F. What do you mean?

D.P. Well, they haven't really been part of any guerilla unit.

J.F. Well they were arrested for underground work.

D.P. Ja, I mean - I don't know. Just delete that.

J.F. Maybe we'd better. They - does the idea - all it said was these guys are white and they're part of the ANC and they escaped and ...

D.P. And they're part of the army.

J.F. I see.

D.P. ANC army.

J.F. Ah ah.

D.P. Ja.

- J.F. And so did you actually show this to black people?
- D.P. I didn't get a chance to - I was arrested that morning. Got to East London with all these photostats - ja. So, so, so what was my main political activity? Ja, I mean, we'd got this tape which was a great thing - Oliver Tambo's speech. So, so I was also exposed to unity movement, right. And Unity Movement had very, very strong non-racialism as well - much more firm and a bit of also a critique of the ANC which which I didn't fully understand. I was beginning to understand at that point. Coming from this guy Alan Zin(?) - who was very much part of SACOS(?) - SACOS politics. So I I was in this uneasy situation there was Guy on the other hand who was a strong influence and Alan Zin on the other hand who wasn't such a strong influence but was making himself heard, you know. I was listening to what he was saying. Ja, up until the time I was arrested I think.
- J.F. And was there much known about the ANC? I mean, did you feel like you were just kind of rediscovering - I mean you'd been told by the BC people: It's a spent force - it's not in the picture.
- D.P. And then this guy came who - my distant cousin who said they weren't a spent force and they were very much part of the picture. From then on - that was mid '79 - from then onwards I thought: No, these guys are talking rubbish, you know. And the more I learnt and the more I read - I started reading things like 'Time <sup>Longer Than</sup> ~~That~~ <sup>Rope</sup> whatever was available.
- And then got this clear picture - and of course we saw all these - since '80 there was this big bomb blast - the Sasol explosion - which was very impressive. It really showed us who's conducting the struggle - not BC people. So all these things I had...
- J.F. This cousin, did he approach you? Was he underground or was he back just - was he released from around?
- D.P. No, no. He was underground, ja, ja.
- J.F. Had he left the country and come back?
- D.P. Left the country and came back sort of fairly legally - no, completely legally but working underground.
- J.F. So was he - did he kind of recruit you or was it just exposure to him? Or did he actually ...?
- D.P. No, he he recruited me. But he didn't really get to anything before I was arrested.
- J.F. What - so how long the time was it from when you met him to when you were arrested?
- D.P. A year.

- J.F. And did you - was it something that was at all scary and worriesome to you? I mean, did you did you figure this is hot stuff I could get in?
- D.P. No, not at all. I didn't even think - it was exciting - and I never thought I would spend all that time in prison. It was the furthest thing from my mind that that - I thought I would be detained but for a few weeks only, you know. Because basically what we were doing: we were dabbling in illegal literature; maybe speaking to people about the ANC - but not sort of consciously recruiting people in any determined way. Ja, but it might have led to that, I don't know.
- J.F. But you hadn't gotten to the stage of setting up units or anything?
- D.P. No, no, no, nothing of that sort. It was fairly, I mean, it was - just think what's happening now, you know, the NUS S producing a whole - ANC - NUS S - talks to the ANC thing. You know, we weren't doing much more than that. No, no, not setting up units or anything. But it it was leading to something - it it could have deepened into something. I I remember fe- having the sense of anticipation that, you know - I'm really getting into something worthwhile and meaningful now. And of course, then I was arrested. And well, according to the Security Police they arrested us prematurely because they they also thought that - were leading to something bigger.
- J.F. So when were you arrested exactly?
- D.P. July '80.
- J.F. '80 not '81?
- D.P. No, '80.
- J.F. Right, that's fine. And then were were you taken on your own? Were you by yourself when you were detained?
- D.P. I was on my own because I was detained when I went to East London for for the weekend - but to distribute all these photostats. And somehow they knew that I was - obviously someone - there was an informer in our midst. And so they took me in - ja - Saturday morning.
- J.F. From?
- D.P. From my mother's house.
- J.F. And did you get a chance to - did - were - to see your mother's reaction? Or did they just take you, I mean...?
- D.P. Ja, ja, she was there and she was, you know, sort of shocked and questioning them - asking them how long etc. And I subsequently found out that, you know, she really put a lot of pressure on them - trying to make sure that I wasn't being tortured and insisting that she comes and visit me - which they eventually allowed her to - because she she she really - she put a lot of pressure on them. If you knew my mother you could understand it. She really is a forceful person that that wouldn't sit down. And and they did mention in an irritating fashion that, you know, your mother keeps on phoning and... until they eventually let her come and visit me.

J.F. And when she came what did she say? I mean, did she, was she in anyway reproaching you for getting yourself into a political mess?

D.P. That's the thing, you know, I was sitting there in the first two weeks - that's that's when they really beat me up and all that - I thought, you know, my mother must be virtually disowning me because, you know, why should I get involved in all this and what a nuisance I am. And then I was so pleasantly surprised because she was a real, you know, great support. And she, during the course of my detention, you know, she - it really had a radicalising effect on my family my detention, especially my mother - because she she saw the police and she saw what horrible characters they were - because they really were fearsome people. And I remember, you know, when she used to come to visit me and and they used to leave the black security policeman with us.

Now I - that was part of my sanity, you know, being able to speak to the black policeman. and they kept on protesting: It's only a job. It's only a job. We don't have a job and ... Because my mother asked them, you know: Why are you doing this? And they said that very sheepishly because they couldn't justify it. And I used to discuss with them, you know, about inequalities in education and all that because they asked me, you know, like what is it - are are we - is the education system unequal? You know, they didn't really know and I told them and they got surprised to to to hear that.

Also they they they were also - ja - surprised and taken in by the fact that I'm an Indian with my privileges, siding with Africans, you know. I I really caught that with all of the black security policemen. And they were given all the menial tasks to do. You know, it's really - you can see the contradiction in the whole system and how those people can be won over or, you know, made to do things - why they are potential risk to the security force - because these guys continually came to me and complain: They don't give me a chance to interrogate. So he will sit down next to me and say: Come on, let me interrogate you. You know, and we have a play play interrogation because he was so (???) because they used to send him on errands to buy a cool drink or you know. Shame, I felt sorry for him. Anyway - sorry.

J.F. Did you ever think in retrospect that they would be the kind of guys who would have resigned under the pressure of the kind of mass ...?

D.P. Ja, ja, they would have. Ja. You see, at the same time there were these sort of people, right. They would also be the ones who could beat you up most terribly in front of white policemen to show that they are worthy, you know. Ja, they would be the ones that would really get into you - no, not with me, because they they didn't touch me - just the white policemen handled me. But from speaking to the other detainees, you know, the black policemen were the ones who do it. Ja, it's really tragic. But but - ja - they're vulnerable to the community pressure - which in East London at that time wasn't very great. Yes, just riddled with informers - Imbansani(?).



- J.F. So you got picked up from your mother's home and taken in and did you right y know? Did they happen to - you had the stuff in your house?
- D.P. Mm. Right next to my bed - in my bag. They found all these photostats.
- J.F. And how - were there many many many? Or were there just for a few friends?
- D.P. About five - ja.
- J.F. So you weren't exactly doing mass distribution.
- D.P. Ja. It wasn't a hell of a lot - ja.
- J.F. And it was just that that they had on you? Just those five things that were - did you also have any other literature?
- D.P. I think so, ja. That was all I had then.
- J.F. So did you figure it was about that? There was no mystery as to why you were detained or ...?
- D.P. No, no, no ... I knew - something more than that, right. Because we were quite active on campus and and ja, they wanted to know who I was mixing with. I I I didn't think they - ja - I didn't think they knew about my my long distant cousin.
- J.F. Which they did?
- D.P. They didn't.
- J.F. They didn't?
- D.P. And - ja - the whole thing of Guy came up and I was also unsure how involved Guy was and - Well, I just knew that you know I was - I thought he was much more involved than what he actually turned out to be. Ja - I thought he was you know real ANC representative in Grahamstown sort of thing. And I was fully in tune with getting involved with him and being part of all that. And so - but but I knew that I knew nothing. I knew very little about him and eventually things came out and , you know, you - oh, I learnt such a lot about what not to do. Because you know you give a little bit and you give a little bit and eventually a lot of things came out and they found out I had a whole stash of banned literature which they found, you know, found.
- J.F. That had been hidden?
- D.P. That had been hidden. It was really an unfortunate thing. You see, I was convinced - they came and told me that Mike Kenyon had burnt a lot of stuff, right. Now I was under a lot of pressure at that time to give them something, you know, to to (.....?) - because they were beating me up and all that. So I thought: Oh, gosh. That's great - Mike Kenyon burnt all our stuff. So I said Ah - I told them where it was - (...?) look there, it isn't there any more. And so they went there and it so happened that Guy's stuff was exactly where my stuff was - because he arranged with the same person to hide the stuff, you know. They found Guy's stuff and they found my stuff - that was so terrible.

J.F. Which was what kind of stuff?

D.P. Oh, you know, banned ANC literature, other banned material.

J.F. What, Sechaba's, ACs ?

D.P. Ja, Ja.

J.F. And - so what were they trying to get out of you? I mean, what what ...?

D.P. You see, initially they were convinced that I was part of either a CP cell or an ANC cell. So they beat me up for two days for that, you know - really want me to say I was part of the cell. And of course I wasn't. Although I was wondering whether I was because they they told me you know this is how it all starts and eventually - ja - it all starts with this - maybe you wouldn't...

(End of side 1, tape 2)