

**The Alan Paton Centre
& Struggle Archives**



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

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

**Third interview with Colin Gardner
conducted by Ruth Lundie
on 4 August 1998
at the Alan Paton Centre**

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KWAZULU NATAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH COLIN GARDNER

CONDUCTED BY RUTH LUNDIE ON 4 AUGUST 1998

AT THE ALAN PATON CENTRE

(TAPE TWO - INTERVIEW THREE)

(‘C’ SHALL INDICATE THE INTERVIEWEE AND ‘R’ THE INTERVIEWER)

R: This is part three of the interview with Colin Gardner, held at the Paton Centre on the 4th of August 1998.

C: Well, Ruth, I was talking about the Institute of Race Relations and the fact that I used to go up to meetings in Johannesburg, but it soon became clear that the Institute of Race Relations wasn't a body that I or my friends were going to be able to carry on working in and I have to say that one of the reasons for this was that John Kane-Berman took over as Director and he soon made it clear that his vision of what the Institute of Race Relations should be doing was quite different from that of people like myself. Firstly he closed down the branches in different parts of the country, so that the Institute of Race Relations became something that simply focused on Johannesburg, and secondly he made it quite clear that the Institute was going to be something which would be working upon and working with big business. In other words it was something that was geared to talking to industrialists on their own level and about their own concerns, and the kinds of interests that a person like myself had were really, from that moment onwards, regarded as not particularly relevant to the work of the Institute. And I have to say, if I may make a brief statement about the Institute in general, that it has in many respects moved in what many people would take to be a generally rather right wing direction. It has become sceptical of movements of a socialist sort - with any touch of socialism about them - and since 1994, though it has made some good critical comments and is an important contributor to the general debate, it is regarded by people within the ANC as a body that is broadly

1 hostile to the kinds of things or many of the kinds of things that the ANC is trying to do
2 in transforming the country. Another thing to talk about in this period – the late 1970s -
3 is the founding of PACSA, the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness,
4 which took place in 1978. The person who did the act of founding -- sorry I was so blunt
5 about the phrase (?) - was Peter Kerchhoff, who had left his job as a chemist at Hulleys
6 Aluminium, and in starting up PACSA, working with all the other people - and I was one
7 of the people on the original PACSA Committee - our aim was to do on the local level
8 the kind of work that, on a national level, the Christian Institute had been doing. The
9 Christian Institute was banned, but there was no way of banning the kind of work that it
10 was doing. So, to go back, just as *Reality*, the journal, tried to carry on with the work of
11 the Liberal Party, after the Liberal Party had been made illegal, so a body like PACSA
12 had as its aim to do what the Christian Institute had been doing - but within the
13 Pietermaritzburg area. Our aim in starting PACSA at that point was very much in line
14 with the general thinking of the Black Consciousness Movement - which was that black
15 people should work among themselves, and on the whole white people should work
16 among themselves. So PACSA was a largely white body to start with; it was a body
17 which had as its main aim the conscientising of white Christians, getting Christians to see
18 their religious commitment in terms of the socio-political realities of an extremely unjust
19 society. As PACSA has developed, and it has developed and changed a great deal in the
20 twenty years now that it's been going, it became non-racial. It had in fact always been
21 non-racial. I may say; I think it was never a whites-only thing, but it was simply mainly
22 whites in practice. It became in practice non-racial, as there was a general move towards
23 a non-racial strategy within the political movements and within the trade unions in the
24 early 1980s. And it has continued the very important work of attempting to show
25 Christians a way in which they could participate positively in the transformation and
26 upliftment of the whole society. But when we move on to - I think it was the year 1980 -
27 when I found myself convening, acting as informal chairperson of the first 'Maritzburg
28 DESCOM - DESCOM meaning Detainees Support Committee. There was a lot of
29 detention going on throughout the country in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and in all
30 the major towns, or most of them, detainees support committees formed, and after a while
31 they began to work together in various ways. A network of DESCOMs was set up:

1 fundamentally the task of the Detainees Support Committees was to bring together the
2 families of people who had been detained by the government for political or supposedly
3 political offences, to get them to meet each other, to try to exchange ideas, exchange
4 notes, to maintain morale. It was essentially, as its name suggested, a support group:
5 there wasn't very much we could do, though we did occasionally have contact with
6 lawyers and we were able to get lawyers to try to find out about particular events in the
7 lives of people who were detained. But on the whole it was, as I say, a solidarity group.
8 It was often very tense, harrowing, to be working and living - as it were - with people
9 who were undergoing the trauma of having often a husband, sometimes a father,
10 sometimes a relative of another sort, detained and often, as one knew, tortured by the
11 government, which in the early 1980s was really beginning to become desperate,
12 beginning to get tense. I think my own reading of the South African political history of
13 this time is that after the Soweto uprising in 1976, the government had a sense that it was
14 back pedaling. It tried to assert itself, but I think in its heart of hearts it knew that it was
15 no longer totally in control of the situation, and most of the things that happened in the
16 1980s I think can be seen as indications of growing desperation on the part of the
17 government. Yes, I won't say very much more about my experience in DESCOM, but it
18 went on for ten years and a number of significant Pietermaritzburg people joined
19 DESCOM. DESCOM was made illegal at one stage and had to change its name - I can't
20 remember what its second name was now - in order to be able to continue, but it did
21 continue: it was in some ways an encouraging experience. It was a real moment, or a
22 series of moments, of solidarity, but it was also distressing: it meant that one was really in
23 touch with the pain of the community of people who were fighting hard against
24 government oppression. I'd like to say also that in 1980 one began to move back, in
25 some respects, to the politics of the 1950s and the early 1960s. I remember going to a
26 number of protest meetings, which were orchestrated to some extent by the trade unions
27 which were beginning to become more powerful then. And I was struck by the ways in
28 which protest meetings of that sort were different from the kind of protest meetings that I
29 used to go to as a member of the Liberal Party. When one was in the Liberal Party, most
30 of what was said tended to be said in terms of a principle. The Liberal Party believed in
31 this and did not believe in that: it was a point of principle that it was against x,y and z and

1 in favour of a,b and c. But I found at the protest meetings that I began to get involved in
2 the early 1980s, the atmosphere was rather different. It was a matter of class struggle
3 really, rather than a matter of liberal principle. Of course the issues were broadly the
4 same - one was on roughly the same side - but one couldn't help being aware of the fact
5 that the rhetoric was different. Now one was part of a group of people who felt
6 themselves to be involved in a war, a war which was at times almost a physical war rather
7 than a battle of principle, shall we say.

8
9 R: And could you mention that the Unions were no longer only for blacks - there was a non-
10 racial element that was coming in?

11
12 C: Well, yes, I think that's true. I'll say a little bit about the unions, although I wasn't myself
13 ever directly involved in union work. Yes, I think that the move from Black
14 Consciousness in the 1970s, to non-racialism in the early 1980s and from then onwards -
15 or the late 1970s, early 1980s - was something that was brought about, to some extent, by
16 the experience of the trade unions. When I say the movement from Black Consciousness
17 to non-racialism, I have to recognise of course that the Black Consciousness Movement
18 did continue and does indeed continue today. But I would say that, on the whole, the
19 majority of African people opposed to the government were followers of Black
20 Consciousness in the 1970s and moved to a non-racial position in the 1980s. And let me
21 say, incidentally, that I'm quite sure that if he had lived, Steve Biko would have done the
22 same: I'm sure that he would not have been taking a BC line in the early 1980s had he
23 been alive. And yet I think that the trade unions contributed in various ways to this,
24 because the trade unions consisted, of course, largely of black workers who were
25 beginning to get a bit of muscle for the first time, but a lot of the work that was done at
26 the administrative level - a lot of the backroom work within the trade unions - was done
27 by white post-graduate students or recently-graduated students from the so-called liberal
28 universities, people with radical views who felt that they needed to get involved in the
29 unfolding political situation, and they contributed in so many important ways to the
30 growth of the trade union movement that I think, for people working in that movement,
31 the idea of calling it a Black Consciousness thing, a thing which kept whites at arm's
32 length, was obviously not on. And I certainly see that as an important part of the
33 transformation of liberation strategies in the early 1980s, from, as I say, a Black

1 Consciousness to a non-racial one...I want to talk next about 1983, which was the year in
2 which I became chairperson of JASA, which is the University's Joint Academic Staff
3 Association. And I think perhaps I should have a little inset here - or go back a little and
4 say something about my university career. I've been talking about myself as a person
5 involved in various ways in certain aspects of what one could broadly call the anti-
6 apartheid struggle. But of course throughout this time I was a University lecturer, and my
7 university career ran parallel to what I suppose one might call my career as an activist.
8 And indeed if I look back on my professional life, my life in these years. I have to say
9 that inevitably most of my time was actually spent on being a university teacher,
10 researcher, administrator, writer, and so on. A person might well ask: was the university
11 work that I was doing relevant to the struggle - in other words, was it in any way a part of
12 or related to or integrated with the kind of life that I was living as a part-time activist?
13 Difficult to judge these things, but I have to say that one hopes so. The English
14 Department which I was a member of was a department that had always believed that
15 training people in reading English literature was something that added to students'
16 alertness, their imaginative openness, and that people became broadly speaking, in a way
17 that one couldn't easily define, better people and better citizens. Certainly the English
18 Department, which when I first studied in it and when I first taught in it was under
19 Professor Geoffrey Durrant, had a strong sense that things political and things
20 imaginative, things aesthetic, were deeply intertwined. Professor Durrant was a person
21 who had strong political views; they happened to take him out of the country at the end of
22 1960 - sadly for us all - but he was a person who was always convinced that teaching
23 literature was very relevant to life in society. And that was a view that I held and have
24 always held. So, yes, in teaching the various works that one taught - though, for many
25 years, my teaching was based entirely or almost entirely upon the classics of the Northern
26 Hemisphere - one hoped that one was teaching students, or helping students, to become
27 richer people and therefore the kind of people who would be able to tell what was going
28 on in South African society. And I think I have to say, if I look back on the work done
29 by the universities, and particularly perhaps the English-speaking universities, in the
30 period 1960 to 1990, I think I'd have to say that it was probably their work which played
31 some part in the fact that, as the outside world commented, the white population of South

1 Africa (for after all for most of this period, we were teaching largely Whites: we were
2 forced to do so by apartheid regulations) - the white population of South Africa was able
3 to accept the change-over to democracy without actually having a nervous breakdown,
4 without going mad, without going crazy: they were able to adjust, they were able to take
5 it in a humane and sensible way to a degree that surprised many outside observers. I
6 would say that one of the reasons for that was the work that was done throughout the
7 apartheid period by various institutions - by the universities, by the churches, at their
8 best, and by the press, at its best - that kept people a little bit more in touch with
9 humanity and sanity than those outside were always aware of. I was talking about my
10 university career: yes, perhaps I should say a little bit about it. I came as a lecturer in
11 1959, I became a Senior Lecturer in 1962, I became a Professor in 1972. I think I've said
12 earlier on in the tapes that I had a sense that I was moving into gaps which had partly
13 been left by so many of my friends who had left the country. I was Dean of the Arts
14 Faculty from 1976 to 1979. I was involved also in the work of English lecturers and
15 researchers throughout the country. A body called the Association of University English
16 Teachers of South Africa (AUETSA) was formed in 1977, and I was in fact the first
17 chairperson of that national body. And throughout these years I was also doing research,
18 writing articles, and the kinds of things that a person does, needs to do, in order to be a
19 decent university teacher and a member of staff. And so also I was involved throughout
20 my university career in staff associations - the lecturers' association, the staff association,
21 what later came to be called the Joint Academic Staff Association, when the lecturers'
22 and the other staff association joined. And these associations dealt with many issues, but
23 one of them throughout was the political issues, and on the whole people who belonged
24 to these associations and those who got onto the committees tended to be more liberal,
25 more radical than the other members of staff. So that was a battle which we kept
26 fighting. In the early 1960s, I had also been the first secretary of a body called UTASA -
27 the University Teachers Association of South Africa - which brought together the staff
28 associations of the four 'liberal' universities - Natal, Wits, Cape Town and Rhodes, and
29 that body continued, though it wasn't really a very strong or influential body, throughout
30 the 1960s and 1970s. Anyhow, so in 1983 I found myself made chairperson of the Joint
31 Academic Staff Association (JASA), which I had been on the committee of for many

1 years. It would have seemed to be not a particularly momentous position for me to have
2 got into, but it rapidly became momentous, because shortly after I had become
3 chairperson, a suggestion was made - by I think, if I remember correctly, Professor
4 Coovadia, one of the members of the Medical School in Durban - that JASA might
5 affiliate to the UDF, the United Democratic Front, which had been formed that year. The
6 UDF was of course a very important body within South Africa's political history of the
7 1980s. And we (in JASA) had quite a radical committee. We thought about it, and we
8 thought this is an unusual thing to do, but the UDF was then a - I'm trying to find the
9 right word - it was a conjunction of other associations: it wasn't so much of an
10 association itself, but it was a bringing together of associations which were involved in
11 any way in what could be broadly called 'the struggle for a new South Africa.' And we
12 thought, well the Joint Academic Staff Association of the University of Natal is certainly
13 part of this, so we decided that we would affiliate. This was - sorry - we couldn't affiliate
14 without having a general meeting. It was a big decision, so we called a general meeting.
15 There wasn't a great deal of interest in the matter at that stage, and we got enough people
16 to agree to our doing this: I mean we got the two-thirds majority we needed at a general
17 meeting. So we wrote to the UDF and said 'we are affiliating with you.' Then the news
18 spread around the university that JASA had done this incredible thing, and people began
19 to demand that there should be another general meeting at which the matter would be
20 properly discussed. And what one could generally call the right-wing forces, or the non-
21 left-wing forces, in the University began to organise and encourage people to come along
22 to this meeting. So of course in response to this the more left-wing forces were also
23 organized, and they said 'well, you come along to this meeting to make sure that the right
24 wing doesn't out-vote us'. And so there was a gigantic meeting in Durban which I found
25 myself, of course as JASA chairperson, chairing, at which we discussed this whole
26 matter, and a vote was taken and again there was a two-thirds majority for JASA being a
27 member of the UDF. By now this was becoming quite a well-known case, and many
28 people - well not many, but some people - left JASA because they disapproved of this;
29 other people, who had never bothered to join JASA, joined it because they approved of
30 it. The Principal of the University, Professor Booysen, was worried about this. I can't
31 quite remember what worried him; I think he was worried about the fact that the staff

1 association might get split in a way which would be awkward for the university, and he
2 came along to one of my executive meetings - held, I remember, in a hotel somewhere
3 between Maritzburg and Durban, one evening - he came along and pleaded with us to
4 reconsider our view, arguing that he knew a fair number of members of staff who were
5 very unhappy about this decision. We said we were aware of that, and we thought that it
6 was one of the moments where dividing members of staff was something which one
7 couldn't avoid; and we pointed out to him that there were an equally large number of
8 members of staff - probably a greater number of members of staff - who would have been
9 profoundly disappointed and dismayed if we had decided to go back on our decision.
10 And he could see that. So we did nothing. We stayed in the UDF, and, looking back on
11 it, I think I and my colleagues are quite proud of that, because we were the only
12 university staff association in the whole country who had joined the UDF, and I think we
13 were quite a healthy influence within the life of the University. In fact during the years
14 after 1983, the University began to realise rapidly the way things were going: the
15 Administration recognised that it had to take a more radical and open stance. The
16 Administration, let me say, had always been broadly liberal in its orientation, but it came
17 to realise that they had to speak out more openly on the issues of the day, and if I look at
18 the history of the University from about 1983 to about 1989, I would say that what the
19 University Administration did, broadly speaking, was to follow the line that had been
20 taken by JASA. And certainly, by the late 1980s, I think the University wasn't
21 particularly unhappy that we were members of the UDF. I think in fact they thought it
22 was rather nice that the University of Natal had this link with what was clearly the big
23 progressive movement within South Africa. So, yes, that was an interesting moment.
24 Another thing to be said about JASA was that a group of people within it, of whom I was
25 one, decided that we needed to set up an organisation for staff associations throughout the
26 country. There was this old body UTASA still in existence, which brought together the
27 staff associations of just the four universities. But by then we were living in a situation
28 where there were twenty universities in the country, and many of those institutions set up
29 under the apartheid arrangement - the so-called bush colleges - were at first treated with
30 scorn by the liberal universities and indeed by the outside world, but by the late 1980s we
31 realised that a lot of good people were teaching in these institutions, and that the majority

1 of the country's students were coming up through these institutions, and therefore it was
2 necessary to somehow level the playing fields and have all the universities together in
3 one staff association. So we worked hard for a year or two to get this association going.
4 It was a fascinating business. We had meetings; we travelled around the country; we went
5 to different campuses. We became very aware of how different the situation was at
6 different universities. But eventually, I think it was in late 1988, or early 1989, we
7 managed to launch the body called UDUSA - the Union of Democratic University Staff
8 Associations. And in June 1989, a delegation from UDUSA went to Lusaka to meet the
9 ANC. A very interesting meeting: very interesting to consider what UDUSA was at that
10 stage. Just to say something about that. In some universities, as they then were, it was
11 really quite dangerous for members of staff to belong to UDUSA, and certainly to go on a
12 delegation to Lusaka. I remember the person from Fort Hare was told by his Head of
13 Department that if he went with the UDUSA delegation to Lusaka, he might well be
14 sacked the moment he got back. Which shows what the state of relationships within that
15 university was, whereas I - I was the University of Natal representative - I had a chat to
16 the Principal of the University of Natal, the same Professor Booysen, and he was
17 delighted that I was going. He wished me good luck, and he said, 'You give the
18 compliments of the University of Natal to the ANC.' So you could see how different the
19 situation was. It was a very interesting meeting [in Lusaka]. It lasted five days, and we
20 discussed everything under the sun, but I think the main thing I want to say about that
21 meeting - perhaps the most memorable moment in it - was when the South African
22 delegation sat round one side of the room and representatives from the ANC - Thabo
23 Mbeki was there. Pallo Jordan, a lot of top ANC people - sat round the other side of the
24 room, and we spoke about our universities, each of us talking about the position within
25 his or her own university. We found, as we expected, that the ANC knew quite a lot, but
26 we were able to tell them many things they didn't know. And then we said that really
27 what we wanted to know was what was the ANC's policy towards the universities: 'What
28 is your view?' And they said, 'Well, you tell us.' And we suddenly realised that we were
29 with friends, that we weren't going to be given any sort of commands or instructions -
30 that indeed we were in a seminar with them to talk about the future of South African
31 universities. Well...

1
2 R: Colin, tell me, how did your activities in general - your university life and so on - mesh
3 with your activities as a Christian, because these were great protest years for the
4 churches?

5
6 C: Yes, that's a very good question. Of course since the - the blotting out of the Christian
7 Institute at the end of the 1970s, I hadn't been involved in such a full way in specifically
8 Christian anti-apartheid activities... That's not wholly true, because PACSA, in
9 Pietermaritzburg, certainly was a local version of the Christian Institute, and PACSA did
10 play a very important role in Pietermaritzburg in the 1980s - both in making statements
11 and in dealing with issues. Indeed PACSA became so significant at certain moments in
12 the mid 1980s that when people were being maltreated by the police or threatened, they
13 often came into PACSA, because PACSA was felt to be an institution that you could go
14 to for assistance - in very much the same way as the Christian Institute headquarters, in
15 Johannesburg, in the 1970s had become a place that people in difficulties in Soweto went
16 to. It had become a haven, a Christian refuge if you like. And that's of course just the
17 right kind of thing for Christians to try to be in a situation of struggle and stress. I felt
18 myself then, throughout this period, very much a part of the church's struggle, even
19 though I wasn't always very precisely involved in it in a formal sense. I'd like to say a
20 little bit about the churches. They really did play a crucial role in South Africa in the
21 1980s. But before I get on to that let me say a little bit about the Church in general,
22 because I'm interested in the history of the Christian Church in South Africa. I think I
23 would say that in the 1950s and the early 1960s, indeed most of the 1960s, the Church
24 was not a very strong body as far as opposition to apartheid was concerned. I think it was
25 Trevor Huddleston who said 'the Church sleeps on..' Is that right?

26
27 R: Yes.

28
29 C: And of course a person like Archbishop Hurley or a person like Michael Scott were very
30 much and very strikingly exceptions to the general rule of the life of the Church in that
31 period. And I became very - well - aware of the reaction of most black South Africans at
32 that time to the church when one reads something like the autobiography, *Down Second*
33 *Avenue* by Ezekiel Mphahlele. His attitude towards the church: he had been a church
34 believer, and then he had left the church and became rather disdainful towards it. Clearly
35 he felt that the church was not interested in the socio-political and earthly lives of black

1 people. One finds that in many of the writings of the time, and I was very conscious of
2 this when I met some of the older exiles, people who had been out of the country for
3 many years. They certainly regarded the church as something that had no role at all in the
4 anti-apartheid struggle. But of course what happened was that during the 1970s and
5 1980s, more and more church people, particularly church leaders, became aware of the
6 importance of the political situation from a religious point of view. People like
7 Archbishop Hurley, who had been issuing anti-apartheid statements from the 1950s,
8 gradually took a more radical stance. His movement was rather similar to that of Beyers
9 Naude, and of course Beyers Naude and Archbishop Hurley were great friends who
10 influenced each other, and I think the Christian Institute in general had an effect upon the
11 mainline churches. You see by the 1980s, and of course one has to mention, supremely,
12 Desmond Tutu - by the 1980s many members in the chief churches - Anglican,
13 Methodist, Catholic, particularly - were aware of the fact that fighting against apartheid
14 was really as important a task as any of the others that the church had. One of the most
15 striking examples of the churches' willingness to participate in the struggle was the fact
16 that the Catholic Bishops Conference had set up, and for about six years funded, a little
17 newspaper - *The New Nation* - which was for many years the mouthpiece of the liberation
18 movement in South Africa. It was banned once or twice, it got into all sorts of difficulties
19 with the government - as you would expect - but it is fascinating that the Catholic Church
20 was in fact paying for that journal. So by the late 1980s the role of the church within the
21 liberation struggle was really very important, and the younger people who had gone into
22 exile knew this. The older exiles only discovered this fully I think when they got back to
23 South Africa, and they rapidly went through a kind of conversion - a conversion not to
24 Christianity (though some of them may have done that too) but to the idea that the
25 Church had in fact been a very important comrade within the anti-apartheid struggle in
26 South Africa in the 1980s. I think it was a symbol of that, for me, that when I went to
27 Helen Joseph's funeral service, at the Johannesburg Anglican Cathedral, in the early
28 1990s, there was one figure who sat through a very long service - very reverentially I felt:
29 he didn't seem, as far as I could see, to be resenting the fact that he was there in a church,
30 sitting in a pew - and that was Joe Slovo. Now I'm sure that ten years earlier, if you had
31 asked Joe Slovo if he would sit through a long Anglican service, without any obvious

1 signs of discontent, he would have expressed amazement. But I took it as an example
2 of the way in which the church had been accepted, or was accepted when the ANC and
3 the other liberation movements were unbanned and came back to take over the running of
4 South African society. Talking about the church, I have to say that it found itself in a
5 awkward position, or a confusion, when the unbanning proclamation was issued in 1990,
6 because suddenly all the people who had been unable to do things were there to do
7 things. The church had to some extent taken over the political reins in the late 1980s:
8 Desmond Tutu had been almost a leading politician at times. And then suddenly the
9 politicians were back. Desmond Tutu felt particularly that the church ought to hold back
10 from politics, and so for a few years there was a kind of vacuum in the church's
11 participation in society: it seemed to stand back and not know quite what to do or whether
12 there was anything for it to do: the church suddenly looked as if it was becoming what of
13 course right wingers had always said it ought to be - a body that prayed and otherwise
14 kept clear of real life. I think one has to say that the church has been re-thinking its
15 position, and I would agree with - and I think many thoughtful and committed Christians
16 today would agree with - a leading Catholic thinker like Albert Nolan who says that the
17 role of politicians is to get things done and to be pragmatic, and to realise that politics is
18 the art of the possible - that as a politician you can't live in a world of ideal solutions, but
19 the role of the church is to remind people constantly of what those ideal solutions are, and
20 that if the church isn't there, constantly reminding and prodding politicians, they are in
21 danger of sinking into a world of mere pragmatism - of mere doing what is possible and
22 of forgetting that society should constantly be trying to transform itself into something
23 altogether different from, and altogether more acceptable than, what we find ourselves
24 living in at the moment. So I think it's important to recognise - it's been important for
25 me as a person involved in political life to recognise - that still, now that the main area of
26 the apartheid struggle is over, still the church has an important part to play: we can't fall
27 back and become a merely spiritual institution.

28
29 R: Another movement, Colin, and we might have to backtrack a bit to this - but a movement
30 that drew a lot of repression from the government - was the University Christian
31 Movement...

32
33 C: Yes, the UCM was a body that I was never directly and personally involved in, although I

1 knew a lot of people who were part of that - particularly a friend of mine, a Catholic
2 priest, Colin Collins, was one of the big movers within the UCM. The University
3 Christian Movement blossomed as far as I remember in the late 1960s, and it was a group
4 of Christians who had merely come to recognise that Christianity and socio-politics were
5 intimately interwoven. And what happened, as far as I remember, is that at a certain
6 stage the UCM decided to split, and I remember Colin Collins saying to me: 'We had a
7 conference, and we asked people what they wanted to do, and the whites said they
8 wanted to discuss theology and the blacks said they wanted to discuss politics. So we
9 said, okay: you go into that room and discuss theology and you go into that room and
10 discuss politics...' And everybody was quite amicable about this, but that was one of the
11 moments which led, I think I'm right in saying, to the formation of the South African
12 Students Organisation: this black group of Christian students from the UCM played a part
13 in the founding of the Black Consciousness Movement, which of course had the idea that
14 blacks could most usefully talk to themselves about their own experiences - their own
15 desires, their own political clout - and I think it's interesting that the UCM should have
16 been, as it were, in on the start of the Black Consciousness Movement. It's an indication
17 of the ways in which religion can be an enlivening force within a political movement, and
18 I think it was because the government was aware of this link between UCM and political
19 activism that they had this view that really the religious leaders should have nothing to do
20 with politics. They therefore decided that the people who were important in the UCM... I
21 remember particularly a Methodist called Basil Moore, who I think was more or less
22 hounded out of the country, and Colin Collins was also hounded out of the country... I
23 think this is what accounted for the government's anger about this movement, and the
24 SCM move was supported to some extent: it was a sort of forerunner of what happened
25 within the Christian Institute in the years which followed. Again a person like Basil
26 Moore was in very close contact, as far as I remember, with Beyers Naude so that this
27 was all radical Christianity working its way up in the South African political situation.

28 (End of first side).

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