

J.F. Can you tell me your family background - did that have a political influence on you?

J.S. Negative there - my family has a long South African background, and my mother comes from an Afrikaans family with a long pedigree going back to the days of van Riebeeck almost - my father was a more recent immigrant from England, and he's the editor of a local newspaper and printing press - also the town clerk. My mother's people were born in this place, Riversdale, and I suppose they belong to the local gentry, if one could call them that - small village about 2,500 people, mostly Coloured and Africans mixed, and white community perhaps 500 - farming district, mixed - not poor, not very prosperous - I went to school there, and after school, after matriculating I entered into the office of the local lawyer and became articled, I sat for the lawyers' examinations, and not very interested in law I decided to leave - I really got bored with the place and went into the civil service.

I was appointed in Pretoria to the auditor general's office and was attached to the department of prisons and they'd have (?) justice, and there I became interested in crime and punishment - while I was in the service I studied for a BA degree mainly in order to increase my earnings - I wasn't terribly interested in the subjects as such, but it was an easy way of getting more money, and at the end of the BA I received a scholarship which took me to an MA and I specialised in politics at the MA level, political philosophy, and moved more and more towards a radical position, mainly because the teaching was done by liberals and I rejected their approach.

They had no answer to the problem of the great depression - this is round about '29 - I was then 22 - so I moved towards a Marxist orientation.

J.F. What did your parents do?

J.S. My father was running a printing plant and also editing a paper.

J.F. And your mother - did she work at all?

J.S. She had been a teacher but she had raised six children - that kept her pretty busy - you'd call her a housewife.

J.F. And did your siblings go on to be involved politically at all?

J.S. No, they all reactionary conservatives - they all got into civil service or banks, railways and became part of the establishment - they thought myself - me a nut and kept clear of me.

J.F. In that I'm looking at non-racialism I'm looking at it ideologically, but I don't want to overlook the issue of race itself - I'd like to make sure I focus from time to time on the race question - when you were growing up did you have any particular exposure to people of other race groups that might have influenced you?

J.S. I mixed with them all the time, Coloured and Africans, which was unusual - I just liked them, I liked their company - I also mixed with poor whites - I had a kind of common streak in me, and avoided the well to do, the petty bourgeoisie who ran the place, and why I was like this I can't tell - this is a psychological problem which I don't think there is any explanation for it - some people go that way.

- J.S. I - I was radical in outlook at an early age, that's all I can say - I didn't like the set-up, and it took me some time to find my way to an alternative, because there was no suitable contact in the village itself I had to go outside into the wider society, and I there encountered people, came across movements.
- J.F. And did you consider yourself an intellectual at all - had you thought of going to university or did that come much later?
- J.S. I tell you, my motives were purely mercenary - I was getting an income of about eleven pounds a month - seven pound ten shillings I spent on board and lodging, so I had very little money left, and the easiest way to get money without going into business, which I didn't relish, was to pass examinations and they'd give me a double increment, so simple as that - and then I got a scholarship, and since I believe in taking things that come to me for nothing, I used it to get another degree, and then I got another scholarship and this took me to London, so it's just mercenary all the way.
- J.F. And in the civil service - there's some very large concepts that you've summed up quite cursorily, and I'm just wondering when you said that you saw through the liberal analysis, that it didn't answer the great depression, that's....
- J.S. It didn't appeal to me - what is liberalism as taught then (?) - I learned the stuff, the philosophy, Hobbs, Locke, Ficht (?) Hegel, and they stopped short of Marx - I picked up Marx myself - and on the English side people like John Stewart Mill (?) - do you know him - Liberty - Kala (?) - that was pretty old stuff - I found my way to new material - the chap under whom I studied for the MA was Brookes, and Brookes was quite well known in the South African history - 1924, which is about the time that I was floating around, he had written a book called Native Policy of South Africa, in which he approved of Hertzog's policy of segregation, and I disliked this very much.
- J.F. So you rejected Brookes firsthand - Brookes was read widely but you actually were taught by him?
- J.S. He taught me, ja, and he failed to convince me - he failed to convince me either about liberalism or about his policy of segregation - ja, I had a way of rejecting people who plead under the guise of philosophical general concepts for particular causes, and however much one dissected it what it came down to was he was justifying white supremacy, and really this was a logical rejection on my part rather than an emotional one.
- J.F. So was it all theoretical - were there no actual experiences when you were in the civil service when you looked at the prison service, when you talked about the....
- J.S. Oh, I disliked it very much - I used to go into the prisons to audit books and I saw the way that black prisoners were treated, how they were stripped naked and exposed in the yards and then had their orifices examined, and that revolted me, and that gave me an emotional impulse.
- J.F. So by the time you left to go to London - that was 19 - when did you go to LSE?
- J.S. '32.
- J.F. So you were there from '32 to '37 - and when you arrived in London you had already adopted a radical analysis, you....

J.S. Ja, my rooted party (?) in the South African experience, but that prepared me for contacts with leftists at the London School of Economics - this was a period of great unrest - it was during the depression and the unemployed miners from Wales were marching on Durham were marching into London - there were demonstrations and there were groups of students who had been drawn into this activity, and with my previous experience and outlook it was natural that I should couple up with them.

I belonged to a society - I forget what it was called - it had something to do with - what would one call it - community, no - international - anyway the object was to interest people of different racial groups and get them involved in political discussion with the leftist approach, and I was the chairman of this committee or society, that will be a better word, and that drew me more and more into leftism.

J.F. And then you came back to South Africa in 1937 - did you - you spoke on this other tape about travelling with Ralph Bunche....

J.S. Do you know about him?

J.F. Ja, I've heard....

J.S. Do you know there's a Ralph Bunche Institute?

J.F. Ja, Tom Carris is there....

J.S. I told that fellow about him (it) - yes, I - I - I was reminded of this by a manuscript which was sent to me from Botswana - Edgar, I think the name is, who wanted me to give my impressions of Bunche and Bunche's Reminiscences, which included the Big Slab, of his contact with me and conversations - I didn't do the tape because it went wrong - he couldn't get into Lusaka - he was told to get away, and he went to UK and then back to United States, and I - I really don't know what happened to him.

But the manuscript, I read it - it was being looked at by a friend of ours - I handed it to her and she took extracts from it relating to Bunche's comments on me.

J.F. So how did - I don't know what Bunche was doing in South Africa in 1937 - did he just come out for a visit....

J.S. I - I - I'd seen Bunche in London, and then we renewed the contact in South Africa - we spent some time together in Johannesburg and then in Cape Town where I was based, and from there we went to Bloemfontein, and I described that episode. Bunche afterwards became the deputy or assistant general secretary of the United Nations with special responsibility for Afro - African affairs, and I think including Negro.

J.F. But at the time was he just visiting you privately....

J.S. He probably came out with a - a United Nations grant - he never told us - but I don't think he could've spent - afforded the cost out of his own pocket.

J.F. And tell me, when you went to that Bloemfontein meeting, how did you personally view the ANC at that time, the ANC of 1937?

J.S. You must remember I had been spending three or four years reading up South African material, preparing a background for all this, so I developed an insight, I think, from the literature into the South African experience, and I had a very dim view of the ANC - 1937 it just about reached the bottom of its previous failure to respond to the challenges that were being thrown up by the Smuts regime - not the Nationalists were in power, but Smuts, Hertzog - the vote had been taken away from Africans and they had put up a rather weak performance under the (.....) one of the founding fathers.

1937 was an interesting turning point because the revival began then in the ANC itself, so that meeting in Bloemfontein was quite an historic occasion - if you look up the literature you will see that decisions were taken - this was after the failure of the ANC to persuade Hertzog to withdraw the bill abolishing the African franchise, or modifying it, and there was an attempt made to revive it - people like Mofutsanyana, J.B. Marks, Moses Kotane and others - but you ought to know much more about this background really to explain - I don't want to go into it.

The Communist Party had had a very lean time - while I was away in England it was going through a bad spell....

J.F. Per the....

J.S. In - in expelling people, purging - all that took place in the '30s and I was out, which is why I - I didn't cotton onto them much - I thought it best that they should settle it out - anyway I - I wanted to study abroad and widen my horizon, and when I came back that period was now over and the issue was war and peace, and I became involved almost from the outset in working for the peace movement, which was an attempt to counteract the neo-nazi, pro-fascist elements that were floating around, and we called them shirts - the grey shirts, the black shirts attacking the left - so we all became involved in a campaign for peace, against war, which was the international slogan at that time, a genuine one - very exciting it was those - that period, 1937, so there was a great deal of political activity all around - the war was three years away.

J.F. Can I take you back to that Bloemfontein meeting - I'm just interested because of my focus on non-racialism - here was a white South African and a black American being asked to address this meeting....

J.S. No, we didn't - we weren't asked - there were whites on a platform I - I told you before informally - what struck me was the whole galaxy of local white bureaucrats, the mayor of Bloemfontein, the police chief, the municipal superintendent - three or four of them who were sitting there - and the spokesman - the people from the ANC platform were talking to them, apologising for their inability to do things, talking about themselves in very self-depreciating tone - and I got annoyed so I moved onto the platform.

They'd asked me before to speak, and I had refused because I thought it not my business, but when I heard this talk I did speak, and I launched out an - an attack on white supremacy and the reasons why there was this enormous discrepancy between white and black in all fields of social activity - so that's how it came about - and then Bunche followed me and he also spoke.

J.F. Did you get a sense of how it was received - was it shocking or was it received well?

- J.S. No, the - they applauded it, but afterwards they told me to get out because the police were searching for me - and they looked after me - they gave me a - a place to stay in until the following morning when they could smuggle me out of the township - the - the point is that it was a - an offence to enter a township, that is a location as it was called, without a permit, which I didn't have.
- J.F. You came back and you got in touch with African political movements, you said, but how does that happen for a white to come back - it was a time when the ANC, as you pointed out, was at a low point - which movements did you get in touch with and was - how did you transcend the South African....
- J.S. I'm a South African - I grew up there - blacks and whites were my companions - it wasn't a great difficulty - and the ANC had a little group meeting in Cape Town and another group in Langa, the location, and I used to go to both, and they accepted me - although they didn't have a practice of formally enrolling people as a member, but I worked with them '37 - I ignored the - the constitution - actually the constitution of the ANC at that time did allow, I think, for non-Africans to join, but I'm not sure.
- But it wouldn't bother me - nor did it bother my associates - they knew me - you see, I was then moving around with Ray, and Ray had been working in Cape Town ever since she returned - or went into South Africa - 1929, 1930 she got plunged into the trade union movement, and she was a remarkable phenomena, quite outstanding, because there weren't many whites doing that work of organising blacks, and she organised them at all levels, railway workers and dairy workers, sweet workers, garment workers, the whole lot she tackled on - she had tremendous energy, and my association with her gave me a pass (?)
- But there was never any question of being suspicious of me or having to break through barriers - I don't think I ever encountered opposition at any stage from blacks anywhere - never had that trouble.
- J.F. When did you meet Ray - what year - right when you came back....
- J.S. Yes, 1937 I made contact with her - I was looking for people on the left.
- J.F. And was it the ANC that you moved towards - was the national liberation league or the non-European United Front....
- J.S. No, I - I - I went into the CP - I had been a member of the British Communist Party, so I transferred, as it were, my allegiance from the British to the South African party, and that became the base and a focal point of my activities - the contact with the trade unions, I participated with Ray in that, and the ANC was a subsidiary auxillary operation, and that was the same, I think, with a lot of the whites who were in the left movement.
- J.F. And you spoke about witnessing a demonstration from Johannesburg to Pretoria, black and whites mixed - I was wondering if you could speak about that because that was so unusual - when exactly was that....
- J.S. That was about 1930 during the depression.
- J.F. This was before you went to....

- J.S. Well, I went in '32 - at the end of '32 - the - this has been chronicled, you know....
- J.F. I just....
- J.S. It's in the books....
- J.F. But it's just....
- J.S. I - I have to rely on - on my memory for this because I haven't looked it up - it might be '30 or '31, and there was a - a mixed white, black procession demonstrating for jobs and wages and bread - the whole thing - and this caused a lot of excitement and I - I was there - I watched it - I didn't take part in it - I hadn't got enough experience and I didn't know my way about at that time - I was also in the civil service - but it impressed me greatly - it - it was my kind of reply to the problem of how do deal with crises.
- J.F. But it was the exception - there weren't that many like that - did you get a sense that that was the solution or was - that was a famous demonstration because precisely it was so unusual at the time.
- J.S. Well, you might say I had a romantic idea, but then I think people with a radical outlook who reject the existing social system are romantics - some people call them mad - you have to have a great deal of confidence and faith - you have to look for little things like that as beginnings - it's not very different from the attitude of a scientist, a biologist or chemist who's doing research work and he gets a glimmer of something or other that he's looking for.
- I believe that there is the same kind of process at work in - in the sociologist or a political activist - they come from the same cloth, what else - they try to work out from an odd assortment of facts some pattern which would support an ideological framework - now I was shaping the ideological framework at that time, and this gave me evidence of a non-racial class approach, but that had to mature - it was difficult to mature it in the South African situation at that time.
- J.F. And how - when you got that sense of some kind of excitement or optimism how did it seem when you went back to your classroom - you dealt with white students - was that something that....
- J.S. No, that was an ongoing business all the time - I was reminded today of the classroom contact by speakers at this law conference, because a number of the people who participated were students of mine - they were Rhodesians or South Africans who had attended my classes - now I was running a class which was supposed to be training colonial administrators, and I had no intention of turning out people who would operate the system - I didn't set out to make them anti anything at all, but I analysed the social structure in which they would operate if they were administrators to the best of my ability using a class analysis and explaining racial tensions and conflicts in terms of class hostility - I was (?) telling them that underneath the race they had to look for interest groups - capital, labour - and that would give them a clue - so that established the kind of radical approach in the classes, which led ultimately to a number of the people whom I had taught taking part in revolutionary activity and going to prison and myself being expelled - but that was a long process....
- J.F. So you....

J.S. 1937, 1965, 7 - 17 years - 27 years - (in)credible.

J.F. So were your students of all race groups?

J.S. Yes....

J.F. There were mixed classes?

J.S. Yes, some African, some Coloured, not many, mostly whites and I - I was in the African studies department, which was newly formed - it had anthropology, archeology, languages, African languages and - and I was responsible for what was called native law and administration - later on I turned it into comparative African government and law - before I came the thing was set up, an idea of training people for government service - this was in line with what was happening overseas in Brussels, France, Holland, Britain - they had all colonial empires, and where do you think the colonial administrators came from - they were being trained - but (?) the South African government all of a sudden got in debt (?) you must also apply the same kind of scientific procedure.

And out of this came the bureaucracy which runs BAD, Black Administration and whatnot and the - the English speaking universities were being recruited to do the same thing - in a sense (?) there was a government subsidy that paid so much for the number of students who participated in these classes - I suppose they made a mistake by appointing me - anyway I - it enabled me to combine my intellectual interest in this whole field of imperialism and colonial studies with practical political activity, and that - that was all right - it satisfied me, and gave me a living at the same time.

END OF SIDE ONE.

J.F. progress....

J.S. I think you ought to ask me questions and give me a chance to answer them.

J.F. Well, it's just that you're going over some of the areas that I want to ask about - the students who you taught of all the different race groups, how did you find their responses to the points you were making - I'm just interested again if there was any correlation between whether the white students tended to respond in a certain way and the African students tended to respond in a different way or was it a....

J.S. See, students are primarily interested in passing examinations - they expected me to give them material which they could use in their examination scripts, and I satisfied that demand, but I did it in my way - not by giving them the official version - I would analyse, for instance, the various acts that were passed to harass blacks, the Native Administration Act, the Separate Representation of Natives Act, which took away the vote, the Urban Areas Act, which had a pass law - I'd analyse this with them.

J.S. And I tried to show them that these acts are intended to strengthen white interests, white supremacy, white capital - now all right (?) they pick it up, the bright ones would (who) give it back and they would get sufficient credit to do - but you've been a student, you know what it is - in the course of the discussion there would be many objections - sometimes there was some abuse - they - they would challenge me, but they would go along - I - I had no trouble with keeping law and order.

If they kicked up a rumpus I'd say to them : All right, we cut this out - I'll put a question on this in the examination paper - you can think it out for yourself if you don't want to listen to me - that shut them up because what do they - what do students want from a lecturer or a professor - they want material - they can get it from the books because I tell them where I got it from, the blue books (.....) - but they don't want to spend their time doing that, they haven't got it - they expect the teacher to process the stuff for them ready made, and that's why they pay a lecturer - that's it.

J.F. And was it the same for black and white students - you didn't find a...

J.S. Blacks were even more hostile because they were petty bourgeois and - and they wanted to get out of this business - they wanted to become professionals of one kind or another - they weren't interested - I used to teach African law, which interested me a great deal, as I had (?) some law students - the people who were most interested in African law were foreigners (who) came from Europe and they were fascinated by African law as an example of a pre-industrial type of legal system.

J.F. As you became radicalised and conscious and committed to understanding African nationalism as a key force in South Africa and the future South African revolutionary movement, where did you feel at the time in the '30s and '40s it would find its organisational base - did you look at the ANC - of course the '30s was the nadir of the ANC, as you pointed out - did you see it in the Communist Party continuing to draw in Africans as it had so successfully, or did you see the ANC being rebuilt and ultimately being the force - I'm just interested because we've taken it from the Bloemfontein conference where things looked pretty pitiful, and as we got into the '40s how did you see developments?

J.S. During the war years we made a lot of headway - now the - the ANC was supporting the war - the leftists rejected it until the attack on the Soviet Union in 1940 - when did the inva - '41 when the invasion took place - so there was a split between the ANC and the communists on the war issue - it didn't worry us much - we always regarded the ANC as a kind of royalist (loyalist) crowd without sufficient political independence to break away from white supremacy - very significant, you see, that they would follow the government, Smuts' government in the war against fascism - we didn't get worried about that.

Now towards the end of the war things began to get more violent, and we anticipated this - we knew that when the war ended the attack on the left and on the working class would be renewed, and that happened in 1946 when there was a strike of African miners, and that led by and large in different ways to the rest of the central committee of the Communist Party, of which I was a member.

J.S. And we were put on trial for sedition, and that case of sedition started in 1946, round about November, December, and dragged on until 1948 - two years fully - and it came to an end only after the Nationalist Party government came into office in that year - in October the Nationalist Party government withdrew the charges, having failed to obtain an indictment - why this is so is another matter.

And then they began to prepare a bill for the outlawing of the Communist Party, and that was done in 1950 - Suppression of Communism Act - so all this time I was deeply involved with my associates in legal action, in police action, in raids, in arrests, in detentions, in prison, pending the trial, so I didn't really have much time to sit down and cogitate in the way you indicate.

And now I was getting involved in the kind of struggle that I'd anticipated before coming back to South Africa - no, '37 - '46 is nine years, a very eventful, crowded experiences, and all the time making analysis of the future - and also I must say there was the beginning of a radicalisation of the ANC - we were now moving along parallel (?) lines.

ANC was influenced by the war, the Atlantic Charter, which Winston Churchill and Roosevelt had drafted to prepare for the post-war period, they also had in mind the need to stop rebellions, revolutions - and the ANC under the influence of Xuma, Dr. Xuma, the president, launched its own charter - if you read Kasir & Carter you'll see all the documents there - and that was a significant change in the thinking.

Out of it came the young African youth league with (?) the radical elements.

J.F. Now how did you an - how did you understand and explain the tendency of some members of the ANC youth league to be anti-white, anti-communist, anti-Indian - did you ever have any - I know that the people you moved with were Mofutsanyana and Kotane and people that you wouldn't have had ide....

J.S. They were party people.

J.F. They were the party people, but when you looked at the young - the militants who were galvanising the support and organisation, the Tambos, the Mandelas and the Lembedes and the Mdas and those people, and you saw that element of anti-white, anti-communism, can you address these issues and tell me how you saw them then....

J.S. But you see, the party had a - a theoretical platform, which is important - as far back as 1928 Bunting and Roux, the two leaders, had gone to Moscow, and they'd been ticked off by the Comintern - not the CPSU, the Comintern, and Communist International - at that time there was a group of American negroes who were very vocal in the Communist International, and they were represented by a couple of very voluble fellows who criticised the communists of South Africa very savagely for being a white supremacy party, and insisted that the correct policy for the communists to adopt was to launch a programme in support of the national democratic revolution - in terms of resolutions adopted by the Communist International as far back as 1920, '21 - there's a whole history of this - communism and the national liberation movement.

J.S. So we had this and - and that seeped through - this was before my time - I knew about it but it didn't make any great impact on me because the party was in a state of disorder - it was after this that people like Bunting were expelled, together with Bill Andrews and so on - between '28 and 1932 there was a period of great unrest in the Communist Party - arising out of this - basically the communists had been oriented towards white workers, thinking the white workers would be revolutionary.

An experience in 1922 in the great run to vote (?) it convinced them that the white workers were the nucleus of a revolutionary class and that their duty was to support it and build it - now by 1928 that optimism had ebbed, died away, and I think the visit to Moscow had opened their eyes that their true function was to work with the African working class, and they thereupon proceeded to do it.

So the party was well equipped to understand the relationship between the class organisation and class struggle and a national liberation movement, and we could understand this - we could understand the shifts and changes in the national liberation movement, consisting largely of intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie, without a firm working class base such as we were trying to build up for ourselves, so we - we weren't surprised.

J.F. But if you look back on it you can understand Bunting and Roux's efforts to build - they at one time organised the league of African rights as an effort toward a socialist mass movement for Africans - they were bruised by the experience in Moscow and the purgings, but again what I'm trying to pick out in this work that I'm doing is the themes that recur in South African history of developing and merging the class struggle and the democratic national....

J.S. It wasn't easy at all - if you read Eddie Roux Time Longer Than Rope and his essay on Bunting you'll see how difficult he found it - in the end he turned against the Soviet Union and became one of its great critics, something which he must have regretted because the observations he made on his experiences with the Soviet Union were later utilised by the national government to attack the Communist Party and defend its decision to ban us.

I saw recently an essay on Roux the scientist, which includes the - an analysis of this perspective of his - all right, so it wasn't easy to make this shift - the white communists who had led the party since its inception and even before that - since 1915 when the International Socialist League was formed - had to turn themselves right round and reject their former colleagues and make an approach to blacks whom they had no real contact with or experience.

But I belong to a later generation, you see - many of them were outsiders - they were people from Europe or - but Eddie Roux and myself were South Africans - we had no difficulty.

J.F. I'm trying to bring in the non-racialism and looking at the issues of nationalism, the democratic national struggle and the class struggle, and if you looked at the ANC youth league period you saw that the nationalism, the Africanism came to the fore - I'm just wondering what your experience was then - what the views were, what the debates were - did you have any contact with those people - was that mainly Transvaal or how did you in the Cape look at this - were you worried when you saw the Lembede kind of philosophy coming to the fore - even Mandela and Tambo at their early stages - Mandela himself admits in an essay - he's quoted widely as saying that he had been an anti-communist, that he shifted....

J.S. Yes, he was - that was - that was Matthews, young Matthews - Joe Matthews, who was at Fort Hare and who was criticising the communists - there was a whole spate of - of criticism coming from various quarters, most vociferously from the Unity Movement, headed by Tabata, and Tsotsi in the Cape, who denounced the communists as members of the herrenvolk and described us as people who were trying to mislead the blacks, so we were accustomed to this - and they did it very effectively.

We had to reply to them and combat them, not physically but intellectually, so politics wasn't a simple one - we were being hammered from the Coloured and African radicals as well as from the white side, and that one accepted as the inevitable - you can divide South Africans in this era - area as liberals, conservative and radical, and socialists as liberals and conservative, and nationalists likewise.

Now the radical ones are those who want to transform the society not only in terms of the racial mixture but also the socio-economic structure, move away from capital to some form of socialism - the conservative labour people were those in the white Labour Party who wanted to get their place in parliament but had no intention of giving blacks any power - white liberals would be conservative like the PFP - they don't bring about a change in the socio-economic structure, but they are prepared to work with blacks towards some kind of a political system that would combine all groups.

But radical liberals would also go further and bring about changes in the political struc - in the economic structure. Now I've tried to classify people, and one learns to distinguish them - there - on the left there are radicals and there are conservatives - that's the main message - now the same is true of nationalists, black nationalists - there were some who were conservative - yes, one can think of Lembede - Lembede wasn't a comm - a socialist in outlook - he wanted to do the Booker Washington stuff and build up African businessmen.

He said that only when we had achieved this could we meet the whites on an equal plane - now we - we rejected that - we thought it false - it was an illusion, it couldn't happen - and anyway it would perpetuate the class divisions - we were fighting against these as well as against racial repression, so we had a pretty clear idea where our friends were and where our enemies.

J.F. And did you - were you - did you think it was necessary and was it possible to try to combat that offensive coming from Lembede - did....

J.S. Yes....

J.F. reactionary - did you - what did you deal - how did you deal with it - did you write, did you....

J.S. I wrote - I - we wrote stuff - I - I had discussions with Coloured people, Unity Movement people, the New Era Fellowship - I talked to teachers in Langa, in the location, in Worcester - I went round addressing them on platforms and putting forward the idea of a united front against the nationalist capitalist offensive which was launched, putting across this idea, and that was consistent with what we had done and what we'd preached and what we are doing today.

J.S. You know, people in United States who are looking for some kind of subtle plot, mysterious attempt by the communists to penetrate the ANC, are quite mad - they don't know anything about the history - the relationship between the two groups goes back to the very beginning of radical leftism - that is when the whites in the International Socialist League, 1917, 1919, there was contact between socialists and African nationalists, as I'm sure you'd find if you took the history of America it would be the same thing there.

It was (?) a natural tendency of the radical, the socialist, is to look around for contact with people who represent the mass of the working class, and once the communists had turned away from the white workers and orientated themselves to the blacks, this would be the logical thing to do. Yes, we - we - we dealt with the tendencies - we wrote articles criticising an article say, by Joe Matthews, and pointing out where in our opinion he was wrong - we commented on all these trends.

You know, we had various journals (?) - Freedom was one, Liberation was another - we brought out these pamphlets and periodicals - there's a whole press of that - those days, which existed before the Nationalists banned us.

J.F. Because I'm looking at non-racialism, because I'm trying to look at the class struggle and the racial categories that exist in South Africa, I'll ask the following question - it's not because I'm racially orientated, but I'm wondering if you've ever considered the tendencies to be at all - why, for example, that in the Coloured community you had the Trotskyist views concentrated, that you had the Unity Movement in the Coloured teacher community - you really don't find many Indian adherence to that point of view - very few whites and only - Tabata's really almost - and Honono were the minority - you had a lot of Coloureds - I'm just wondering if - how you would assess the different race groups and the different political tendencies?

J.S. I think they were competing for political power - all my analysis of politics has to do with power - I read early on a book by a chap called Russell, Lord Russell - you know him - philosopher - great man on English (?) philosophy - it was called Power - and he wasn't talking about electric power or motor power - he was talking about social power, political power, and although he was anything but a Marxist he was very definitely not - I read this and I got an insight into what makes politics go, and I think it's a struggle for power - struggle that is to say to get into a position where one can determine the policies and shape the destinies and thinking of other people, that's power.

What was it that the Unity Movement were trying to establish - they were a minority just like the whites - they wanted a base just like the white communists - they looked for the base amongst Africans, as did the white communists - so they were competing with us for influence, and to get that influence to dislodge us from our association with the ANC - they resorted to these tactics, they use racism - they attack us for being members of the herrenvolk - do you know what the word means - so that's racism - white supremacists, that's what we were.

J.S. They - they in fact said a white person couldn't identify with the black struggle - they used an old expression which I've heard thousands of times, blood is thicker than water, meaning you can't trust the white man - I'm sure you had this in - in the States as well - so it's a very simplistic explanation - you might go into all kinds of philosophical arguments, but that to my mind is basically why the Unity Movement wouldn't tolerate any association with communists.

There was another thing - as long as they attacked the Communist Party they had some immunity from police prosecution, which I think in the practicalities of life is something that has to be taken note of.

J.F. When did you actually join the ANC or become more involved with the ANC - you came back, you went to this CP right away, but at what - your....

J.S. I told you, in 1937, '38 I was associating with ANC groups - they were weak in the Western Cape - it was a process of symbiosis, not as definite (?) sitting down and joining it - I grew into it - they knew me, I knew them, I mixed with them in the townships, and we sat together on platforms - I'd attend the cultural life of the Africans in Langa, the township - I went to their concerts, funerals - their burials - I wasn't just there for political purposes. I tried to understand them and become part of them.

END OF SIDE TWO.

J.F. out of themselves - and I'm wondering if you can talk - I guess perhaps maybe you should - perhaps you could speak about that issue you raised the other day, saying that there were two different strands of whites, the missionary liberal and the....

J.S. Yes, I - I worked with them - I - I was a member of the Institute of Race Relations - I sat on the local Cape Town branch - I worked with people like Rheinhalt-Jones, who was a prominent member of the race relations, Molteno, Brookes himself - I didn't have any kind of rejection (dejection) feeling that they were liberals and I should leave them alone - I thought they were doing a certain job - they were spreading information exposing conditions which were adverse to blacks - they weren't my cup of tea - I didn't think that they'd ever be able to bring about a change.

I was a revolutionary - I wanted to bring about change - but I would assist in these areas in the kind of United Front effort the same way as the ANC today works with the churches - people understand that - we haven't got an anti-religious approach - Eddie Roux had a very strong rejection for Christianity and religion - he - he used to conduct campaigns almost single handed - he turned out pamphlets attacking the church - he had a thing about it - I - I never said that - I felt that the church, although it was quiescent and indifferent to the struggle for change, contain the elements of a radical approach.

J.S. And my proposition was that the system of race oppression was so gross in South Africa, so violent that it could not become acceptable, and as the changeover from colonial rule to independence spread throughout Asia, the Pacific, here in Africa, the balance was being tilted against the whites, and the kind of isolation that has now taken place was something that we all anticipated - we foresaw it, and we made it our business to hasten it and bring it about.

Among the people who went abroad and started the campaign against apartheid were - or even before apartheid white supremacy were communists - people like Naidoo from Natal, who was there in 1946 at the....

J.F. M.D.?

J.S. No - no, no - he went on a - with a delegation, Naidoo.

J.F. That's M.D.

J.S. A chap from Natal - trade unionist - he married Pauline Podbury, a white woman - it was a very interesting cross-racial marriage between communist Indians and white radical, right communist women - I - I'll get his name sometime later - anyway he went to New York on a delegation with ANC people, and was there when the Indian government launched its attack on South Africa - the first meeting of the United Nations - denounced the treatment of Indians and Africans, and that secured the passing of a resolution condemning South African racism, the first of its kind - so we were in on it from the outset, and we've always had a great deal of faith in the importance of mobilising international opinion, and believing that this was one of the great achievements of the ANC and - and the communists that it had influenced world opinion - we were always impressed by this, and I think we made a contribution in that direction - who -

Who do you think set up the anti-apartheid groups all over - there was a communist contact - so to people in the United States who speak about communist infiltration we say this is ridiculous, it's unhistorical - there - there was a close relationship between communists and ANC nationalists from the outset because we were working for the same objectives, we faced the same problems, they had the same enemies, and experience has shown us.

That's why the ANC people are so easy with us - they have no difficulty - they don't doubt our sincerity, they don't think we are trying to grab power from them.

J.F. So did you - many white South Africans move through a liberal phase, and that's the reason to work with race relations, the churches etc., but did you yourself not....

J.S. No, I - I'd worked the liberalism through when I was a student, as I explained, in Pretoria studying political philosophy or political science under Brookes - I got rid of that.

J.F. Can we come back to the youth league - you spoke about how you tried to combat it....

J.S. Ja, the anti-communist elements, by writing, by talking.

J.F. I guess what I'd like to ask you about is more the theoretical questions - is non-racialism just an aspect of the ANC's ideology or is it actually an integral component - I'm just interested if you can talk about it - do you see it as - if I say to you I'm writing about non-racialism do you say that's just one aspect of our struggle or do you say no, that's central - do you think it's important to spend time on it?

J.S. What I - I would suggest is that you look at the ANC's constitution - you will see that it has moved towards an open door - you should also examine the composition of the ANC leadership - you will see that it was only in 1985 at the second consultative conference that it accepted non-Africans as members of its national executive - you will also discover that as far back as 1969 the ANC conference had taken a resolution that at some stage or another it would be correct thing to admit whites and Coloured and Indians, but the decision to do this would be vested in the president and he himself and he only could decide when, and he took him all those years from '69 to '85 to make the decision - there is the very courses (?)

And at the 1985 consultative conference there was opposition coming from a number of people inside the conference, including communist members who were saying it's not time to open the door, that this would only upset the applecart of people inside South Africa, saying that we should consult Mandela and the other prisoners before we taking this step - very cautious - ANC's like that, slow - it may be revolutionary in its aspirations and its determination and its will, but it's very cautious about moving.

J.F. Is the discussion of non-racialism synonymous with the discussion of the national question?

J.S. Yes, it is very much so - let me explain that point - Oliver Tambo in the last couple of years has been making a great issue about representing all sections of the population - you might say that the ANC's development politically and morally went through the phase first of all of trying to unite all the races and tribes of Africa, which as you know was the aim set out in the regional constitution, focusing attention on blacks - then it went through a period of trying to bring about political changes through constitutional processes.

A third phase which coincides with this period of the 1940s that I refer to, it becomes more militant and radical approach - they not now only want to have a share of political power, they want - they thinking in terms of votes for all, which would mean the majority vote - you see, the communists had launched this in 1928 - we were pioneers in that respect - nobody else had ever come forward with this notion of a black republic and a black majority.

So the ANC moves (moved) slowly towards the idea eventually that it represented not only blacks but all people in South Africa - now once it got onto that notion the logical thing was for it to say : All right, we'll have all members, members of all racial groups in our organisation - that's the note that Oliver Tambo is - now is pressing (?) - he's saying, and he spread (?) this in his January 8th. speech - he's inviting whites, he's inviting everybody to join - and that is an evolutionary process, and I think it - the affects (?) are feeling that we are moving towards a position where we will in fact take responsibility for running the country, and that means we must have the co-operation of all sections of the population in a very active way, so that the admission of non-Africans into the leadership perhaps sub-consciously - I'm not saying it's a deliberate thing that they sat down to think out - represents this feeling that we are reaching a change (?) in the power structure, and we'll need to mobilise everybody.

And there's plenty of evidence to show that there are whites who are prepared to come out and join us and go to prison for long time.

- J.F. I'm just eager that it not come across as in any way opportunistic that now it can work, now you need the whites, so they come....
- J.S. Yes....
- J.F. I'd just like you as a theoretician to tell me how it actually has an ideological, theoretical base - is non-racialism a kind of overlay showing what nice open-minded people the ANC are, or does it actually relate to the core ideology of a movement which is a democratic national movement which seemingly the majority of the people in the country have voiced support for moving towards this in a socialistic direction, so how does non-racialism fit in with the ideological beliefs - not just the practical pragmatic means that you say : Of course we want to mobilise, there has to be a place - there're four and a half million of the whites etc. - how is it in fact ideologically rooted, so very, very different from an Africanist PAC view, which claims to have its own ideology - what is the ANC ideology that calls for the involvement of all the population groups?
- J.S. I would say there's an element of opportunism - some ANC people would make use of whites in order to get into power - there's no guarantee that if they were in power they would retain this base - they might want to grab all the positions in the - the cabinet - this has happened elsewhere - it happened in Zambia - it's going to happen in Zimbabwe when the 20 seats which are reserved are pushed out - it'll be very hard for whites to get into the political arena at the top level - might happen to us.

But we as non-racists, and the communists are very strong on this - more even than the ordinary ANC - will try our best to build bridges, create alliances, cement an ideological network - and how do we do this - through Marxism, which is anti-racist - we think that in order to combat racism it's necessary to spread the notion of a Marxist ideology, which is why I work in the department of political education in the ANC, and also in the department of education itself, because I believe that education is the medium through which we can change people's ideologies.

I've got a - a kind of 19th. century faith in the power of education - I believe in it because there's no - nothing else to do - how else can we change people - you can't force them, you have to convince them - so my primary function is that of an educator - I was that at the university - I've remained that throughout all my life - I think that's the answer to it, and I'm sure that my colleagues would have the same opinion, and a large section of the ANC would feel the same way - they -

They asked me to go out to the camps to teach Marxism as far back as 1977 - I left the university in '75 - '77 they asked me to go there, and I spent some time there - and they asked me to teach Marxism - not just history of the struggle or liberation theory, which is theology, but, if you like, Marxist theology, and they wanted it - why - because the people who were coming out from South Africa after the Soweto uprising of '76, they were wanting it, and they asked for it.

It wasn't a dodge on the part of the leadership - it was pressure from below - they wanted it, and I think that's important.

- J.S. Now you see, if you talking about racism and so on, and you must regard the ideology of Marxism, Leninism as an antidote to pure racism - no person who accepts a Marxist outlook can be a racist - he may be all kinds of things, a deviationist in many other ways, but he can't logically equate a Marxist, Leninist outlook with the notion that some races are superior to others, so when the - the people in the Unity Movement or in the PAC and so on preach this whitism and say that they want to get rid of non-Africans that only indicates the primitive nature of their political understanding.
- J.F. So what was it like going to camps - you talked about what your students were like at Cape Town - what were these students like to teach - how did they respond to you?
- J.S. No, I liked it very much - I suppose in a way I'd always wanted to teach blacks rather than whites, and this was an opportunity, and it was given to me because I'd been kicked out of the University of Cape Town, so I could shift to a different area of education - I'm a teacher - this is my trade - that was fine (?)
- J.F. Because those are - not only is it that they're blacks, because you said you had blacks who were petty bourgeois - these are blacks who'd come out of an experiential readiness to accept and understand....
- J.S. There is a difference, you know - I was in the camp with about 500 people, and I was the only white person there - the only one - that's the difference between that environment and speaking to a mixed crowd of students in Cape Town, where the structure is dominated by white institutions where the institution itself is white, so there's a big difference.
- J.F. Can you just finish off what you were saying about being the only white there - I don't want to leave you just....
- J.S. Well, that is so - that's all - finish - there was no other white person in the camp.
- J.F. I'm just interested in the kind of response from people like the Unity Movement when they say : Oh, the ANC has this four nations thesis - it seems there's always been the question of how far should you go in setting up non-racial organisations within the framework of a liberation movement - the Indian Congress, the Coloured people organisations - even now you have organisations that are exclusively white, that are like JODAC - how does this fit in theoretically....
- J.S. I personally disapprove of JODAC - I understand the reasons for the congress alliance, but it seemed to me always that it was a make-shift arrangement and shouldn't be continued, and in fact when the ANC was banned the whole thing collapsed - I - I believe that JODAC is another attempt to revive it in order to give dissident or (?) - not dissident, radical whites a home.
- J.F. But is there such thing as a four nations thesis in the ANC?
- J.S. No, never was.
- J.F. So you would say that there was a use for the different organisations in the '50s but now there's no use for them any more?
- J.S. I think that the congress alliance came about as a result of a number of historical circumstances, starting with the banning of the CP.

- J.S. And this was an attempt to create organisations in which militants of different groups could combine - the ANC would have been embarrassed by having to associate with people who were communists and are known to be such - so it was convenient for them to - it was a ploy during a certain period of time - it ended with the banning of the ANC - it ended at Morogora in '69 - if you read the Morogora thesis you'll see there's no question now of a separate home for different racial groups - there's talk about a revolutionary committee council, RC, on which people will be represented even although they are not members of the NEC executive - that comes much later.
- J.F. But Billy Nair is in the Natal Indian Congress - is that - do you disapprove of that?
- J.S. No, we accept it - we are....
- J.F. But now he's....
- J.S. Yes, we are all for national movements if they can function - we have no objection - National Indian Congress is an old established institution - it has a history, and we approve of people working within it for the general aims - if there were a Coloured organisation of the same kind we'd similarly approve it, but we don't think the Coloured are a nation - it isn't a national group - we think the Coloured aspired to become incorporated in the white group, unlike the Indians.
- J.F. I just hope I've - I'll leave it now, but I hope that I've dealt theoretically with the non-racialism issue - I think empirically and experientially I've spoken - interviewed a lot of people who've spoken about it, but there're few who can articulate....
- J.S. But you must define your own concept of the ideology of non-racialism - what is it you want to find - we don't think as communists, as Marxists, that the racial issue is the basic - we think it's an offshoot of the class struggle, and once you grasp that there's no difficulty in seeing that race is a derivative - however much people may think it's primary, it's not primary in our opinion - in the opinion of nationalists it may be so - that's the difference - if you just conclude by saying that nationalism per se anywhere has no ultimate explanation of social change, which I mentioned to you before, was the basic issue.
- The nationalists want to achieve power - they want to take possession of the society, but for what purpose - what is it that the Afrikaaner nationalists want - they want to have power for themselves, but they don't know which way to turn with the society - what kind of society are they going to perceive - do they perceive - I think African nationalism is like that - you can't see beyond the stage where it achieves power - what does it do with it when it gets it - do you know.
- All right, when they talk about doing away with race discrimination - that's all we - we agree (?) but what ultimately comes out of that, and how do you do away with race discrimination - that's our problem in the ANC - I think the - the Marxists have an answer - maybe not satisfactory - who can have an answer - no possibility - no one possibility - there are options, but we have aligned - we - we have a clarity - we think that in the ultimate end there will be a restructuring of the whole society and participation of all groups in a system that will move towards the breaking down of class barriers.

J.S. As long as there are classes there will be racial and national divisions - may I say that's my final word.

END OF INTERVIEW.