



**RECORDING THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE IN  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Oral History Project of the Alan Paton Centre,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Pietermaritzburg Campus**

**Interview with Radley Keys  
conducted by Ruth Lundie  
at the Alan Paton Centre  
on 3 July 1998**

The interviewee has agreed to open access for use by researchers,  
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**ALAN PATON CENTRE****“RECORDING THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE IN KWAZULU-NATAL”****ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE ALAN PATON CENTRE,****UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG.****INTERVIEW WITH RADLEY KEYS,****CONDUCTED BY RUTH LUNDIE ON 3 JULY 1998**

(Edited, corrected version.)

(‘K’ SHALL SIGNIFY THE INTERVIEWEE AND ‘L’ THE INTERVIEWER)

11 L: This is an interview with Radley Keys, at the Alan Paton Centre, on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1998. Radley,  
12 when did your political awakening start?

13 K: I would imagine it goes back really to my mother and my grandmother - their sense of justice  
14 and that was the seed. Politically it awoke more in the army and then more vigorously and  
15 more blatantly in the scholasticate with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. I was a student for  
16 the priesthood from 1974 through to 1977. And in 1976, during the Soweto uprising we  
17 lived in community in the St Joseph’s Scholasticate in Cedara. We were studying philosophy,  
18 which involved contact with philosophy and contact with issues and how that impacted on  
19 our faith and that was to be analysed according to our thinking. In 1976 the electricity within  
20 this Scholasticate, within our community was very static. We had a tremendous bond and  
21 almost a despair at what was happening in the country. So, also, in those days in South  
22 Africa, if you lived in a multi-racial community you were considered as an odd ball. And  
23 when I did my pre-novitiate I was living in multi-racial communities of Black and White  
24 students together and we were always looked at very strangely from Black and White people,  
25 because they had been brainwashed into believing that this is not the done thing. So, we  
26 really experienced first-hand, each other’s worlds, over the years, from 1973 right through  
27 till now - always having lived in community in mixed races.

28 L: And this was awakening generally in the country after the 1960s when the whole country had  
29 been so severely repressed.

- 1 K: Absolutely...
- 2 L: Under Government.
- 3 K: In the 70s the giant was awakening, ja.
- 4 L: Yes, and with young people particularly.
- 5 K: Yes, and one sensed that in the students because we were young in 1976, I was just over  
6 twenty, as were my counterparts in the Scholasticate. And we were more aware of the  
7 political catastrophe facing us. The dimensions in the society that we lived in because we had  
8 that daily contact with each other came from Sotho, Zulu, English, Afrikaans, Xhosa  
9 backgrounds, even international backgrounds - which helped give us that international  
10 perspective.
- 11 L: And SASO was beginning then you see - the Black Consciousness Movement and that would  
12 have had some effect.
- 13 K: Indeed. Indeed, and then, well I left the Scholasticate in '77 and I went to work for what is  
14 called the Young Christian Worker Movement, the YCW. Now, interestingly, during that  
15 year of 1977, it was actually 1978, that's the same time that the old Union Movement, which  
16 was - it wasn't a trade union movement, it was really in-house management liaison  
17 committees with workers, and then ...
- 18 L: You mean a trade union movement?
- 19 K: There was no trade union movement. In '78 the trade union movement started getting  
20 together and in '79 the trade union movement was legalised. So through my working in the  
21 Young Christian Worker Movement where the whole emphasis of the YCW was to train  
22 young workers who were just leaving school, or who had left school, we trained them in  
23 leadership qualities, and leadership abilities, through a very clear method, presented by the  
24 YCW. It's an international organisation so we had international links. But we chose the  
25 wrong year to work with the YCW because in 1978 - the repression that started in '77, with  
26 Biko's death and other activists, moved on anybody that questioned the government.  
27 Anybody that dared to criticise the government was considered Communist, a danger to the  
28 security of the state and so we, the YCW, were labelled that as well. Never mind we were  
29 the Christian Worker Movement, we were still considered Communist and tools of the - a

1 revolution.

2 L: I'm sure your international affiliations would make you more dangerous than ever.

3 K: Oh, absolutely, but it was also our saving grace. Because a lot of internal resistance to  
4 apartheid was stifled because they were just localised units - NGOs we call them today. The  
5 organisations had had no links outside the country and the YCW had international links. The  
6 president of the YCW, Phelelo Magane, I still remember him very clearly, he was detained  
7 without trial for nine months during that year and I'm sure he wouldn't have been alive if we  
8 didn't have the international links.

9 L: To bring pressure?

10 K: To bring pressure. We had simple things like a Christmas card campaign, where across the  
11 world, YCW was invited to send Christmas cards to our president of the YCW, in jail, and  
12 there were hundreds and thousands of Christmas cards pouring into the jail where he was  
13 actually being held and then they realised that this wasn't just a young Black activist who  
14 could easily be ....

15 L: Not at all....

16 K: ...He had links, not only nationally, but internationally, so I think those international links  
17 were both the saving grace as well as our condemnation as being a...

18 L: Yes, being a lot of reds.

19 K: And the training of workers was not the thing to do.

20 L: Not at all, I mean they - well you're still in a country where, you know, education up to  
21 Standard Three was the idea.

22 K: Absolutely. We picked up on that end of Bantu Education and gave people - well it involved  
23 literacy skills, it involved speaking skills, it involved analytical skills, and leadership skills -  
24 so it went right through it in a very sound and logical way.

25 L: It was teaching people to think for themselves, which was what Bantu Education didn't do.

26 K: I don't think any education in South Africa did that for anybody. I think my education started  
27 in my tertiary education, in the Scholasticate. My schooling in the government school in  
28 South Africa gave me no ability to think for myself. It gave me technical abilities, how to  
29 multiply, deal with scientific matter et cetera.

- 1 L: You were lucky you did those years in the Scholasticate.
- 2 K: Oh yes, it was the - and it still remains -
- 3 L: A treasure?
- 4 K: ...the anchor of my life, because having gone through the YCW, we couldn't have meetings  
5 in our normal venues we had a little yellow combi and we'd drive that to the beach and have  
6 a meeting in the combi because our telephones were bugged, we were being followed by the  
7 Security Police, our leadership was being detained. And so we had to be very careful not to  
8 put young workers in danger of being prosecuted and persecuted. So we had very  
9 surreptitious meetings in different parts which we're sure made the Security Police think we  
10 were even more dangerous. But we were merely giving young people - tools - to lead their  
11 lives more efficiently and more effectively than they were. And you see - I am left with one  
12 humorous example - I was in KwaMashu one day and then I had to go from a Branch meeting  
13 of the YCW to Warwick Avenue where we had another group, and then I had to go and see  
14 somebody else. And I was being followed by the Police so they put their uniformed people  
15 on to me and when I came out of the block of flats that I had gone in to, and he stopped me  
16 and started searching me and smelling my hands and checking if I wasn't trading in 'dagga'.
- 17 L: What did he find on your hands? I was sort of thinking of gunpowder...
- 18 K: No, they were smelling for dagga and they frisked me and - it's just ironic. They used any  
19 means to harass people. Young activists who came and became a part of the YCW groups -  
20 their parents were very fearful for them because at the time then anybody that dared to  
21 criticise was quickly whisked away and disappeared from society. Parents were very fearful  
22 for their children; we had to constantly meet with parents to say 'look, this is a church  
23 organisation dealing with training your children to help them in their life.' I think the - it was  
24 a revolution of a sort - a revolution of making it in the real world - they call it empowerment  
25 today, but we didn't call it that then - a sense of their integrity and their identity for their life  
26 and that was what the problem was for the government. They didn't want, like I said, people  
27 to think for themselves, people to analyse, people to challenge.
- 28 L: And they didn't want people to have a purpose in their lives...
- 29 K: No, no, they just had to be like Verwoerd and ...

- 1 L: Yes, obedient.
- 2 K: Mmm, and I was with the YCW for 1978, '79, '80, '81...
- 3 L: That's also an invaluable training.
- 4 K: Absolutely! Now I would travel from Durban to 'Maritzburg, to Newcastle on a motorcycle -  
5 in summer and in winter! And go and meet with YCW groups - we had one at Edendale  
6 Technical College, we had one at Macibisa, we had three or four inside town, in Eastwood,  
7 in Northdale, in town. And then we started Escourt and Newcastle and I was on that  
8 motorbike more than I was off it!
- 9 L: I'm sure you were.
- 10 K: And the cold in the winter, and it would rain in the summer, but you get used to those things,  
11 because people who have gone through that process - people like Bishop Qcubaso? - was a  
12 YCW member. And there's others, like Cele, Siphon Cele, who is now - was an organiser for  
13 COSATU, I mean we had - a lot of people who've gone through training and have actually  
14 taken leadership positions in different organisations.
- 15 L: Oh, indeed. I've been interviewing about Sobantu and the influence of the YCW and the  
16 church instruction - it's coming through very much with the youth groups there.
- 17 K: Absolutely. And it's a very sound training for life. It's magnificent. That was the revolution  
18 the government didn't want.
- 19 L: So, this was until when? '80?
- 20 K: '81. And then I got too old to be part of the Young Christian Workers.
- 21 L: Oh. Oh, bad luck there - it happens to all of us.
- 22 K: So I had to look around and during that time too I was studying through UNISA, so while  
23 I was working for the YCW I would study in the evenings whenever I could, do my  
24 assignments, post it at four o'clock in the morning to be there on time ...
- 25 L: Quite a hard time, yes.
- 26 K: So we - I was able to do three-quarters of my degree by correspondence. I then had to find  
27 a source of income and employment - for a few months I went to work for the municipality  
28 and I decided 'No, that's not my kettle of fish.' Answering queries about water and  
29 electricity and accounts and all that sort of thing. So I cancelled that and went into teaching.

1 I was offered a post at Woodlands, at the Haythorne High School and I taught physical  
2 science there for two and a half years - to Standard Eight, Nine and Ten.

3 L: And that would have a big educative value for you too - living out at - you know -  
4 Woodlands and Haythorne High. Woodlands has had a tremendous political influence on  
5 young people in this town.

6 K: Yes.

7 L: Awareness - you see...

8 K: Awareness - it is a community that is aware of what's going on and leaders - there have been  
9 excellent leaders coming out of Woodlands.

10 L: And they've been taught how to read the newspapers and so on and so forth.

11 K: Yes, I was an assistant boarding master in the hostel.

12 L: Even better.

13 K: So I was ...

14 L: You knew what was what.

15 K: So I was seeing what was going on inside and saw the better and the worst part of life. I must  
16 say I was very - I must have had some excellent students because during the two and a half  
17 years I was teaching, I had only one student who failed science.

18 L: Is that all?

19 K: Ja, it's...

20 L: Wonderful! That was really very good.

21 K: So it was - and then I was put onto physical education and I had to do religious education as  
22 well - so they loaded me a bit much and I found I was - my frustration in teaching at that time  
23 was of working under what was called the 'Coloured Education Department' - it was  
24 administered from Cape Town, through Durban to 'Maritzburg - and for six months you're  
25 living without a salary, it was most difficult.

26 L: I'm sure it was.

27 K: But my frustration in teaching essentially was, you educated people to walk the streets. And  
28 I needed to make a decision and I made that decision. I wanted to be more pro-active than  
29 just helping people get some education and then ...

- 1 L: And doing this while you were educating them in science..
- 2 K: Ja. I then decided I must move into - I applied for two positions. One was organiser for the  
3 Progressive Federal Party and the other one was Organiser for the Community Awareness  
4 Programme of the Municipality.
- 5 L: Oh yes - tell a bit about that.
- 6 K: I went for both interviews and both of them wanted me - so then I had to apply my mind and  
7 say 'right - where shall I go?' And I needed to - in those days I was thinking I needed to go  
8 into the arena where pressure could be brought on decision-making in the country. I could  
9 never go with the National Party. I had, up to that time, never involved myself in intra-  
10 parliamentary activities - in the YCW. Phelelo Magane - the same guy I was telling that was  
11 detained, up to the 1980s, '81, I'd never involved myself in elections, voting, never. And  
12 Phelelo Magane said to me - after his detention, it was - he said to me, and Whites - White  
13 members and friends tried to convince me of these points, you know... He said to me 'we sat  
14 in jail for nine and a half months - we meditated on a lot of things.' If it wasn't for his faith  
15 he would have gone mad. He said 'Wherever we can bring pressure to bear on the  
16 government, we must do it.' You can't sit in a little ivory tower and pretend to have clean  
17 hands. And as he says 'Anybody that had the vote should use it to bring pressure on the  
18 government, anybody that didn't have the vote would have to use any other means to bring  
19 pressure on the government.' So he had - both - he saw both strategies as acceptable. Attack  
20 from within and without and we debated this for weeks and eventually I came around to see  
21 that - ja - it can apply to me as well.
- 22 L: Did he have any particular political affiliations?
- 23 K: At that time - it was in the late seventies - early eighties - anybody that did have any political  
24 affiliations to the ANC wouldn't say it to anybody. Because ...
- 25 L: No, no. It was too dangerous.
- 26 K: ...the pressure was too great.
- 27 L: Yes, it was too dangerous.
- 28 K: Too fresh in their minds were the deaths of Steve Biko and seventeen others that died, at the  
29 hands of the police. Purely for being in opposition. So - well, I knew that they were very



- 1 active in YCW - we had the same goal to train people to take over leadership positions.
- 2 L: Of course, and I mean it was a - an inheritance from 1912 onwards really.
- 3 K: And we were all - anti-government - within the YCW. We couldn't see any good in the  
4 government and I still can't - seeing what was good in those days? Coming into teaching I  
5 then went back to my - had to go to meditate for a while - try to see where would I be most  
6 effective and where can I make a little contribution to the betterment of our society? I then  
7 chose the PFP as an organ. Went into the PFP and at that time - in 1966... the what was it  
8 called - the m - political interference - non-...
- 9 L: Oh! Improper Interference Act...
- 10 K: Improper Political Interference Act was introduced and the Black members of the Progressive  
11 Party would have been prosecuted if they stayed within that party - so it wasn't aimed at the  
12 Party - it was aimed at Black individuals.
- 13 L: Black and White. Political Collusion.
- 14 K: Ja. So that's how - when the Liberal Party decided to...?
- 15 L: That's when we decided to disband because we weren't willing to go on.
- 16 K: Right, and the Progressive Party decided, as a body, with their Black membership and White  
17 membership that the Progressive Party should continue and the Black members will stand on  
18 the sideline. In 1983 I decided to go to start working - that was the referendum year - in  
19 1984 I applied for the position of organiser. I got it - they welcomed me. They saw my  
20 training in YCW as unique and my background and so on...
- 21 L: Valuable.
- 22 K: And so I got into the position and I looked at it, and I joined it because I saw there was a  
23 non-racial philosophy in the PFP - a philosophy I hold. Go into the PFP and people from the  
24 '66 to '83/'84 (era) had sort of forgotten practical non-racial (behaviour). Because I had  
25 come from non-racial, or multi-racial communities all the time...
- 26 L: Societies ... yes ...
- 27 K: And I got into the PFP at that time and it was very much a White enclave and I remember the  
28 looks I got when my friends, who were not White, came to visit me in the office. And they  
29 sort of looked with suspicion ...'what's - who is this ...who's that?' But over the years, it

1 became more and more integrated. Immediately we started on the outreach programme and  
2 that's when I started working with Black Councillors in Imbali, with the amakosi at  
3 Vulindlela, the leadership figures within COSATU, or as it was in those days, FOSATU, and  
4 I kept my contacts from those days, like Jay Naidoo, who was the local organiser for  
5 FOSATU. So we had - during my YCW days, the Minister of Finance, now?

6 L: Trevor Manuel?

7 K: Sorry, his deputy...? Alec Irwin.

8 L: Oh, Alec Irwin.

9 K: Yes, he gave us a few lectures on the Trade Union Movement - 1978. He introduced - he  
10 was very much part of the initiatives on...

11 L: I've always thought he was awfully good, yes.

12 K: Yes, he used - he was in the - at the start of the Trade Union Movement in the country - the  
13 second ...

14 L: Second time - because the first time was in the 1940s...

15 K: When you had the ICU?

16 L: Yes, and Gwala, and co, working up at Howick and so on.

17 K: Right and Champion and everybody else that was going. So, when I saw these guys going  
18 up to parliament - I thought well, they were in the YCW - that's trained people they are.

19 L: Good!

20 K: But going through those years outreach was looking into trying to bring people from different  
21 backgrounds into a political understanding. Not coalition, because there was no ways - sure  
22 the PFP and Inkatha cultural movement at the time, would have meetings on a local level.  
23 I got to know people within the IFP - what was then Inkatha - now it is the IFP. I got to  
24 know them in different parts of the Midlands - I got to know community leaders from my  
25 having worked within the YCW. I got civic leaders and people like that also to meet with  
26 Progressive Party members and that's when I think the PFP in this region started to actually  
27 develop a cross-cultural - ja, and span the racial divide. But - then I was very encouraged by  
28 the support given to me by a large number of PFP members at the time. Some members were  
29 a little bit hesitant, but some of the members even tried to get me kicked out for that.

- 1 L: Oh really? Did some think you were going much too fast?
- 2 K: Yes, and but the Chairman at the time was very clear and so he said 'No.' And we had some  
3 good members of parliament and they supported me on the outreach programme. And  
4 unbeknown to me - that network that we set up was the most useful vehicle to monitor the  
5 violence that started in '85, '86, '87.
- 6 L: Because these were vital years for the Midlands.
- 7 K: Absolutely.
- 8 L: Absolutely vital. The church was playing a larger part there - because everything else was  
9 shut down, as you might say.
- 10 K: Everything else was shut down. The only avenues for political dissent were the Church and  
11 the Trade Unions.
- 12 L: And the NGOs.
- 13 K: And the NGOs could do .....
- 14 L: They could do a little something.
- 15 K: And my activities aggravated the Police very much. I remember Vlok castigating me from  
16 the privileges of parliament and saying - it's in Hansard somewhere - in the A,B,C -  
17 but we'd developed good communication between COSATU at the time, between Inkatha,  
18 between different parties. And the PFP didn't see itself as a contender within Black politics,  
19 as long as the political organisations were detained or banned ... So it was a sort of purist  
20 thought in the PFP at the time - we won't go into the Black community to organise -  
21 politically until it's - everybody's able to do that.
- 22 L: Available to - yes.
- 23 K: And I think it is a worthy moral standard (that) was taken by the PFP, but ...
- 24 L: Rather an intellectual stand?.... from a Black point of view?
- 25 K: Yes, it sort of - and for me - I just went in and I made the contacts and I got involved with  
26 the communities who worked with me. I got to know people who really - Khaba Mkhize and  
27 myself go back right from those years - early '80s - right through the conflict that developed  
28 from '85, in the form of the bus drivers and the commuters and the - when the buses were  
29 attacked and then the bus drivers would go - everybody on a bus and they would go and

- 1 clobber anybody who stoned the bus. And so the stoning of buses started in '83.
- 2 L: You remember it a clearly as that - oh, I didn't - yes, of course.
- 3 K: That was also the time when the IFP and the UDF starting squaring up more.
- 4 L: Yes, the UDF was taking shape then.
- 5 K: When the - well, the UDF, in 1983 was formed because of the Tricameral system...And, but  
6 it hadn't got its act together and the IFP, Inkatha, was starting to make inroads into non-IFP  
7 areas. I call it IFP - but it was Inkatha Cultural Movement. The UDF of course didn't endear  
8 itself to Inkatha from its very beginning ... the UDF called anybody that was involved in  
9 government as sellouts and stooges. And that was an insult to every member of Inkatha and  
10 they took it personally and they saw it as an insult to their leader which they took even more  
11 personally.
- 12 L: Touchy crowd.
- 13 K: Yes, I mean somebody criticises our leader in the Democratic Party and we say that's part of  
14 the game, but not them, and it was a matter of honour and duty to actually re-establish the  
15 integrity of the leadership. And also the leadership in the UDF and Inkatha were never ever  
16 singing the same tune.
- 17 L: You know but - they were totally different in that the UDF was an alignment of anti-  
18 government forces joining together because the situation forced them into it.
- 19 K: And that was one strategy that they chose - that is ex-outside of the system, opposition to the  
20 government outside of the system. Inkatha was saying 'opposition to the government from  
21 within.' And that's where the - and that's also for me , I think the most disastrous waste of  
22 human life that that caused because in the end, you had thousands and thousands of people  
23 killed in the bloody conflict and at the end of the day you've got still, those who were inside  
24 and those who were outside trying to sort things out now. So, for me in a war like that - and  
25 it was a war - it was a low-intensity war.
- 26 L: It was a low-intensity conflict and not acknowledged as such.
- 27 K: No. And when we, we exposed it from our monitoring position - from 1985, '86, '87 I  
28 started making a lot more noise publicly because everybody else was too scared to put  
29 anything in the press. The only way I could do it was write a letter to the police and send the

1 same letter to the press and they would have published it that way. So, I was hauled into the  
2 Security Police Headquarters a couple of times. They didn't dare arrest me because I was  
3 part of the official opposition, you know - in that sense it was useful to have parliament. And  
4 we could expose it and I think that our members of parliament were ingenious in the way they  
5 exposed certain atrocities and got it into the public view. While the police were trying to  
6 squash it all the time, but what was said in parliament you could print, we could print it out  
7 at once. We used that - and I pumped information from this office to parliament and then the  
8 press release - internationally we also got publicity that way. But those contacts within the  
9 IFP - Inkatha - and within COSATU, within civic associations, it doesn't matter how much  
10 I tried, or how anybody else tried, it sort of - hounding people to say 'Look, let's not fulfil  
11 government's dream of a Black-on-Black conflict.' The government was just pumping that  
12 view all the time - 'oh, it's just Black-on-Black conflict.' It was manipulated and managed by  
13 the government and we kept saying - well, I kept saying that even certain members within the  
14 PFP at the time were saying 'No, I'm wrong.' And I said, it is clear to me when I go into  
15 Edendale and I see an IFP - Inkatha - march escorted by the police into a non-Inkatha area.  
16 I then say 'what is the agenda of the government?' They're using the police to intentionally  
17 destabilise ... If a UDF grouping wanted to have a meeting to elect a committee, that meeting  
18 was banned, it was shambocked apart. So much so, I - in Macibisa (the tape goes blank for  
19 a while) ...in Henryville School, well, no, they - members of the Macibisa community came  
20 to me in the office - we had the old office in Harwin's Arcade - you might remember that?

21 L: I do remember it.

22 K: The old rickety stairs...

23 L: I do remember that very well.

24 K: Ja, so we had an office there and they said 'Look we need a committee to be established, we  
25 can't get our meetings together because the police are constantly harassing us and they won't  
26 let us meet. They're chasing us apart and they're banning this and they're banning that.' I  
27 said to them 'All right, let's have a PFP meeting - in Macibisa?'

28 L: Oh, what a good idea! I like that.

29 K: So they said 'Mmm, okay and what will you do?' 'I'll bring a member of parliament, we'll

- 1 talk about pensions, we'll talk about this and then you can address the community and have  
2 the election of the committee.'
- 3 L: Excellent! What a good idea Radley.
- 4 K: So we all arrived on the day - I had a couple of lawyers and myself and a member of  
5 parliament and we got the full school hall - and we had a talk and we said 'here's the lawyer  
6 who can deal with pensions - and this lawyer can deal with UIF, and then - here's your  
7 community leader, he'd like to make an announcement...' And I saw the police arriving. So  
8 I went straight out to the police - with my notebook - and I took the number of the vehicle  
9 and I took the name of the policeman and immediately that makes them most accountable in  
10 their own eyes.. So they said 'What's this going on here?' And I said 'Well, the PFP has  
11 called a public meeting - we are looking at establishing - getting ...a community ... an advice  
12 centre going and a committee to make sure that everything runs smoothly.' He said 'Why are  
13 you taking my name?' And I said 'No, it's our normal practice. Just in case anything happens,  
14 we can use your name as a reference to parliament to make sure that nothing untoward has  
15 happened.'
- 16 L: Wise as serpents.
- 17 K: So, they just stayed outside and the committee was elected duly.
- 18 L: Were the people nervous inside?
- 19 K: They were, but there was a growing sense of defiance of oppression.
- 20 L: Good, you see this was excellent about it.
- 21 K: And people started to say 'Right, there's nothing that we can't do. It is better to suffer with  
22 hope than to suffer without hope.' Suffer like that is doing something - and so we got that  
23 going - it's just a small thing that happened in Macibisa - the committee got established and  
24 was able to operate for a couple of years more. After a year they had to re-assess it - but ...
- 25 L: It didn't matter - they did something while they could and it made them see that things could  
26 be done.
- 27 K: Ja, absolutely. And, as you know, in 1987, the beginning of '88, UDF leadership was  
28 detained in the midst of peace talks, and the IFP side was not detained - the UDF - ... and I  
29 then went to speak to Buchner, on a number of issues - to try and get certain of our members

1 released, because certain of our members had also been - Black members who were joining  
2 us - had been detained. I also - we also put pressure on Buchner to say 'Look, what are you  
3 playing at? Here you've got in government - verbally saying they're going to agree to the  
4 peace talks between the UDF and Inkatha and COSATU, and you go and detain their  
5 leadership.' You know, it was Monica's son, Wittenberg, and it was - he was killed at the  
6 hotel in Victoria Road one night?

7 L: Oh, Skumbuza Ngwenya?

8 K: Ngwenya and others - they were detained at the time that the peace talks were starting to take  
9 off. Because we worked closely with COSATU in trying to bring a public awareness to the  
10 level of the conflict that was developing.

11 L: And developing it was.

12 K: It was. Then they brought in '87 - the Kits Konstabels - the -

13 L: Yes, Green Beans weren't they called?

14 K: Yes, and I got Roger Burrows, in parliament to condemn them and the DP was - or was it the  
15 PFP still in those days?

16 L: I was going to say - when did you become DP?

17 K: In '89, so it was '87...

18 L: You were on the way there?

19 K: Ja, I don't know now...

20 L: A couple of years to go...

21 K: Two years, and Roger Burrows made it very clear that these special constables that were  
22 called were not serving this cause of justice to contain the violence or anything.

23 L: Really, they were stooges.

24 K: And we actually came across them in Ashdown, a number of times.

25 L: All over the place, yes.

26 K: Yup.

27 L: And the local people despised them so strongly.

28 K: Absolutely. But they ruled with a gun and might. In '80 - that was '87. '88, then the release  
29 of the detainees, we continued to work. Every time any move towards a peace settlement

1 came, there would be an additional problem that came from Inkatha. So you feel insulted -  
2 the leader or 'Your ANC mouthpiece overseas has denigrated the leader.' or 'The king has  
3 now been put into disrepute.' And I remember clearly there specific times when COSATU  
4 and Inkatha, we were moving to get things together, just before signature, it was thrown out  
5 because of some or other reason. Ad I don't think that the South African government at the  
6 time was innocent, they stirred the pot. They wouldn't like to ...?

7 L: Of course, it suited them, I mean this is the point of low intensity conflict - you do all this in  
8 the background.

9 K: Divide and rule.

10 L: Yes.

11 K: The police, unfortunately, were used as pawns in the game. The army was used as a pawn  
12 and from '87, '88, '89, things were getting progressively worse and it started at Imbali, it  
13 spread to Ashdown - I had people from Ashdown living at my home when I was renting in  
14 Bishopstowe, because they feared being killed. Young boys and men were the targets during  
15 those years of annihilation.

16 L: Yes, absolutely. Now tell me a bit about this because when was Chief Mapumulo killed?  
17 Was this not yet?

18 K: Not yet.

19 L: A bit later, yes? Why did you have your house out at Bishopstowe?

20 K: I wanted to get away from the pressure of town and I thought living out of town would be  
21 ideal - I can get some country air.

22 L: Yes, and it wasn't the plush White suburb.

23 K: No, it wasn't. It was ...

24 L: Was it a smallholding?

25 K: Part of a smallholding where I rented a house and well, I lived in a community as well.

26 L: Yes, well, I mean, you were able to do that you see and in fact it suited you extremely well  
27 as time went by.

28 K: Absolutely, yes. 1990 came along and it's ironical, in the early part of 1990, things started  
29 going awry in Table Mountain. Now all the way from '85 to 1990, Mapumulo's area was a



1 haven for peace, while everywhere else there was violence. Sweetwaters, Impendle,  
2 Greytown, even next door to Table Mountain - in Kwa Ximba, at Wartburg and Kwa Nyavu  
3 and in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, there was political conflict. Mapumulo made it very  
4 clear - it doesn't matter what your politics are, if you want peace, you're welcome. If you  
5 don't want peace, you're not welcome. And I think he was being - of course he and  
6 Buthelezi were arch rivals. Mapumulo was attacked on the steps of the KwaZulu legislature  
7 by members of Amabutho. So he was - there was no love lost between those two and then  
8 the problem started in Table Mountain and I think it was politically manoeuvred, not from  
9 the KwaZulu government, from central government. Mapumulo was starting land claims and  
10 planned legal action against central government. How best to deal with him - get him to be  
11 knocked out. In 1990 we were dealing with the problems...

12 L: This is early 1990?

13 K: Early and it was February the second when FW De Klerk was making his speech. I was in  
14 Table Mountain with the police and a group of people and we were trying to stop them  
15 blowing up and attacking at Kwa Nyavu because the previous night Mapumulo's house was  
16 burnt and a number of people had been shot and we had to get the bodies identified and taken  
17 away..

18 L: And did you have any idea that that speech was coming off that day, and that the ANC was  
19 being unbanned?

20 K: No, we were standing there and of course the State of Emergency was still in existence so we  
21 were trying to pick up the pieces of this to try and prevent a bloodbath starting in the area  
22 (which) we had hoped would continue to be a haven of peace. But it was not to be. The  
23 Dogs of War, I call them, came and they planted their - they formed a committee within Table  
24 Mountain, they got the neighbouring chief to agree that there would be a bit of nyakanyaka.  
25 And Maphumulo's haven was destroyed, his home was burnt, his wife's home was burnt, his  
26 second wife's home was burnt too. We actually had to console the wife of Mapumulo and  
27 organise for transport to get them out of the area.

28 L: And they came into town to have?

29 K: Well, they started in the centre of town where COSATU gave them a building in town. And

1 that became a health hazard, because you had two hundred and something people holed up  
2 living in a little warehouse top floor - the mezzanine or whatever it was, and the health  
3 problems developed and that's where we tried to pressurise the City Council at the time to  
4 deal with it. And they said 'Well, what can we do?' So, eventually we got them pressurised  
5 so much that Mason's Mill was opened and people could move from there to Mason's Mill.  
6 And that was the destruction of the community of Table Mountain. Because ever since then  
7 people have gone into a fierce world.

8 L: What a pitiful thing, that a community should be destroyed like that.

9 K: Then late 1990, was it later? 1990?

10 L: No, you're still with the Edendale War in April.

11 K: In March, March the 25<sup>th</sup>, was the meeting at King's Park. The 27<sup>th</sup> things started blowing  
12 up in Edendale. That Wednesday, I think it was the 28<sup>th</sup>, it's the day that I would normally  
13 go into the areas to meet with people to do the monitoring and give report backs. That day  
14 I wasn't able to get in and I phoned Mkhize, at the Witness, 'What's happening, nobody's  
15 going to let me through.' 'Oh, there's ...' and then the 'phone calls came through. I was  
16 monitoring from the DP Office - from 1989 we established a monitoring office, put out a  
17 number of people who 'phoned - I had information from all over, and that information is fed  
18 through to parliament and challenged the police on their activities, really.

19 L: That was a marvellous thing to have done. I mean it really gave you the handle for that week  
20 - that was coming up - to get the whole thing monitored.

21 K: You could never do that in two days.

22 L: No, you couldn't have.

23 K: When it blew up on the Wednesday, then all the NGOs and concerned organisations gathered  
24 and I was there for the DP - from the DP's side - and we discussed 'Like what do we do?'  
25 This crisis has blown up on Wednesday. I think it was the 28<sup>th</sup> of March when all hell had  
26 broken loose, there was an invasion from Gezubuso into KwaShange, into KwaMnyandu -  
27 that whole area from Henley Dam - across KwaShange to KwaMnyandu.

28 L: Thousands of men...

29 K: Thousands, and the police wouldn't let me in - normally I was able to push my way through,

- 1 but this time I couldn't - there were barricades up - there was incredible chaos. And that very  
2 same morning we took that group of PFP ladies to investigate - what it's like in the township.
- 3 L: Well, that was baptism by fire, wasn't it?
- 4 K: So we went around and we were out of there by eleven. The tour had been completed,  
5 because that was a morning tour. Then I picked up that all these things that were happening  
6 and we were in there ...So, so they were - they sensed the tension in the area, and they saw  
7 the police moving around - they saw burnt-out houses from the conflict, they spoke to injured  
8 people, we introduced them face to face with ...
- 9 L: Did you hear any shootings?
- 10 K: An occasional shooting, but monitoring it was - there was more shooting at night than during  
11 the day. I then organised a 'plane with Khabe Mkhize.
- 12 L: That was a very dashing thing to do - if I may say ...
- 13 K: If you can't get in there you go over it...
- 14 L: Well, quite..
- 15 K: And we took a flight and I said 'Well...'
- 16 L: Could you see clearly from this little 'plane?
- 17 K: Yes, absolutely.
- 18 L: So you saw the forces situated? and where ...?
- 19 K: Yes, you could see along the roads, the movement of hundreds of people in all directions -  
20 and you could see...
- 21 L: Refugees and militants and so on...
- 22 K: And police vehicles with them...
- 23 L: Yes, and ammunition being distributed.
- 24 K: That I couldn't see from the air...
- 25 L: No...
- 26 K: But definitely police vehicles, army vehicles and a - there was a wave of destruction that came  
27 downhill - from KwaMnyandu - that's ...
- 28 L: Ntombela's Place?
- 29 K: And that was actually John Zuma, from Impendle - he used to live there - down KwaShange

1 into Vulisaka.

2

3 End of first side.

4

5 Second side.

6 L: So you could see this even from the air?

7 K: Even in the air the police attempted to remove us. I said to the pilot - you will not - we are  
8 paying for you, you are going to do what we want you to do and you can tell them that I am  
9 here on behalf of our members of the parliament and Khabe Mkhize from the Natal Witness  
10 is here with me in the air. And they can do what they like - but we are not leaving the area.

11 L: Good for you!

12 K: And we told them we were going further into the area...

13 L: Excellent!

14 K: And the helicopter...

15 L: And what did the helicopter do?

16 K: Buzzed up and down, took photographs and everything of the ...

17 L: Yes, they were quite sure that you were there in the air...

18 K: Yes, but what we were doing was taking photographs of what was happening on the ground  
19 and we saw the next day - that front page of the Natal Witness - half the picture of the valley  
20 burning and that was - the Friday then we organised a prominent persons visit into the area  
21 two days after that. Among those were Mgojo and Members of Parliament, City Councillors,  
22 Church Leaders, and Nuttall was one of them - they took these people as a group to meet -  
23 we arranged to meet Ntombela at his house. Trying to see what's going on, and to stop this  
24 carnage. We got to his house and he wasn't there. Along the way we had seen a tent being  
25 erected - because remember that was when the IFP were trying to have a meeting with  
26 Mandela to address a joint meeting and the assistance of family members and - that's it - and  
27 they just put up the tent. So we went back to the tent and there he was sitting himself - and  
28 his gun (in) his belt.

29 L: I was going to say a bandolier of cartridges...

- 1 K: Two guards were sitting there with shotguns in the tent. He didn't get up, he sort of looked  
2 at this group of people...who ... I looked at him with a certain amount of contempt knowing  
3 ... at least I introduced him to everybody and he, he wouldn't speak in English - he said to me  
4 he refuses to speak English - he had a translator working for him, and he said it wasn't the  
5 IFP people who had assaulted the community. The community were sick and tired of it  
6 because when the buses came back from Kings Park they were stoned and a number of them  
7 were shot on the way up to Taylor's Halt.
- 8 L: But they weren't filled with IFP then?
- 9 K: It was, and the IFP buses coming through Edendale were being shot and the community said  
10 'The buses have been (shot)...' and there were strikes and protests and all that ... and the  
11 community said 'Yes the community is fed up with it.' And they had had enough and this was  
12 their revenge. The IFP had nothing to do with it. Now the prominent people spoke and said  
13 'How do we resolve the matter?' But we got nowhere basically. No responsibility was  
14 accepted by the IFP and we tried to tie it up and we said goodbye. But you know the rest of  
15 the time - from the 25<sup>th</sup> through to the 1<sup>st</sup> of April - that's called officially, the Seven Day  
16 War.
- 17 L: And meantime the town was filled with refugees. Every church hall was full.
- 18 K: Every place and that again was a dislocation, but it was more pleasing - if one can talk about  
19 pleasing - is that a large majority of those who fled, have been able to go back to KwaShange  
20 and to KwaVulisaka. Not like Table Mountain, where you've still for today, 1998, people  
21 living in Dambuza, people living in Pata, people living in squalid situations, not being able to  
22 go back to Maqongqo. And in that sense, the community needs to re-establish itself in  
23 Maqongqo. And that Seven Day War didn't end, we continued the monitoring, we've got  
24 records of the next year and a half of the violence that continued.
- 25 L: The bodies in the mortuaries?
- 26 K: I had to attend people looking for their relatives and we had every week, a couple of days at  
27 a time going to mortuaries with people and had to identify the bodies of their relatives -  
28 hundreds of bodies at that. It was the most soul destroying part of the monitoring. We found  
29 a couple of people - none of them alive and so it was .. Yes. The Seven Day War also made

1 me aware of the uselessness of monitoring.

2 L: Oh, why do you say that?

3 K: Well, it's the most depressing thing to actually write down how many dead, how many houses  
4 burnt, how many cars destroyed, how many power lines broken, how many telephone lines  
5 cut. So, in 1989, that was when it started - it came into force more in 1990 as the trust for  
6 Peace in Natal, established in 1989. At least in Natal we got the community leaders in  
7 Pietermaritzburg to say 'Right, let's get this trust established and let's give it a boost - get  
8 people together and pre-empt violence.' Well, in 1990, after the Seven Day War we then  
9 moved into a more aggressive, mediating and conciliatory work. We would go and liaise with  
10 Mapumulo and try to get him to a position where he would, as far as he could go on one side,  
11 we would negotiate with the IFP and bring them as far as we could. I remember clearly the  
12 two sides, IFP and Mapumulo were at a point where they - I had everything set up, and it was  
13 to be on the next day and they would start working out how people would come back home  
14 and re-establish order in the community... That night I went to the IFP and I said  
15 'Everything's on board..' And this guy said 'Yes, but I can't go.' And I said 'But excuse  
16 me..' He says 'Oh, my committee here wants to do it, we want to do it, but Mthethwa from  
17 Ulundi says until Mapumulo goes and apologises to Buthelezi, no IFP Member is to meet  
18 with Mapumulo.

19 L: Of course, the old story..

20 K: Nobody from the IFP must meet with him.

21 L: Yes, that I believe - I mean it's happened time without number...

22 K: Mthethwa, those were his words to me that he had directly from Mthethwa, who used to be  
23 our Minister of Police in this province a while back. So I had to then go to Mapumulo and  
24 be a conveyor of bad news and since then it just went from worse to worse. Houses were  
25 being ransacked and burnt and I've got photographs of that area from right the way through  
26 ... but that was our initiative "Peace in Natal". We removed it from the DP because we  
27 wanted it to be non-political.

28 L: You wanted it to be a general thing of the whole community in so far as you could.

29 K: And we worked in a place in Nxamalala, in Mthoqotho, in - that's KwaPhezulu - that's on the

- 1 Nxamalala side of Vulindlela. IFP, UDF houses were being burnt down - you know the  
2 whole thing.
- 3 L: Yes.
- 4 K: Attacked, counter-attack, attack and counter-attack, no-go areas. So we worked on it and  
5 it took about three, four months to get the UDF aligned people to accept talking. And with  
6 the contacts I've made within the police, I said, bring the IFP on board, because at that time  
7 in that place, I was not perceived as impartial. You used to talk to the UDF, you must be  
8 UDF - you're not with us, you're against us. So the police got the leadership of the IFP from  
9 the area and after a little bit of badgering I got the UDF leadership, after a bit of badgering -  
10 to meet at the riot unit in their boardroom.
- 11 L: Oh goodness me, that's... that would ...
- 12 K: And a code of conduct was hammered out between the two parties; not a peace accord, a  
13 code of conduct.
- 14 L: That was a step...
- 15 K: Ja. Free access on the roads, to and from - free access to the schools for the children, and  
16 water is accessible to all in the community. If there's a problem this is the person to contact -  
17 in their community - that is the person to contact in that community. Beautiful - things  
18 started working out - we will call an immediate meeting, the police, "Peace in Natal" and the  
19 two communities together and representatives. And in that way, overnight almost, peace  
20 descended on them ... peaceful ... they just... Echo took a photograph of the two leaders  
21 shaking hands on a code of conduct that was agreed to. And the strength of doing those  
22 things one has to get the leadership to be seen to be making the decisions, to be seen to be  
23 implementing them - we just disappeared... the police... I said to them 'You're not even in the  
24 picture.' He said 'Peace in Natal' is not even in the newspaper.'
- 25 L: This is the two leaders?
- 26 K: Ja, and they did it and they actually helped release the code of conduct and through today,  
27 that community has never had a problem there. They came to me a year later saying 'Oh,  
28 we've had a few hiccups.' But it was dealt with immediately and it was resolved. Now they  
29 visit each other's shebeens. So it's worked tremendously and we also went a step further to

- 1 say 'Right, this... those hands that were involved in war, are going to be idle... what do we  
2 do?'
- 3 L: Well. Because it was a war. And it was a continuing war and Whites of Pietermaritzburg  
4 (were) totally ignorant about it.
- 5 K: They didn't want to know.
- 6 L: Yes, it suited them not to know.
- 7 K: And those who did want to know got very - precious little out of the newspapers 'cause that  
8 was censored. But we met with the community - both IFP and UDF and said 'Right, what  
9 are your concerns? What do you need here?'
- 10 'We need water, we need this...'
- 11 'Okay,' so we zoned in on water and we said... I went to Umgeni Water and I asked them  
12 'Are you able to assist with this - tapping of the springs and getting it through to the  
13 community?'
- 14 'Not a problem.' So I went to Umgeni Water and the community leaders formed a water  
15 committee and labour came from the community, and resources came from Umgeni Water.
- 16 L: Marvellous, Radley.
- 17 K: So, that's the taps...
- 18 L: You must be so grateful you were able to do this...
- 19 K: It is the one shining example of how people can actually resolve their differences and start  
20 building.
- 21 L: Now, Radley, if we're 1990, ANC branches would have started being formed at this stage?  
22 I don't know at which stage UDF disappeared...
- 23 K: At almost, almost with the unbanning of the ANC.
- 24 L: I see, so the one fled into the other?
- 25 K: Yes, that's - there was an attempt by UDF members to maintain their identity but I think that  
26 was short lived and the ANC was not too....
- 27 L: That took a long time...
- 28 K: ...favourable to UDF and the ANC existing ...
- 29 L: No, and besides these were all local people who knew each other, knew what each other was



- 1 up to and were able to negotiate.
- 2 K: That was the turning and like I said that was just one community where the leadership actually  
3 was strong enough to decide for themselves, they didn't have their strings pulled by the  
4 regional office of the ANC - they didn't have their strings pulled by Ulundi, and that's where  
5 it's ...
- 6 L: That was why it happened.
- 7 K: And that is why Shongweni - Mpumalanga, has succeeded, the leadership was strong enough  
8 to decide.
- 9 L: And that was a real community - Mpumalanga - wasn't it?
- 10 K: Absolutely.
- 11 L: Yes, and a similar thing happened here.
- 12 K: We could have worked in Table Mountain if the IFP leadership, locally, had the strength to  
13 make decisions, hence the different outcome.
- 14 L: And that of course killed it stone dead.
- 15 K: Stone dead. And we had - I think today we're in a much better position than we were in  
16 those days. I forget...
- 17 L: Do you?
- 18 K: People forget so easily the horror and pain, and the destruction that went through..
- 19 L: But it was terrible, it was terrible...
- 20 K: And amongst White people in the city, some knew what was happening?..
- 21 L: Their domestics? Not able to come - or could they put them up, (their) daughter-in-law or  
22 whatever...
- 23 K: And bury their son here - and bury their husband here and bury the brother here - because it  
24 was always the men and the boys who were targeted and if the White community - I've said  
25 this before - the White community of 'Maritzburg, were more pro-active, more investigative  
26 and less chicken-hearted...
- 27 L: Yes, chicken-hearted could have...
- 28 K: ...could have taken a bit more interest in people. I must say from the Party membership of  
29 the DP there might - we informed them through our newsletters with the limited resources

1 we had and they kept - to their credit - they kept enough resources for me to continue to do  
2 the monitoring.

3 L: So you had no difficulty in support?

4 K: No, not if you were ...

5 L: But where? and so on...

6 K: Ja, of course, but I think today, 'Maritzburg is - there's a lot more peace because people  
7 remember the war.

8 L: I'm sure this is the case, I'm sure this is the case, yes.

9 K: You know the problem with crime - that's ? is under control, in the CPF I'm involved with?  
10 the Community Police Forum in Loop Street - according to statistics we are ...

11 L: Are the statistics just going down?

12 K: We were maintaining the pressure on criminals in the city centre now, but in terms of political  
13 conflict, I think we've all learnt a lesson, that you cannot annihilate your political opponents,  
14 and the IFP has had to learn that, and the ANC has had to learn that, and I hope that the  
15 UDM and the ANC don't have to go through the same experience to learn that.

16

17 (The tape becomes blank and appears to be switched off - there is nothing further on the rest of this  
18 side.)

19