

**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

Interview with Christopher Langeveldt  
conducted by Ruth Lundie  
on 29 September 1998  
at 25 Loop Street  
Pietermaritzburg

The interviewee has agreed to open access for use by researchers,  
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**KWAZULU NATAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT****INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER LANGEVELDT****CONDUCTED BY RUTH LUNDIE****ON 29 SEPTEMBER 1998 AT 25 LOOP STREET, PIETERMARITZBURG****(‘L’ SHALL INDICATE THE INTERVIEWEE AND ‘I’ THE INTERVIEWER)**

I: This is a recording of an interview with Chris Langeveldt in Pietermaritzburg on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 1998. Chris when did you first start getting interested in politics?

L: You see that would have been in 1970, when I first joined the seminary at Cedara and for the first time in my life lived in a non-racial community. I think I was pretty dumb, typical White product of a White's private high school. With all the racial appendages that came with it. And that's - at the seminary that I got to know people like Boetie Klasale<sup>^</sup>?, expounding? a whole alternative way of looking at history and a whole alternative way of being a South African and for the first time that you had to face up to what being a White was all about. But then also I had involvement at University of Natal. I'd say the first thing that catapulted me into real opposition politics was the Student Bulletins we did at the time. And in 1972 - or I think it was '72, I led the party to the riotous assemblies act and that was my first dabblings in politics - we stood up that night 'till midnight, facing the police, with Alsations and that led me deeper and deeper into political involvement in the sense that with Black students who I'd go home with them during the ? I spent time with people's families in the townships and just see - you know you were exposed to a different reality and I think that began my real political education and transformation when I saw life as it were from the other side.

I: Yes, quite.

L: And I think the discussion - I was handed a copy of Mandela's Freedom Speech - the speech from the dock..

- 1 I: Oh yes..
- 2 L: And that was a major turning point for me too because I had never had access to those sort  
3 of histories, and I think the studies as well - we began to look at Black Consciousness. At  
4 that stage it was rising.
- 5 I: Well it was - very naturally during that transition period, wasn't it?
- 6 L: And from Lesotho we got a lot of influence from (Aelred) Stubbs.
- 7 I: Oh did you indeed?
- 8 L: Yes, yes - and didn't he edit that book "I write what I like"?
- 9 I: Yes he did - he was a close friend of Steve's.
- 10 L: Ja, Steve Biko and we were in touch with the community at Lesotho.
- 11 I: Were you?
- 12 L: Through Cedara.
- 13 I: Yes.
- 14 L: And we got a lot of that literature. So it's actually a whole lot of influences, it's the personal  
15 interaction with people in that non-racial community at Cedara. It's the political  
16 consciencitisation of us Whites in the seminary and it's the access to the literature and then  
17 the actual courses themselves. Very critical studies of what was happening in South Africa.  
18 Now Clive Fore? was a very important person in teaching us alternative ways of analysing  
19 social normality in South Africa.
- 20 I: When did he come to Cedara?
- 21 L: Well, he only came there in 1975 - year - but I got to know him when I was a student in  
22 Rome in '73. So I was already exposed to some of Marxist critique's of South Africa at that  
23 stage which were then fleshed out by people like Boetie Kalhele? From a Black perspective.  
24 So that's how I began, it was from student politics in short.
- 25 I: I'm sure. I'm just going to wait for a minute...
- 26 L: Okay?
- 27 I: Yes.
- 28 L: Shall I move on from there?

1 I: Yes, we'll move on from there.

2 L: I think a very formative time for me was '73 to '76 - in Rome - Italy. I met up with Brazilian  
3 students - a whole range of Latin Americans, students from the East and Liberation Theology  
4 was coming into its own at that point, and Black Theology as well. And that was a very  
5 formative period for me - debating all these issues - but it was all academic to a large extent.  
6 I also came to know Paulo Freire method of conscientisation very well. I also read '?' and  
7 all that kind of thing. So as soon as I got back to South Africa I was asked to teach at Cedara  
8 in 1976. I also then joined up with a community programme - it was actually Sam Jacobs'  
9 Community Care Centre.

10 I: Oh, out at Raisethorpe?...

11 L: You know at Raisethorpe. And he involved me in that programme and I decided to work for  
12 the Methodist Church for six months and just- in that programme, for which I was given  
13 board and lodging and then tried out the sort of literacy programmes - adult literacy thing as  
14 a way of getting involved and I think what catapulted me in there was the shock - being  
15 aware of the 1976 killings? And that became a whole process for political formation on the  
16 ground when I began to learn the incredible histories and wisdom of people on the ground.  
17 I met people who had been actively in trade union service - or who were beginning to  
18 become very active: Ali Bloomack - she did a course for some of the un-employed people  
19 we were working with in that community programme at the time and through there I got  
20 more and more access to trade union structures and then I became involved with the YCW  
21 as a result. And our aim was to organise people, Christians, into modes and structures in  
22 such a way that they would combine their faith exploration with a concrete political  
23 involvement. And that seemed a very useful vehicle for doing it at that stage. At that same  
24 time I began to know Albert Nolan very well and I think from him I learnt the importance  
25 of structures in building leadership, method and then mobilising and organising the real  
26 contradictions that people experience on a day to day level in townships and so on. And that  
27 was the beginning of my political formation I think and involvement as well. Fairly seen I -  
28 let's see I went to Lesotho in 1979 and I met Mike Worsnip, I met Mike Lapsley..

- 1 I: You met a lot of the refugees from Soweto?
- 2 L: ...refugees from Soweto and then - let's see - I was in Buthe-Buthe so I stayed with -  
3 basically - the wives and children of migrant workers - 60% of the men at any time were  
4 outside Lesotho. So I saw - visible there - though it wasn't so much a time of political  
5 instruction - the theoretical stuff - you could see for yourself the impact of South Africa and  
6 its labour practices on neighbouring states. That conscientised me far more than any political  
7 theory and it was in that period - 1979 - that I acquired the Sesotho smattering? And I  
8 prepared myself for going to Soweto. I went to Soweto in 1980, beginning of 1980 - and  
9 originally my idea was to work for a trade union as a labourer - but the authorities at that  
10 stage were ...
- 11 I: ...declined?
- 12 L: Yes, I worked in a parish - but from the parish base I became involved in organising with the  
13 Young Christian Workers. And the whole idea behind that was to - train - students - develop  
14 their leadership in structures - and it wasn't us giving the training - it was peer-group training  
15 through taking up action, organising actions around the contradictions they experienced  
16 daily. And the sort of contradictions that we organised around were corporal punishment,  
17 lack of text books, ? The schools were a major site of struggle - because of the corrupt  
18 teachers, the drinking - the teachers - the lack of amenities and so on. And through that - ja,  
19 we began to develop a pretty strong movement. Not only in the kind of Nylsfontein region -  
20 but in Natal - the Western Cape and in Transvaal, as it was known then. And I became part  
21 of the national movement that secked (sought) to combine Christianity with the basic goals  
22 of the Muslim group?
- 23 I: And what I learnt from the young Black high school student at the time was the fact that the  
24 Young Christian Workers was an international organisation...
- 25 L: ...organisation, right..
- 26 I: ...had a tremendous appeal and effect..
- 27 L: Ja, ja, no it's it's ..
- 28 I: In widening horizons...

- 1 L: It widened horizons and gave people access to ideas like world socialism, African socialism,  
2 and things like - ways of thinking about an alternative society that went beyond simply  
3 criticizing the racial structures - it included a far more penetrating awareness of the dynamics  
4 that sustained the racial - racially-based community. And for people like that it was an  
5 amazing formation because they - they - they developed the formation through taking action  
6 on day to day issues - but in the process were learning a lot of political theory - they were  
7 building up a relationship of solidarity with countries abroad - and so if we look in 1982 -  
8 there were a whole lot of YCW people were detained - it was around Neil Aggett's time -  
9 you remember a whole lot of people were detained during that period?
- 10 I: Yes, I do.
- 11 L.: A lot of YCW people were detained at the same time and because of our - precisely because  
12 of the international connections there were all sorts of solidarity campaigns - around Europe,  
13 America, the East - this baffled the intelligence community I think in South Africa - that this  
14 small organisation had these sorts of links - because they were putting pressure on South  
15 African embassies abroad for the release of ... and I think that feeling that there was this  
16 international dimension to the struggle, was very important for those countries?
- 17 I: I'm sure it was, I'm sure it was.
- 18 L.: But I think why YCW was so important at that stage was that they succeeded in convincing  
19 people to be Christian meant being involved in the struggle to transform - but not in parallel  
20 Christian structures, but through existing secular structures.
- 21 I: Yes.
- 22 L.: But living out your Christian commitment in those secular structures - so your FOSATUs and  
23 that were the logical place for YCW - people to - follow through with their political  
24 convictions. And YCW group became like a faith reflection group on the actual involvement  
25 in those structures like FOSATU which eventually became COSATU - or indeed other  
26 unions. We ... (they speak at once)..
- 27 I: ...for the first time young Whites were getting involved in the Unions..
- 28 L: Yes.

- 1 I: ...the real incident was ? in the 1940's, but now they were back and there were people like  
2 Irwin and Pauline Stanford and so on who were concerned.
- 3 L: Ja, and then so - a whole Credo of Black leadership started developing in that movement and  
4 they became the Jay Naidoos today - amongst other people. But ja there was amazing  
5 formation that took place within Black leaders - and as I say it became the foundation of the  
6 new Black Trade Union movement that was just absolutely powerful. So that's what I recall  
7 of that period in the early '80s. What of course was interesting is that there was a lot of  
8 theologising going on within the YCW movement. I think for a lot of young Black students -  
9 this was an amazing discovery that you could be Christian and yet be devoted to  
10 transformation and revolution. That it was a Christian imperative to become a revolutionary.
- 11 I: Well you see this was unusual, I mean - the sort of Christianity that had been dished out was  
12 that it was almost difficult - it wasn't necessarily good - but weren't you endured? in that sort  
13 of statement?
- 14 L: Ja. And just to have a different picture of Jesus as a kind of revolutionary - for many it was  
15 a mind-blowing experience.
- 16 I: I also think that Steve Biko's influence was strong.
- 17 L: It was tremendous..
- 18 I: In this..
- 19 L: Ja, very much so..
- 20 I: Yes. Mmm.
- 21 L: And I think this was a progression that thought, I think, in a refined - those are important, and  
22 they coalesced. I think there was a lot of Latin-American influence as well that came in..
- 23 I: Well, I mean in the form of literacy and that sort of thing - it's a very strong line about their  
24 environmental rights and so on..
- 25 L: That's right... there was ? Tides - there were all sorts of people..
- 26 I: Yes.
- 27 L: And there was of course - the - I think the very - what had a big impact on YCW are the  
28 structures - not only, but I can remember it was possible to possess ? than others - was the

- 1 courses on transformation run by Ann Hope and Sally Kinghorn? In Lesotho in 19...
- 2 I: They started in Swaziland I believe?
- 3 L: It started in Swaziland but then they repeated them in 1979 - was one of the courses done by  
4 them again in Lesotho.
- 5 I: Oh yes?
- 6 L: And it was about 60 people that met at Mazenod - from all different sectors of an incipient  
7 sort of UDF or mass ? movement - there were ? people there were unionists and so on and  
8 they were trained in the delta method at the time. And that provided them with ways of  
9 building up structures, analysing reality according to the fair scheme and that provided a lot  
10 of good political education for a whole <sup>Black - Africa</sup> -cader - caders of people that then were literally ? in  
11 once ? processes (they speak at once)..
- 12 I: Yes...
- 13 L: Ja, that's what I remember of that. And the YCW took a lot of that forward in its own  
14 structures and passed that onto other formations as well. Let's see...
- 15 I: Was this prior to you going to Soweto - to ..?
- 16 L: Well, it was just prior to going to Soweto - ...
- 17 I: Yes..
- 18 L: ...which, which...
- 19 I: ...which was a very good introduction to Soweto?
- 20 L: Yes, it was - it was a very good formation for me - and it made me - I mean the Freire  
21 Method made me aware that adult education - it demanded of you an absolute respect for the  
22 experience and wisdom of people - which kind of lessened the Black Consciousness view  
23 that you as a White had nothing to teach our children? you could only act as a facilitator -  
24 through raising questions and ? and ? which I thought was what most of the ministers are -  
25 because I mean - they didn't ? (He speaks very softly)..
- 26 I: I seem to remember that in the Transkei - in the mid 1970s the freedom effort was banned?
- 27 L: It was yes, I mean that's why Sally Kinghorn and Hope were not allowed into the country and  
28 why they held the course in Lesotho.



- 1 I: I see.
- 2 L: It was the only way we could legitimately get a course...
- 3 I: Yes, because we had hoped to introduce it at Alice..
- 4 L: Ja.
- 5 I: And then it was locked up.
- 6 L: Ja.
- 7 I: Mmm..
- 8 L: It was banned and their books were banned as well - Ann Trindall sent ? books on the  
9 transformation method of ? So we had to smuggle them across the Lesotho border and  
10 leaflets and Kwazi eventually helped us to get us out there. It was then eventually - it was  
11 reproduced in other courses where ...
- 12 I: Yes.
- 13 L: So... Right where do we go from here?
- 14 I: No, you got to Soweto from here, surely?
- 15 L: Soweto, ja.
- 16 I: Yes.
- 17 L: A very formative period - all round - because I've been...
- 18 I: Were you a parish priest?
- 19 L: I was a strange animal, I was a deacon for nearly four years ...
- 20 I: Yes..
- 21 L: Starting here in Natal at Cedara when I was teaching in '78. No '77. And I was deacon up  
22 to 1982, then eventually I got ordained in '82 because the parish requested it to become ?  
23 monks? And it made sense to me theologically - that the community asks you to be ordained.  
24 And I didn't want to - in the beginning become a priest - I just wanted to be layman.
- 25 I: Yes...
- 26 L: Um. working for - truth? I was ordained at ? in 19~~82~~<sup>81</sup>.
- 27 I: Oh were you, yes?
- 28 L: Ja. And that had a profound impact also on the history of my life...

1 I: On such a huge? community of people.

2 L: Ja, you can imagine that's such a symbolic place?

3 I: Yes.

4 L: Eugene - with the site of June 16<sup>th</sup> commemoration and that's where I was ordained. And  
5 ordained into a Black community that received and accepted me as their pastor. So -

6 I: That was a great privilege.

7 L: It was a really incredible privilege because I didn't think that I'd ever be allowed to work  
8 there.

9 I: No.

10 L: If the people wouldn't want me to live there - they might have been very ? to offer me (he  
11 speaks softly). My first sort of real introduction to mass politics came with the funeral of a  
12 man called Mr Ngcobo, who had been killed in Swaziland, he was an ANC, in KK, had been  
13 killed by the SADF and his parents went to Swaziland and brought his body back to Soweto  
14 for burial. At that stage it was almost impossible to find anybody - any minister that was  
15 prepared to bury so they came to me - the youth - and asked if I would bury him and I agreed.  
16 And that catapulted me into incredible levels of politics - because just doing the funeral  
17 criminalised you in the eyes of the security...

18 I: Of course..

19 L: And it had the other effect then of people beginning to trust you and who were drawing you  
20 deeper into the political structures in the Soweto community. So I soon became part of like  
21 women ? structures, civic structures and also a person they called on to operate with the  
22 structures, using ...

23 I: Shall we pause for a minute to let you sort things out?

24 L: Yes, Ja I think the early 80s were a very important period of struggle which culminated in  
25 the launch of the UDF, and a number of other formations around that and Church people  
26 were quite intimately connected with all of those political formations through such  
27 formations as the ICT (the Institute of Contextual Theology) which also sustained our work  
28 as pastors in that situation..

- 1 I: I think restrictions were such that the Church felt an obligation to assume certain things  
2 which it hadn't until then - am I right?
- 3 L: That's correct - I think so - it provided structure and finance and the education and the  
4 possibility of - ja - acting almost as a shield for a number of ? Not just any underground ?  
5 you know - I mean I think there was a real conviction that this was part of the Christian  
6 programme - it wasn't just used as some sort of ...
- 7 I: Yes, no - as a means..
- 8 L: ...as a means to an end, no. And I think all those influences together - the formation of  
9 structures like ICT or YCW - was welding the formations that had intimate links with the  
10 unions, crystallised eventually to - ja managing the resistance as we know it.
- 11 I: Yes.
- 12 L: And I was lucky to be part of that. The most difficult period I think was between '82 and  
13 '86..
- 14 I: Was that when Soweto ?
- 15 L: That's when - I mean the State of Emergency was '85 and then after that it was just  
16 proclaimed year after year. But repression was quite severe already in 1982. What I recall  
17 was that - sorry I'm rambling a bit - but...
- 18 I: No, it's alright because I think these things - we haven't got a whole ? view of ? and we will  
19 get it..
- 20 L: I recall what triggered off the sort of mass-democratic movement was okay the incipient  
21 things round Wilson Rowntree's strikes, the meat boycott - red meat boycott in the early '80s  
22 and then Neil Aggett's death to me, triggered off the whole thing because it was at that  
23 funeral that people went onto the streets and decided that enough is enough and they came  
24 out as a mass force - the unions and all the formations - and it became a way of putting those  
25 kind of formations on the street as it were - in public view. And not long after that we had  
26 the crystallisation of the UDF structure which was launched from it. Now once that was  
27 formed, I think the tide - was unstoppable because you gave people structures through which  
28 they could actually begin to have their contributions at various levels. And you had your

1 civics that were dealing with the problems in your townships - you had your school  
 2 formations that organised people around the ? schools, the university ? all the ? decency? (he  
 3 speaks softly). You had the stuff that labour felt and I think the regime were being isolated  
 4 at ? degrees level and - but at the same time the regime was hitting back with severe  
 5 repression which was metered out and generated this enormous detentions, the deaths and  
 6 ...

7 I: Yes, the rolling tyres .... all that sort of thing.

8 L: The burning of ...

9 I: ...you hadn't seen before..

10 L: No and there was that - I remember there was a stage where we were burying people at the  
 11 rate in Soweto of one to two a week - who had been shot by police in ...and these were  
 12 people who were involved in the action in some way. I think it's that that gave rise - in my  
 13 mind - to that Cairo Document because what was happening - the pastors in the different  
 14 townships were actually just getting tired of burying the dead all the time and they were  
 15 saying this had to stop. In the media you have all these pious right wing - bully gang -  
 16 charismatic talking about - they were using ? quite deliberate to legitimise the position of  
 17 the state - calling what the state was doing legitimate self defence whereas the people were  
 18 involved in the violence and stuff like that and we just felt that there had to be clarification  
 19 of what people meant by the word violence - we had to ? we managed to get what the ? was  
 20 about. And I think the ? out of those very real structures to clarify.

21 I: What year was this published?

22 L: It was published in 1985.

23 I: Yes.

24 L: But I think the movement towards it begin already in 1982. People reflecting on the  
 25 disparate ? and the ? and the various formations about what was happening and they were  
 26 appalled at the way in which the gospel was being used to give credence to and ? to the  
 27 actions of the state whilst criminalising the actions of the people. And gradually people  
 28 thought that we had - something had to be done about re-legitimising the actions of the

1 people - of the ordinary people in the Christian terms. So that was very informative for me  
2 as a participant in that process- both the process of township politics but also the process of  
3 the ICT's work around formulating ?

4 I: And it was a case of truth starting to show itself for what it was.

5 L: Ja. That's it. The Truth had to come out.

6 I: Yes. So you had a very involved and busy parish priest's life in Soweto?

7 L: Ja, it was - it was - we attempted to build small Christian communities that lived up with the  
8 rural structures, the civic structures and the women's structures and the trade union structures  
9 and we tried to ensure that our liturgy and the whole way of being as Christian communities,  
10 celebrated and interpreted people's struggle with ? in that struggle - that's what it was all  
11 about. And I remember - one of the most dramatic things that happened - we set up a - in the  
12 ? of our parish we set up a liturgy committee that began to plan all these things under the  
13 celebration and our very first - at our very first liturgy committee meeting some of the parents  
14 were saying that their students didn't understand their involvement in the past - in the  
15 resistance they supported in the 50s. And I remember them saying - 'what will we do - how  
16 will we make our kids aware that we were involved.' And we got a film "Generations of  
17 Resistance" from the ...

18 I: It sounds familiar yes...

19 L: (they speak at once) United Nations? And we were able to show it one morning at the church  
20 at mass instead of preaching a sermon - we showed this film "Generations of Resistance."  
21 And I remember it was about 1983 and I think the kids were absolutely shocked - I mean they  
22 never believed that their parents had been involved in the 50s or 60s - that taught me how the  
23 system had robbed people of their sense of history.

24 I: Yes...

25 I: Because suddenly when they saw that film "Generations..." they saw footage of their parents  
26 - you remember those women in KwaZulu - here in Natal that beat up the men because of  
27 drinking and so on - and for not bringing back the money to pay for the schools and the  
28 women burning the shebeens - the women ? marching up to Pretoria - all that was in that film

- 1 and these kids then were entranced - they couldn't believe that their parents had actually been  
2 involved in resistance against the state - they believed that the struggle began in 1976.
- 3 I: But you see - I remember ? saying - 'all the books were banned.' The students didn't know  
4 their own political history - not at all.
- 5 L: That's right and you didn't blame them for having those attitudes but it was very interesting  
6 to see that once been ? the admiration they had for their parents and their willingness to go  
7 back to their parents and learn lessons about underground struggle because many of their  
8 parents had the skills of underground struggle but had shut up for fear of being lynched.
- 9 I: Naturally.
- 10 L.: Obviously and this - I thought it was a tremendously reconciling moment in our community  
11 after that - whole new attitude towards parents began to emerge - pride in their parents and  
12 a more collaborative effort between the formations even - you could see them getting closer  
13 - in say the civic structures - there was a new sense of peoples' history was beginning to ?  
14 in all structures..
- 15 I: It seems that...
- 16 L: I'm not saying we did - but ...
- 17 I: Yes, I didn't realise..
- 18 L: Ja, it was a very important lesson. I think - you know this - there's publications like "??"  
19 I: Yes.
- 20 L: They were absolutely vital because they gave people back a sense of their history - that they  
21 had been denied and be proud - Chris Mbhengu - and people - and I mean the way  
22 publications were shared were incredible - in Soweto - publications really did the rounds, I  
23 mean that's the way books should be shared - do you know what I mean?
- 24 I: Well you see - I do indeed, yes.
- 25 L: They really went - and people - they did the rounds and people were consciencitising each  
26 other - to me the structures were absolutely vital because people developed real leadership  
27 skills - I can remember illiterate women suddenly becoming chairpersons, that was the jargon  
28 of the time - 'we're the chairperson of this committee...' In the process of learning how to

1 read and write - learning how to give speeches, learning how to become confident and  
2 learning how to take up action against the state and fight some ? And you just - maximised  
3 leadership at that point - it's a pity that it was such a short phase because I think because if  
4 we'd had a much longer phase of the structures being angled to consolidate themselves you  
5 would have had a much wider layers - or leadership being developed. Obviously the state  
6 cracked down fairly quickly and realised - you know - about '84 '85 that the way to destroy  
7 that leadership was by destroying the structures and that's exactly what they did - they  
8 crippled the structures ..

9 I: They ? clamped down?

10 L: Mmm.

11 I: Now was it your ? to this that precipitated your going to the Philippines?

12 L: Yes, yes. You see - actually some of it was a - a chance factor. I was - Albert Nolan was  
13 asked to go to talk to people in Holland about the Kairos Document and he couldn't make  
14 it - he had something else on at the time - so he asked me to go in his place and I went  
15 because I can speak Dutch. I went to Holland and it was on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May - on the 12<sup>th</sup> of  
16 May I think the State of Emergency was declared. While I was there - ja, my provincial  
17 'phoned me up and said 'don't come back because they've raided the church at Soweto and  
18 they came to pick you up and you weren't there ...' So they said 'stay put in Europe for three  
19 months and then come back.' While I was there I worked for the overseas ? I couldn't stay  
20 in Holland all the time - I went to London and I worked for the Catholic Institute of  
21 International Relations. Theo Kauffman at that time had been deported out of the ?...

22 I: Oh yes.

23 L: That was in 1996, and together we worked on building up links of solidarity between other  
24 countries and South Africa, and we felt that the people that were closest to our struggle were  
25 the south-south type - and we felt that very little had been done to actually develop those  
26 links. I mean a lot had been done to develop links with Sweden and with London and  
27 England - you name it ...

28 I: Oh, Europe, yes... but nothing with places that had similarities...

- 1 L: Ja, so in - and we felt that it was important to sort of break out and organise that so the  
2 Catholic Institute of International Relations did a lot to bring about some - linkages between  
3 people in El Salvador, Guatemala and the Philippines and the struggle in South Africa - to  
4 learn from each other. So they organised conferences where they'd bring activists from those  
5 different theatres together to learn and exchange about their experiences - different levels and  
6 forms of struggle. Now I was asked to go to the Philippines because El de la Tourie? - you  
7 may have heard of him - he's a Filipino Theologian - ...he felt that the Philippines had an  
8 immense amount to learn from the ANC - in terms of...
- 9 I: Oh really?
- 10 L: Ja, ja. They had developed an internal struggle without international links of solidarity - or  
11 they hadn't - their links were very bad between their internal struggle and their external  
12 struggle. And he thought that the ANC had found the right balance - how to build up your  
13 internal structures and at the same time promote the struggle internationally. That wasn't the  
14 reason I went to the Philippines, the reason I went was to be exposed to the range of  
15 organisation in the Philippines and also to begin a process of consultation which would  
16 eventually lead to the Damascus Document..
- 17 I: I see...
- 18 L: So I was asked to - we first had a meeting actually in Zimbabwe in 1987, it was ? by the  
19 Albert Nolan, myself, and we mooted the idea of the need for a kind of international Kairos  
20 Document that would involve people from the Philippines, from El Salvador and Nicaragua,  
21 and El Salvador - agh, Honduras. So what we agreed to do was that the Catholic Institute  
22 for International Relations would coordinate activists who were involved in the national  
23 liberation movements as well as the Church - coming from all of those countries to a meeting  
24 in London where they would gang together and edit a kind of international Kairos Document  
25 - but there had to be preliminary kind of research done for that. So I was asked to visit the  
26 Philippines to float the idea with formations there because Ed was banned from returning to  
27 the Philippines and I was able, through the Vatican, to get into the Philippines on that kind  
28 of request from the cardinal there. In that way I was able to talk to various formations in the



1 Philippines and get the idea started with them thinking about and doing analyses of their  
2 situation in the Philippines. Other people were asked to do similar sorts of things in  
3 Honduras, Guatemala and so on - or in Nicaragua and then they put the same in South Africa  
4 - where people were doing a similar process with speaking to various structures, doing  
5 research into those organisations. We then brought all of that research together in London  
6 and the Editorial Committee then produced what became the Damascus Document - so ja,  
7 that's what I did in that period.

8 I: Yes, I'd love to ? groups..I think it's important.

9 L: At the same time - One of the other things that I did while I was in the Philippines - I was  
10 asked to look at how they developed low intensity conflict strategies in the Philippines.

11 I: Oh, very interesting.

12 L: ? was asked to do on behalf of our struggle and I collected an enormous amount of material  
13 from Filipino comrades about the low intensity conflict warfare theory and practice and that  
14 sort of thing - which I then brought back to South Africa and sent back in various ways.  
15 That's how Michael and myself got more connected on the scene here in 'Maritzburg  
16 because...

17 I: He was writing his book?

18 L: Yes, but that's because we - um - at that period, asked him to do research on low intensity  
19 conflict here in South Africa. Which then combined the information we had gleaned from  
20 the Philippines - from El Salvador and Guatemala because we believed it was all connected -  
21 the whole low intensity stuff. And Michael wrote the thing on the South African issue. And  
22 so, ja that was one of the more important products, by-products of the visit to there . When  
23 I got back from the Philippines..

24 I: What year would that have been?

25 L: 1987.

26 I: Yes.

27 L: I was asked to leave Soweto and come and teach here at Cedara because Theo Kauffman had  
28 been deported and nobody had been sent in to replace him so they asked me to take his place

- 1 and begin teaching at Cedara. And that's how my involvement in the Pietermaritzburg  
2 region started to move - because I've been ? for that dark period and ..
- 3 I: But so much valuable experience - I mean it was worth every second...
- 4 L: Oh, yes. I in fact felt sad about coming to 'Maritzburg initially because I wanted to go back  
5 to Soweto and my post?
- 6 I: Of course - I mean it was a matter of where you're seen?
- 7 L: But because of the need at Cedara, the Mother Superiors asked me to come and take vows  
8 of obedience...
- 9 I: Oh yes, yes...
- 10 L: And then I - ja, a new phase began completely - I mean that was 1987 and I had to re-  
11 establish myself here and it was very difficult because I was - I knew the structures in the  
12 Johannesburg region and Soweto and - UDF nationally, I didn't know people in Natal so it  
13 was very hard to start work up again political and regional - in the beginning.
- 14 I: And it was a different scenario because with the whole Inkatha/ANC division - ...
- 15 L: Ja, you had to be very, very careful...
- 16 I: Very.
- 17 L: Let's see - what happened? Initially I got involved - with secular structures - it was at - I was  
18 involved in the ministry of the church and the church ? had the structures. And we...
- 19 I: Yes, but there were - Detainees Support Committee - Dreskamer? And places like that, I  
20 suppose?
- 21 L: Ja, yes, and the PDA, the Pietermaritzburg Democratic Action Committee which was then  
22 the link through to the national ?
- 23 I: Yes.
- 24 L: So that's how I became involved here and that was the one structure to which I had some  
25 clout - political clout.?
- 26 I: Well, people like John Jeffrey would have been involved?
- 27 L: John Jeffrey was involved.
- 28 I: Yes.

- 1 L: And Peter's wife and Sue Philpott?
- 2 I: Yes..
- 3 L: And Bertins - Simon Bertin was another one at that time ? we were really doing our bit to try  
4 and conscientise Whites to programme support in ? (he speaks very quietly) - not very  
5 successfully...
- 6 I: No, I fear not...
- 7 L: Um, ja, but my - my main sort of involvement with the Black community was through the  
8 church again.
- 9 I: Yes.
- 10 L: And the political ? all through the church links - um...
- 11 I: And the students at Cedara would have been what 80% Black?
- 12 L: More than that, um they were 90 - I would say at that stage 94% of my students were Black  
13 students and the rest were represented there - small ? and that sort of thing. I think we're  
14 going to have to focus on questions now - I'm rambling...
- 15 I: Yes.
- 16 L: Maybe you can switch off?
- 17 (End of first side).
- 18
- 19 (There is nothing on the second side).