

YUNUS MAHOMED: SECOND INTERVIEW, DURBAN, 9 JULY 1992, BY J.SEEKINGS

JS: Just one question about the matters we were discussing the other day. The no-vote referendum position in December 1983, in the referendum issue, the thinking that was behind the no-vote position, was there a general consensus among for example NIC activists about, and UDF, in the Western, in Natal about that position? Or did you have some heavy debates about it?

YM: I think, no, I think to the best of my knowledge there was... Look, I am not saying there was unanimity, but there wasn't heavy debate. I think within Natal, I think it would have been a kind of, a very sort of significant majority position, and I think that is why Natal, by the time it got to the conference, had a fairly uniform position. That would be my recollection.

JS: And within the NIC? I mean, for example, in several previous occasions, there had been (as you were saying the other day) big debates within the NIC over participation type issues. Was this one fairly consensual?

YM: Ja, I think this one seemed to be fairly consensual. I think, I don't recall there being any kind of, ja, serious sort of differences on this issue. It seems like this one was a, wasn't participation, in terms of a dummy institution, because I think a lot of the other arguments in terms of the participation debate was, a lot if it emotional. That the process itself is corrupting, so you can get the best guys and once they get that in their approach, in the referendum, nobody's got anything, you do it, the people vote and it is finished, it is giving an opinion, rather than being involved in a longer ongoing process. So it didn't really raise to the best of my recollection, any serious debates within the NIC.

JS: Right. And just finally on this. When you got to the PE conference, and there was a lot of, actually when you arrived there, there was a lot of documents flying around the place, kind of fairly vitriolic, heavy documents, I believe.

YM: You might have to jog my memory about that.

JS: Well, I haven't got copies of them, but I believe that people like Professor Mohamed and others were busy writing away beforehand.

YM: Pamphlets, and so on?

JS: Pamphlets.

YM: Ja.

JS: And the decision that Curnick should issue, present the Natal position was only decided at the Conference?

YM: Ja. Well, look as I said that would have been decided by the Natal delegation, of which I was formally part, but because I was part of the National Secretariat, I would have, I didn't attend because the thing was so tense, that from the NEC's side, we were probably having simultaneous meetings, ja. So that, the Natal, I mean the other people like Paul, and Curnick and so on, would actually be in a much better position to describe what happened in the Natal caucus [?].

JS: Okay, and very finally on this. Was there much of a sense that this issue, if it wasn't handled well, could lead to, sort of, a lot of resentment aimed against Indians in the UDF, specifically as Indians?

YM: Ja, well I think that concern had developed. I had... The one thing that did strike me was at some point, from the Transvaal delegation, I think Firoz [Cachalia] presented their position and I was, I mean I was just sort of observing this, because we weren't, we had agreed that none of us would speak, but also the way the hostility was coming from certain sectors of the crowd to him, I think that one was beginning, and unofficially, one began to pick that up. So I think, ja, that may have, it was. Let me put it this way, I don't think it was, it wasn't an overt or dominant current, but an undercurrent emerging from some sectors. But I think it was prevalent in some sectors and so on. That was something one had to take account of. I think that the position was that the NIC obviously was for, and also because Firoz had spoken, he was always in the Transvaal, he spoke as Transvaal, as part of the Transvaal UDF delegation, the TIC which was in existence, I think, at that stage, would then have had a similar position. Was it in existence?

JS: Ja, oh yes. Do you remember the NEC, or the National Secretariat, formally discussing the problem of, the possible problem of, resentment of Indian activists in the UDF? In that context?

YM: Ja. It was raised at some levels. But now what I am not clear about, was whether we actually... It would have been more likely, an issue of that nature, it just, but I can't remember a specific instance, we tended to discuss those kinds of matters in an informal, or in-committee way, rather than for minuting in a formal kind of way. So it would have been, it was, I am quite certain it was discussed. But more in, my recollection would be that it would be more discussed in an informal kind of way, in a non-recording way.

JS: Well let's move on to thinking about some of the events of 85. The very first thing I want to think about is the question of youth organisations. At the end of 1984, the UDF decided it must take up the International Youth Year and set up, and encouraged structures to be set up at the beginning, I think the very beginning of 1985 there was a conference in Durban here, at the Mnini Camp. I don't know whether you were at that conference?

YM: No, I wasn't.

JS: Where a committee was elected to oversee the process of National Youth Organisation. At some point Dan Montsisi was also appointed to be IYY coordinator. Now, in most areas there were separate IYY committees, and National Youth Organisation committees. In Durban, the problem was rather different, I believe.

YM: Well, what I... I think, you see, look the problem... You see I think today I think they've made up and they are good friends now, but I think you... the one guy is Kumi, from the Youth Forum, I think it was called, and Khetso and Lechesa I think

were the two guys. Now, I suppose now they can talk about it much more dispassionately from both angles. But the point is that what we were trying to do... Okay, although Lechesa, no, he wasn't from the REC, in the initial phase he wouldn't have been Publicity Secretary, but I mean, Khetso was like the sort of... well, I think at a certain point, I don't know if he was always ... [?] but he was like a kind of, the driver for Curnick, and an assistant to Curnick and so on, so he was actually based at the office, for both and at a certain point, because Curnick initially, before he became National Chair, was, soon after he came out, employed as the organiser for the Million Signature Campaign, the coordinator in that 83 period, just after he had been released. And then was sort of based in the office there. And I think part of this youth debates, as I recollect, started appearing during that period. And I think from, I remember having, from the REC's side, in some ways we were trying to mediate the conflict. Some of us, let's say somebody like myself, I mean, historically, I knew Khetso from when he was quite young, and so, and because he was close working with Curnick and so on, I mean it is possible that we could have been more, we could get more information from the one side. I am not sure at that time... No, Lechesa I don't think was even on the REC but Jabu Sithole was. So I think that again the REC was quite balanced, because you also had Victoria [Mxenge] and Xundu and so on. So, within that we would have, there would have been people, if there were people who were seen to be, who would not have identified... And we tried to have some meetings about, to try and get these two groups to unite. And at times, I remember, a number of, I won't say a number, but there were some meetings held, a few, in that case trying to see how and what the differences were and so on. But largely I think we kept on saying to both the groups, because we were getting, in some way, you could say, letters or representations or something from this group and that grouping and so on, and one was trying to get that. And then I think there was, there was eventually some larger meeting at which the NYO emerged, right? And the other person who then went on to SAYCO from here was Simon Ntombela. He is at IDASA now so he could give, you could get perspectives from him as well, in that period. But I think his were... Just being the secretary and from the REC side, we were involved with the issue but involved more, not as youth organisers, so we stayed out of the debate, or tried to, as much as possible and got involved when the two groups were actually coming to us and trying to say how actually it had occurred.

JS: Now what was your understanding of what the problem was?

YM: Well, ja, I think, look, my understanding of the problem was, firstly I think there was, there would have been some problems about what I can call organisational strategies or methodologies about firstly how things would go about. I think there was some suspicion from about some of the people, particularly I know from the kind of, let's say the people who became like the side, the Khetso's and so on, because they were seen as one grouping. But some of the people, whether they might

have been informers, or system-linked, because they had some dubious history, they were a bit concerned in terms of, in that kind of period, about associating... I mean, I think that was the second kind of concern about how... Now, I'm not sure how openly that could have been expressed, but I think when it had been communicated privately to some of the people, there would have been negative reactions, because there were some, I would say, the other grouping having, because there were these two groupings, there would have been some bonding between the individuals and I don't think that the conference was diplomatically chaired. That I think faced a greater counter-reaction. Because those are always difficult times for issues to handle, and I think that was the second issue, that I recollect that had exacerbated the issue. Ja, and ja, I think, also... I am not sure... I suppose the first sort of issue was obviously the question of influence and power, I suppose. There was the youth constituency, is a powerful constituency, and you had sort of, both groupings had sort of kind of capable and energetic and ambitious kind of leading individuals, right? And I think that would be the other issue that I would identify. I think those, to me, were some of the more important issues at the time.

JS: At NEC meetings, sometimes when youth issues were discussed, would reports on youth from different areas be given by youth representatives on the NEC or by the regional representatives on the NEC? I mean, did you have to report on the situation in Durban?

YM: Well, ja, you see, well, in the initial phase before SAYCO was formed, the youth didn't have representation in that 83 to 85 period, right? I think after that, after the second NY-, the second National General Council, then by that time, SAYCO in its embryonic form, or whatever it was called before it was formally launched, then came on. And then we had created, we changed our approach, because the NEC's size had been reduced, but now we were getting national structures, and it was mainly the students, the youth, and the women sector, I think, over a period of time, came. So what would actually happen was that, once they came on board, they would give the reports. But quite often what happened, and I remember, I think invariably almost most of the regions were involved, maybe less so would have been Southern Transvaal because the SAYCO head office was there, but I remember like in Border - and you probably can, because you are working on this.. - there were two youth congresses, and they had that big split. And now you would get the SAYCO guys saying this, and then there would be that, and sometimes in Natal, also, they would give a report, and I would say look, from my contact and from our reports of the meetings and so on. And so there used to be discussions and sometimes there were variances. I mean it was, their reports differed from ours, their perceptions sometimes differed. But they would actually lead usually with the report, once they were there, on the youth issues. But it would be sort of at times, challenged, or the perceptions would be challenged from different.. And then also, part of the problem would be, and I think at times there was this whole, also

problems about the resource flows and so on. And I mean in Border, even Natal, the guys used to..., I remember going up to NEC meetings and saying: But you know the guys are not getting resources, they are complaining that they couldn't organise. And what was happening - and I think Western Cape had a similar problem at a certain point - because what was happening is that we were using, because it was an important sector, there were UDF regional resources which were at times being diverted to maintain the youth, on a, sometime, a long basis. And then those who didn't get paid. And so I think those were the kinds of issue that were...

JS: Thinking about resources, leads to another question. In the first period, 83-85, before the Easter 85 conferences, did the UDF in Natal have any employees as such?

YM: Yes, in the Natal region?

JS: Ja.

YM: Ja, well I am just trying to work out... Ja, well I think what, I am just trying to work out whether we had volunteers... I know Curnick was employed.

JS: For the Million Signatures.

YM: For the Million Signature Campaign, but then basically, because that was the major campaign, even once the campaign was over, he remained as the organiser. And I think, after a while, I think, I don't know whether it was towards the end of 83, I think, Khetso - when you see him, if you just talk to him - but whether, what period - he would be more clear about the dates - was based in the office, I think largely voluntarily because I remember his family saying this guy is not working at all, and so on, and just running around and so on, so obviously, it was okay because, he was still, he was just out of varsity so his parents were supporting him and so on, but he actually was doing that. So he would have been the other person on largely a voluntary basis, as more or less with Curnick, as I said, in the office. Then we might have employed..., and then Terror was a full time employee, who spent part of his time, because his wife was here and his kids were here, so I think that..

Although I think, I would say about a quarter or so of his time was actually spent in Natal on average, maybe even less during that period. And he used to be travelling quite a lot. So he was based partially here, and he used to show. And so I think he manned the office, and then Lechesa at a point, I think again just check with him, but I think he was also..., I don't know whether it was after 85, when he was elected. And then we might have employed some younger people just to help with receptionist work and things like that, but I don't think we had too many, it would have been... I think, generally, one had tried to keep a much more tighter rein overall, when you look at the Natal region in terms of employees, than, for example, Southern Transvaal and some of the other regions, we actually had much less employees than other regions.

JS: At this time, Victoria Mxenge was treasurer, I believe. Is that right?

YM: Yes. That's right.

JS: I mean you were obviously a secretary, you were also involved in the financial side, and presumably Mewa Ramgobin was also involved in the financial side as National

Treasurer. The funds that were raised, would they all be channelled through head office, or would some funds be raised locally for local expenditure?

YM: No, initially, as I say, in that 83 period, you see up to the time of the launch, if you take... We came into existence about April 83, I think. So, at that time there was no, I think, concept of even overseas organising. So everything was being raised locally. I think that people had to pay for the busfares and so on for the launch. Either organisations or individuals paid, I know everybody had to pay, there was no other, I don't think there was any subsidising. We might have got limited subsidisation in terms of going to the bus companies and raising money locally to subsidise some people and the churches might have given us some money. And I remember, well, we chartered some kind of plane, or there was some deal, because there were about a hundred, up to about a hundred and fifty people, professionals, who actually paid their own fares, on some late night or some kind of flight both ways, at a, very kind of, very attractive fare. So those were the kind of... There was a lot of kind of local, either people paying from their pockets, or local fund-raising initiatives, or subsidisation from their own organisations. I think once after the launch, and within the NEC, I think initially there was moneys available, until much later. I think by the second NEC, or third NEC, we would have been informed if money was being raised overseas and so on. Because I think, at that time, it was kept quite hush-hush because, I know it took me some time to find out we were getting money from the Swedes. As in the initial period it was left to Mewa and Cas [Saloojee]. I mean, they said, no, well we are getting money from some friends, and basically, so the NEC knew that there was moneys coming. And they said: we'll make money available to the regions. After a while it became, I think while then they started telling everybody quietly where the money was coming from and everybody knew. I'm not sure... What do the minutes say now? I mean you probably know more than I do about that part.

JS: I don't recall the minutes saying anything about money.

YM: Finance, ja, well I think the way we used to discuss it is quite in committee, because it was still a fairly repressive climate. I mean I remember at a much later stage when we actually started talking more openly, and I mean, I think, later, during those times, I think when there was a lot of complaints and so on particularly from the SAYCO guys and I'm sorry I'm jumping a bit, but then we, I remember we got the money from the Swedes, I'm meeting somebody from the Swedes, but you know if you just broke that kind of rule because the point is that there is such a lot of suspicion being cast, and then we used to say this is the amount we are going to receive, this is the budget and so on. In that, so I think, that in that first phase, there was no kind of questions about that certain regions or certain sectors were getting favoured over others, and so on. While I think in the later period those kinds of things were emerging, and I think that is... I don't think it would have been minuted because at a later stage we stopped minuting, because a lot of those

were during the emergency period. But in the meetings, I mean, it was being openly disclosed.

JS: Fairly early in 1985, just after the Azaadville conference, Natal was, said it could employ a regional, a sort of rural organiser. Do you recall who that was?

YM: Yes. We employed a person called 'KK'...

JS: 'KK'?

YM: 'KK', from Maritzburg, from the Midlands Region. Now, 'KK'... Now you see, because then, I don't know what happened to him, but he was detained fairly shortly afterwards and didn't do too much.

JS: Was that a youth guy?

YM: 'KK'. Ja. Did you see Martin [Wittenberg] already? Are you going back to see him?

JS: I've had some discussions with Martin.

YM: I think Martin, you see... Maybe, just to preface that arrangement between... What you have is you have the REC here, the only region that effectively had a subregional REC in a sense of its own type of region, was Maritzburg. They functioned. And the point was that that was regarded more as a rural area. Well not Maritzburg itself, but they had access to rural areas. So for the organising in those rural areas, that was... So there was the guy called 'KK' that we employed initially. And then there was another youngster. When he got detained, we were employing I think a guy from someone from Mpophomeni now.

JS: Somebody called Boy?

YM: That's right.

JS: So first there was this guy 'KK'...

YM: And then it was Boy. I don't know whether there was anybody else after that that we also... Yes, you see and then I think S'khumbuzo [Ngwenya] was also employed. I'm not sure but he became the Midlands region co-secretary with Martin and I'm not too certain whether he was supposed to move into the rural areas. The problem was that in that period, Maritzburg actually, or the whole Midland region, became the centre of the violence. So anybody, we were employing guys, and then they all, at a certain point in 86, or 87, late 86 early 87, I mean these guys were just getting picked up. I mean we had about a thousand detainees, just in the Midlands region. So it was, then it was just, everybody was in. And the point is that we might have continued to pay salaries, because that was a UDF policy almost, to say that if a guy gets detained, it is like an occupational hazard and you continue to pay the guy. I think that is what would have happened. We actually may not have done that in the initial phases, because when 'KK' went off, we might have just given his family a subsistence, and employed Boy and taken some of the money to pay there, and that's how it would be...

JS: At what point did the REC restructure? So as to include representatives from places like the Midlands? Because on the first REC there was nobody from the Midlands. Is that right?

YM: Ja, that is right. No, what would have happened is that what we did was that at the, after the first, we only had one other election, which was in 85, before the NGC. And at the second, at the second meeting where elections were held, there was a new constitution, the constitution was amended. And what we had made provision for was... You see, in the old REC we didn't have, everybody, you selected people as individuals, and not because they were linked or representative of a sector, so you just, it was a whole lot of individuals who were nominated from the floor and they became members of the REC, I think. When we, in the second phase, we actually created a gap, and I remember that there was a trade union person supposed to be in there. The problem with the trade unions because of the difficult relationship they have, they had a mandate problem. There were trade unionists or workers, but they didn't want to come onto it because of... Ja, I think there was a mandate problem, and then I think eventually, I mean we used to ask a guy, some guys sat in, Thami used to, once he was regional secretary, used to be ex-officio, but he didn't want to be, he couldn't be formally there because of, I mean there was always a tension, even nationally. I mean there was, later on it became cooperative, but they didn't, there was always that debate. So because one had a good working relationship with him, and I think he was Regional Secretary from about 85, 86 onwards, I'm not sure exactly when, Thami - he is also currently Regional Secretary, of COSATU now - Thami Mohlomi. No he won't be written there [REFERS TO LISTS OF REC MEMBERS]. But what I am saying is what actually happened.. Have you got the 85 one? No this is the 83. [REFERRING TO LISTS]

JS: 85.

YM: 85, but if you look at 85 on, you have got all the people see. Also Themba was one, and Themba must have come on, Themba was... He has been suspended now, but he was ... [NEHAWU ??] until very recently. But I think in addition to him, well I think it was after this, I think Thami would have been elected in 86, I can't remember the date. But also Themba was, he used to attend but he was not sometimes regular and he went into his own periods of detention, somewhere during that emergency. He wasn't around for a while.

JS: Why did the Natal Region decide to restructure in this way? And none of the other regions had this formal structure?

YM: No, well I think what we found was that, in the REC, the old REC, the problem was that one of the accusations that was being, well it wasn't made as an accusation, but let me say a perception which I was getting informal feedback on, was that the UDF was being run by the office bearers, and particularly I was playing quite a central role, and people felt, they used to... The point is that while we should try and meet regularly on a weekly or fortnightly basis, people used to come to the meetings, I used to give all the facts, the reports of everything that was happening, and then the NEC members knew quite a lot of what was happening, because when there were NEC meetings in between and so on. But I think in a sense what we found was that

there wasn't a commitment because people didn't really know what to do. Because they might have been either professional guys or something like that. I think D.K.Singh, to use an illustration, was on the previous REC, right? Now, he had been although he was not put there because he was DHAC, when he was chairperson, but he wasn't very active and he had slowly become less active. But he hardly attended an REC meeting, and that was the sort of reason for motivating it. That a person must be accountable. We said: How do you make this thing work better? If a person is accountable to a sector, the sector has the right to hold that person accountable. If that person doesn't attend meetings, you can go back to the sector. I mean, I think a number of those people over a period of time would be replaced or substituted. But it was up to the sector to decide that. Now in terms of the old arrangement, if D.K.Singh did not attend meetings, DHAC had no constitutional basis to replace him because he was nominated in his individual capacity. Although people bore in mind the office he held at the time, that he would have been nominated. So I think that it was just to try, it was a structural way of getting more commitment and accountability from the people who were there.

JS: This presumably means that there was no need then to have Regional General Councils?

YM: Well, ja, the Regional General Councils, we didn't really have as many as the other regions. Because these people actually did... In fact, ja, we actually had much less Regional General Councils. And that became a criticism. Also that in the old period there were more Regional General Councils, and after that period there were less. And that also became a criticism. But also I think that part of the reason for not holding Regional General Councils, was that the Regional General Councils... I think things might have turned out differently had there not been the Emergency and so on. Because a lot of the considerations for not holding them was your perception of the security situation and how much of a risk you are prepared to take. The idea was, let me say it didn't work out that way, but actually let me just tell you what the plan was. That you would actually then say take the Regional General Council to be more structured, in the sense that instead of having one delegate, where you have major issues you are entitled, and you might have actually not used, might even have done it on some proportional basis, where there is a large affiliate there, you would say come with four reps or something or otherwise just do it equally, but you know it was like we had at the national level, a difference between the NEC...

END SIDE ONE (TAPE ONE)

JS: You say that this was the last regional election held? In 85?

YM: Ja, 85.

JS: Now also, the other striking thing about this is that, these are also all Durban people. [REFERS TO LIST OF 1985 REC]

YM: That's right, but then, yes, that's correct. Now what there should have been and what there... Ja, what was... The point is that the Midlands [sic] region had a subregion. Now, in addition to these people, we were supposed to, the way we were going to operate, is that we had divided Natal up into 5 subregions, as you would know. And the point is that the only subregion which effectively was able to operate besides from the Durban region was Midlands. Later on, we had something operating, it wasn't really a subregion, in Northern Natal. Well, in fact all the five at some point, what you had some kind of core grouping operating, and they used to actually attend REC meetings, in the latter period. I remember at the 88, 89 period, there were guys from Empangeni and also, again a lot of the guys got detained, but I mean, in meetings, not, I don't think they used to attend regularly REC meetings, but we used to have, I suppose in the nature of what you would call a General Council meeting, or of a larger meeting of some type, because it was actually more costly, you had to arrange for those guys to come down and so on. But there were some guys in the Newcastle, Dundee, Ladysmith axis, they also operated there. Again, there used to be quite often detentions and hassles and so on. So there was a problematic form, but there were some, and they were entitled to representation, which isn't reflected here... [REFERS TO LIST]

[BREAK IN TAPE]

YM: I think there was provision for that and I am not sure where it would be recorded, but I must try and find that. But what was... As the subregions came, I think what we had done, although by the time of the National General Council, I think that is when these, this document was printed, these posts had been filled. But I remember, even the sort of women, and I think the unions hadn't decided who their rep was going to be, and we got that subsequently. And we also said that we want to divide Natal up into these subregions, and I think by that time the concept was clear. And also, we had, they weren't going to elect, but they would have representation because this committee, and I mean this was also one of the criticisms that was coming through from the other subregions, that this was both a, you know it was like we always talk about from everywhere else in the country about the kind of PWV domination of the country and that they think that what they do goes for the country, we had the same kind of metropole problem in Durban. Because they said: Are you a Natal REC with all Durbanites sitting on it, or are you a Natal REC, and then on what basis do you do that? And I think that had we continued to, during the, if things had, then I think the constitution would have been changed again. I mean the one idea we were trying to create was that the Maritzburg people who were coming regularly were getting quite frustrated because quite a lot of the time, was in a sense in the meetings was taken up discussing kind of Durban or subregional issues. You know a lot of the issues that people brought up at the

meetings. And the Maritzburg guys said: Look that doesn't concern us, we don't come and raise, we've got our own meetings to discuss these things at. Those... If we're coming here all the way, we want issues that affect the region as a whole to be discussed, and you must have your own meetings. And so I think there was that criticism that was coming through. But, I think, even then, they were supported in the few meetings where people from the other subregions came as well. But because Maritzburg is the closest and also had a resource base and so on, where people could come down regularly, they actually had attended, in that post-85 period, were fairly regular attenders of REC meetings, even during the emergency period.

JS: At the Azaadville conference, you were elected onto the restructured, reduced NEC again. I presume you were fairly regularly attending NEC, National Working Committee meetings. Fairly soon after that conference, what was...

[INTERRUPTION] Fairly soon after the conference, the issue of repression cum violence arose, firstly, and most specifically in the Eastern Cape with the murder of Goniwe. Did you go to Goniwe's funeral?

YM: No, I didn't go to the funeral.

JS: I presume there was a big delegation of Natal people who did?

YM: Yes. There would have been a, I think there would probably have been a bus or something that went, I can't now recall, but I wasn't able to go for some reason or the other.

JS: You discussed ... [?]. Do you recall the issue of consumer boycotts being discussed in the National Executive Committee?

YM: Yes.

JS: Soon after that? Can you recall the context of the discussion, and the gist of the discussion?

YM: Well I know that, you see, one of the problems that, because of the Inkatha issue and the division in the townships, I think there was from Natal's side, we have always had a difficulty in terms of implementing a consumer boycott. Because, and I think that, if you, in that period, the sort of violence, had largely been a Natal issue. Right, I mean everybody was concerned about it in the NEC, but I think that because of that I think there was difficulties from just trying to implement it, and so I think we had raised those concerns at the meeting, in terms of that we would have difficulty. I think also, I think Western Cape because of its particular dynamics also had some kind of difficulties. Some other regions like Border and some of Northern Transvaal and so on, found it much easier because of the nature of those, I think those were the kinds of the debates that were taking place.

JS: When in July or August, 1985, with the state of emergency in the Eastern Cape and the Transvaal, UDF structures decided to take up the consumer boycott essentially as a national form of protest against repression and against the state of emergency. And we see it in the Western Cape, we see it in Transvaal, Pretoria, Jo'burg. But Natal made a clear decision that it wasn't really Durban, there wasn't going to be a consumer boycott called in Durban as well?

YM: Ja. Well, I think what would have happened is that it would have been discussed within the REC and... Well, it would have been, one would have largely been influenced, because in many of these places the consumer boycotts really operate in African areas. In the non-African areas, it wasn't really successful, there might be some odd examples, but I think overall I think that was my impression, and I think so, in a sense, one would have been guided largely by the kind of township leadership, here, and I mean they were saying, look, there's a war going on and, because there was in that period. Now if you recall in 85, ja I think... Victoria was murdered in... Was it 85, August?

JS: Yes, August.

YM: Ja, so that was that period. So shortly after that, and then there was the Umlazi massacre at the commemoration service. And so that was the sort of atmosphere of the time, when those, that decision was actually taken. In a way it was really quite... The Inkatha, sort of, was really on the rampage at that time.

JS: Except that the issue of the consumer boycott would have been discussed nationally, regionally, before she was killed.

YM: Ja, no, no I agree, but I'm saying that, although her killing came after that, I am saying that the violence was still on, and other people were being killed, and it was very tense. And the situation even prior to her death, was actually... Because the violence was building up. If one just takes, from my own point of view, the build up in the violence, is that initially, about, if I remember, 83, say the UDF, 83 was fine, they were still writing letters, to Gatsha and so on, and Terror was writing those long letters, you have probably seen some of those, and trying somehow engage it. But I remember in 84, or late 83, early 84, Archie and Curnick went to Esikaweni where Archie was actually assaulted and I think this Gideon Zulu or somebody, I mean they can tell you more, ... [?], and that was the first skirmish, but it wasn't taking life or something. But as we went into, later into 84, but particularly into 85, the escalation was actually developing, and my recollection is that even before Victoria was killed, the tensions and so on, and I mean, people were actually being killed on a much greater scale than ever before. It hadn't reached the later scales as far as 86 or 87 later had, but I think in relation to the past where there hadn't been that kind of history, and I think that that was the kind of, from my recollection, the kind of..

JS: Do you remember which the first campaign was, which was affected by this? I mean for example in the Million Signatures Campaign, had this been a factor? Had this affected the areas which...? Not at that point?

YM: No, not at that point. Because, that was the first, one of the first campaigns, late 83, early 84, right?

JS: Early 84.

YM: Ja, early 84, so that is the case. Now at that point there wasn't really a problem about the Million Signature Campaign. You see again, with the Signature Campaign,

what you could do, is you could collect signatures, people came into the Metropole to do their whatever, so you could get them at the time. To effectively monitor a consumer boycott, it had to be done in the townships and the people were coming there and so on. I think at that point in time, I mean, there wasn't... Later on people began to raise problems of the kind of harassment and intimidation, forcing people to drink oil, and things like that, which some of the kind of more militant elements were actually raising. Those were, and we were a bit concerned of the image within the community that UDF was developing. But I don't think that was a concern, I mean that wasn't even an issue, because there hadn't been that experience at that stage.

JS: You said that consumer boycott was essentially something that was centered on African areas, and not in coloured and Indian areas. Now, consumer boycotts started off in Eastern Cape where there were very small coloured and Indian areas. Why couldn't this have been extended to those Indian areas, coloured areas in Durban?

YM: You mean the consumer boycott?

JS: Yes, the consumer boycott. Why were you pessimistic about the chances of organising a consumer boycott in Durban? In those areas?

YM: Ja, I suppose... Look, in a sense, maybe, I think we didn't even consider... The problem was that it wasn't going to receive... Predominantly one would look at the African areas, and I think in that sense, they weren't, they had the problems. I mean, you know it is the first time it is actually striking me that should we have tried it out in these other areas, even if it wasn't going to... Could we have had a differentiated policy for not carrying it out in African areas and just doing it in the Indian and coloured areas? And I don't think actually that that debate actually arose, or at least the thought crossed people's minds in that form. Maybe just a general point, if I remember, once the violence had actually started, the one factor was that almost most meetings you just couldn't avoid that. I faced this problem as the secretary. People would come and say, look, so and so has been killed. You didn't operate as an REC which had to discuss a whole lot of items, because if there was a violence issue, somebody would say, can we change the agenda order? And there was an attack here, there was this, and these people need this kind of assistance and what can you do and so on. And people would usually set aside two or three hours for the meeting and that item would sort of eat into quite a lot of the time. And then the other issues go down the agenda. And some of them actually don't get discussed. Or get discussed very briefly and superficially. And I think that was one of the effects, I think, of this violence and on the way the meetings, or the kind of debates and discussions and the decisions that would be taken at REC meetings.

JS: Do you recall being influenced much by the experiences of the consumer boycott in Pietermaritzburg? In connection with the Sarmcol dispute?

YM: Could have been, you know. What occurred there? Was there...? I can't recall now.

JS: Well, do you remember the Sarmcol, where the Sarmcol strike...

YM: I remember the strike and so on.

JS: ... and the UDF then in the region... [?]. MAWU, in conjunction with the, UDF called a consumer boycott, and Inkatha came up with a very heavy statement against the consumer boycott, saying that they were going to break it. And that the tensions that the consumer boycott, that the union and the UDF would backpedal and called off the consumer boycott in face of Inkatha, imminent confrontation with Inkatha.

[UNCLEAR]

YM: No, I think we would have been influenced by something like that. I mean that was part of this whole tension. We knew that, I knew for example that somebody like Archie Gumede would have been quite strongly opposed to the consumer boycott. Because he would actually have come to the meeting and said: Look, people are dying there. Do we want to do something that's going to... You know very, very emotional arguments. And as the President, Regional President and so on, he would speak fairly strongly and emotionally about the issue which actually would, I think, influence the meeting to an extent. And then to take the other experiences into account.

JS: So the kind of argument that he would make is that with a consumer boycott, people are going to die?

YM: Ja, well, it can... This is Inkatha's position, fine, it doesn't lead to an escalation of violence and so on. I mean, and that could be a problem. It wasn't specifically, I mean, at points in time, I remember that where there were some other kind of, I can't remember what they were, but say a kind of, or forms of action, which might have been in some ways radical. It became a bit bad, because if there were non-African members quite often making the suggestions, it sometimes took on a kind of racial flavour in the sense that he would sometimes say: You don't live in the township, what do you know about that? And so it was, it unfortunately sometimes became a bit difficult to deal with that kind of, to try and manage a meeting when those kinds of comments were made. And then people would obviously sit up and say: You are not saying that, because of that. And so on. But it just gave a kind of unhealthy colour to it, the meeting at times.

JS: Fairly soon after this, you were detained anyway, in August. Fairly soon after the Inanda violence erupted. You were released in October. The next thing, the next conspicuous thing which occurred after this, is the launch of COSATU here in Durban.

YM: In November. Ja.

JS: In November.

YM: In November, early December.

JS: Now one of the things which occurred at the launch of COSATU of course, was that there were very, very strident criticism of Buthelezi and Inkatha and KwaZulu. Do you remember this being discussed in UDF structures?

YM: I was at the launch, I remember Baraji speaking. Again I think informally people were pleased with the statement. And I remember even Archie came to the launch. He didn't say anything, whether he heard that. But I don't remember, formally, whether we actually discussed what was said or the speeches that were made or anything like that.

JS: Did the UDF ever consider a, at this point at all, a more conciliatory approach to Inkatha?

YM: Well, no, I don't think so. I think at that stage, I don't think that, I don't think one had actually understood the nature, or the extent of the conflict and the possibilities that it had and so on. In terms of that I think, I don't think that... I think that what we... I think a lot of discussions had focused on... I mean our position at that point in time, that Inkatha had been around before us, we came onto the scene, and we wanted space to be able to organise. And what we had thought of doing and the strategy we employed was not to go to Inkatha, but actually to say: Who are the people who support him? And actually show them, try and win them over. And I think that was principally have involved reaching out to the churches, and actually saying to the churches: Look, this is who we are. And actually trying to win them over, trying to use the churches to reach out to the business community and so on. And then actually work out strategy. And then I think by that period, are we in about 86, that 86, 87 period, now for the COSATU launch. Then I remember, because then the violence shifted, well not shifted but its intensity became much greater in the Midlands region at that point, and I think there, we had a number of discussions where it was Martin, S'khumbuzo and them, the UDF guys, but Alec [Erwin] I remember was based there, and I went up, Curnick and I went up as I remember, and we had these quiet meetings, you know, underground with Alec and Martin and them. And we would be jointly strategising in terms of the COSATU/UDF people. And I think we were trying then to start the kind of forerunners to the formation of the Joint Working Committee between COSATU and UDF at a later point. Because we were jointly formulating strategies and so on. And I think that in Maritzburg, I think at least from the people who had been working there, the attitude, but also within COSATU itself, I think, there were obviously, now you had the Sidneys and the Cyrils and so on who had a much different approach to UDF then the old FOSATU people. But I think that somebody like Alec was a kind of old FOSATU stalwart, also began to change. I don't think he changed his conceptual notion of what UDF should be, but I think he developed a healthy respect that, here were guys who might have a different approach from that organisation but they're being hit as badly, they think logically, we can debate with them, and we need to cooperate with their organisation. So I think around just the very major crises that faced all of us here, a sort of working relationship evolved and then I think structures emerged after that.

JS: In this region, did the formation of COSATU actually transform, itself, transform the relationship between unions and UDF? Or was it more the experience of the violence which was affecting the way that people like Alec thought?

YM: No, I think both of the processes occurred. I think if one looks at COSATU, although you had COSATU, it took a few years before... You still had COSATU but you had the old guys saying: Okay, the congress unions are still caucusing and FOSATU guys were caucusing and as you got the... You still had all these small unions in the initial period going in, and then the mergers took place and you know there were... And then I think there were changes, it was that sort of process. Earlier than that the COSATU process itself, because now the people's attitude changed, because COSATU was no longer FOSATU. Because now you had both sides in. But I think, maybe what I am trying to indicate is more from the FOSATU union people who were a bit more antagonistic, not antagonistic, but had reservations about UDF, I think that having to work together on the violence began to change, just the working together also contributed. I think it was both the processes.

JS: Were there other issues besides violence that were discussed by COSATU and UDF?

YM: Ja, although I think in a structured way over a long term period that was a central issue that was really discussed. I think, again, what was happening was, and it happened both on the national and the regional level, because... And I think there were some sort of larger joint workshops, but you see there was, for example, the whole, when was it? There were the two stayaways. I know we were quite ecstatic because the COSATU one collapsed and then we went for one after that, I think, in October or November of 87 I think or 88 and it was very successful, right? And although COSATU was saying, no, it was not going to, and so on, right? And I think we had a lot of fights with COSATU, both at the national and to an extent at the regional level where there were debates and differences about how and the way they, the recognition, and so on. I mean I think the other sort of point and I think there were some meetings nationally because COSATU or some, let's not say COSATU at all, but let's say some persons within COSATU wanted to take the line that now you need an alliance between workers and the youth. So it was SAYCO and COSATU, and then UDF without the youth was going to be a sort of shell. And I think that that was something which even the SAYCO leadership, we discussed with them and so on, but they said, no they see the need and so on, and they were fully committed to UDF. So they were present at meetings where, I don't think that issue may have been formally raised in that form, but where discussions about joint campaigns and so on. And there were meetings where we said, okay they had like, I think, the living wage campaign, and things like that which were ongoing campaigns of theirs, we would say, well these are our kind of campaigns from our side and then I think we would share information and just cooperate and so on. And as I said, their Thami used to sit on our meetings, on our exec. You see, by that time

also Billy was the chairperson of UDF. He was in trade union circles because of his history and even Curnick, they had before their Robben Island stints, were in the trade union movement so there was a... And in that sense he used to be, he was very close to the workers and so on, in terms of his own personality, lifestyle and so on. And that actually meant that he was quite often invited to address workers, and just more than the regional, more than the chairperson of UDF, he would be a kind of consultant. Every time there was a problem, a strike, everybody was running to him, all the unionists, well maybe everybody is a bit of an exaggeration, but I'm saying a large number of people used to go there and discuss with him, get his views and advice and so on. So the point is because he was also quite, very central to the UDF and he used to be at most of the meetings and so on, there was a lot of interaction at that level. Secondly, that Thami was sitting on our, he used to come, and I used to try and get him to as many meetings as possible. And then formally, you had Themba from, also sitting on the REC. But also what was happening at the same time, was that the people who were within COSATU who were organisers, a lot of our own township youth and so on, started taking on positions because of this ongoing close relationship. I mean Billy would be told, or I would be told: Look there is a space here we need an organiser here, or there is a merger of unions, we're looking for guys. So UDF kind of youth, or people from the townships would apply for those positions and actually... So in that sense, a number of processes which were actually closing the gap. And I think that it was probably was happening, not just here, but in some ways the process would be occurring in different, at different, at a different pace, nationally.

JS: The actual Joint Working Committee that was specifically from the Natal Midlands, rather than Natal?

YM: No, initially it might have started off in... There was a joint structure, right? Now if you, there was this whole period when the Maritzburg guys were... And that's fairly well documented about the talks with Inkatha and so on, right? No, you are right, sorry I missed that part. So in that period, part of that strategy was through the Chamber of Commerce there were those talks, that time. And then it was actively strategised that you know, we needed to go into those talks, we needed to get an agreement signed, after the court action and all that. So we had been through that experience. But I think in that earlier period, it started off as a cooperation in the Maritzburg area. When the Maritzburg guys got detained, the COSATU guys were not, well there were a number of COSATU organisers hit as well in the detention, but it was primarily the UDF people and thousands of them, being mostly UDF. What would have happened then was that there was a breakdown, right, when all these guys were detained, because that was primarily where it was. And then we resuscitated it because the violence had then spread out of the Midlands region into the other areas of Natal. But also back into a lot of the areas around North Coast and South Coast and Hammarsdale, ja, in fact in that

period, 88, that it actually came this way, down, through that, there were those areas like Hammarsdale, you know the townships around Clermont and so on. It was... At times, different flare-ups were occurring but it almost like engulfed the whole province in different ways. But at least the entire Durban and Maritzburg and stretching out this way. Because like those areas were midway between Maritzburg and Durban what actually began to happen was, depending on where you were, if you lived in those areas, if you were, or you had more contacts and so on in Durban, because they were more or less equidistant, people were going with their problems to both the areas. So what you got by, I think it was 88, you actually had a Joint Working Committee which covered the whole of Natal. Ja, okay, ja it was 88, because then you see I was, ja, I was restricted, I got caught, around late September 88, right? And I know that they were meeting before that, but then once that had occurred, I started attending towards the latter part of 88 the JWC meetings myself, because they were held in the NUMSA offices here, I remember that. So then we continued for the whole period right up to, ja I think by about mid-1990, because the ANC people had then established, the ANC regional committee had started functioning. We actually phased out and said, the ANC must start dealing with that issue and the branches were beginning to be formed and they were moving towards that and that became a more representative structure than we were.

JS: Right, so the Joint Working Committee then essentially became ANC-COSATU rather than UDF-COSATU?

YM: That's right.

JS: Did the Joint Working Committee in this later stage from when it covered the whole of Natal, did it have a fairly steady membership? From the UDF side?

YM: Yes.

JS: Who, other than yourself?

YM: Well Sandy [Africa] was actually much more regular than I was. But what it had, you see what would happen is that it would have had, it had a core which would be myself, Sandy, Jeffrey Vilane (he was the COSATU chairperson), Thami (who attended regularly as the COSATU secretary), Alec Erwin (because he was quite central to the issue). We had also nominated Diliza [Mji] who was, who had become quite involved in the issue, and there was a meeting with a minister or something, and although he wasn't in the REC or so, Archie had asked him to come in and then he became involved. Now in that period, then, and there was Jay, who was now running with the issue of... 'Small' Jay, right. I think, in a sense, in some way... And yes from Maritzburg, we would have Siphso Gqabashe, who was fairly consistent. Oh yes, the other guy who was actually there was, the Northern Natal chairperson of the ANC, Willis Mchunu. And then there were different other people who used to come with Siphso from Maritzburg, youth guys and so on, but Siphso I think would be, was the guy who remained most consistent. And then at different points it changed, because Harry [Gwala] used to come to some meetings, and other

guys and so on, from Maritzburg. So it just depended, but, I think, at least that was the kind of the core. Right? And then what was happening was you actually had those... So I think then we continued to pursue a similar strategy of talks with them... And then there was, by that time also, there was delegations going, because the COSATU guys were travelling more openly by 89 and then Sandy wasn't restricted, so I think there was this whole attempt, I think from our side it was Alec and Diliza who were meeting with Oscar Dhlomo and Mdladlose. And I think that then there was this talk about a joint meeting with all the parties, ANC, UDF, COSATU and Inkatha outside the country. I mean there were delegations and there was - all that would be fairly well documented, I'm sure now that would be quite easily accessible. So that whole process was continuing in that 89, 90 period. Whilst after that, well after the unbanning when people came here, well then that need fell away, but the late 89 period, well eventually, again it was the same old kind of wheedling out and settling with letters, the same old kind of thing that you get about, I mean details I can't remember, but distortion or just legions of letters and so on, and interpretations. But those meetings, but the point was that there was a lot of discussions that used to take place between that foursome, and then there might have been even a larger committee, because they both had from time to time, from COSATU/UDF on the one hand and then the Inkatha guys. And later on when the ANC came in, there were meetings where I remember John Nkadimeng, Zuma and Thabo and so on and so there might have been some UDF/COSATU. But, as I say, over a period of time, once the ANC guys came back, because even from Inkatha's own perception, they always saw us as a front of the ANC, so they were quite happy if we dropped off, and they dealt directly with the ANC, and COSATU guys remained.

JS: In mid 1990, there was a, remember there was a - I'm trying to get the dates right, I don't have the piece of paper I need - there was a proposal for a conference, on peace and reconstruction in Natal. I think it was proposed in May, in the aftermath of the... Let's get this right. Mandela comes out to speak in King's Park, and fairly soon... and he comes out with peaceful statements. Fairly soon after that though there is the so-called Pietermaritzburg War with the flare up in especially Edendale and fairly soon after that there is a decision by COSATU, UDF, SAYCO etc that there should be national action over the violence issue, including a conference on peace and reconstruction in Durban. Now that conference was never held?

YM: Yes, we did.

JS: ... or was it held? Was it organised under the auspices of the UDF or the ANC?

YM: Under the JWC.

JS: JWC.

YM: Ja.

JS: Which was still at that point mainly UDF?

YM: Well, UDF/COSATU. But also by that time, you had Terror [Lekota] and his [ANC] Interim Committee operating. So that was held at UDW. Now actually, maybe it

took on, I think because, ja, Mandela and them were there. It was a major conference, well it was national and I mean I think that there were a lot of ANC people who were there. There were quite a number of, it was quite broad. But also you see in terms of UDF itself we were in the process, although I don't think the decision was taken, but I think within this region, I think one was actually saying that one was playing a lesser role, particularly in terms of the violence issue. So we were there at that conference, and we were organising it and so on. Also I suppose it became a question of the confusion of hats also, because you also, while you were a UDF office bearers, you weren't ANC office bearers, you were also ANC people, in a sense, in a sense. And you see Sandy more than I would have still continued to play a leading role. I am not sure, in fact, I had, after that conference, which you know was held in, that was in June or July, ja it was July, because I remember part of the problem was, you see the Vula guys were just detained, and just a few days before that even, I don't know whether Mac [Maharaj] and Ronnie [Kasrils] had been detained, but part of my problem, I remember at that meeting, I actually, because I had to take Madiba to meet with the families, because there was those kinds of issues about interventions and so on, and so there were concerns and he had agreed and so on, I was there with Valli [Moosa], and my own problem, I got quite caught up in the next few months, just with that trial and so on because then I was asked, I was acting there. So I couldn't be, in that, from that July/August period, I actually, I wasn't able to make meetings and so on and then, because that had been taking up a lot of my time, because that trial had come up. But then I remember that Sandy was going, but then also she said, look, we should... I actually just started phasing out, because I went later to meetings and I told the guys: Look, realistically, and I know that COSATU guys, I mean Jay and Alec and so on were saying, you are deserting us and so on, and I said, I have just got serious time problems. I also then I think in the ANC then elections were held and then different people were and I actually just felt that when you were there as UDF your REC was functioning, you were getting reports, whatever the form of that was, and however limited, you could represent something, I actually was feeling that I don't actually know what is going on, partly my ability to strategise was damped and yet I was going to those meetings. Now there were better people, because the [ANC] branches were there, the ANC was operating and they used to come to those meetings and one actually began to phase out. And Sandy was actually working much more actively. But also in that period then, the current chairperson, Jeff Hadebe had been out and he was working for NADEL. And then there was a link-up, because basically NADEL was saying let's get someone to monitor the peace and so on, violence thing, and he was liaising quite a bit. Once that, the REC was elected, he was on there, Zuma was the chairperson at that stage, and there were enough people, they were just coming onto the scene, that were handling it. And I mean by that stage the UDF was about, I think, deciding that it had to close down.

So that was actually the way it moved.

JS: Can I go back to much earlier, again? There are a couple of things I want to bring up. The first was the issue of Moses Mabhida's funeral. I am not sure exactly when this was, it was under the state of emergency

YM: 1987, I think.

JS: 87?

YM: 86, 87.

JS: Now that was, I believe, quite controversial within the Durban, Natal UDF?

YM: I remember people went to that funeral, and they got caught. And I know Archie and Curnick went and they met with ... [?] ...

JS: ... the whole debate was whether the funeral should be held inside the country or outside the country. There was a proposal that it should be held inside the country, then there was the counter objection that it is too dangerous to hold it inside the country, because of Inkatha or whatever.

YM: No, that's right. Now, I don't know who argued which position...? But I think...

END SIDE TWO (TAPE ONE)

YM: ... this is an issue which, it could have gone either way.

JS: My understanding is that Pravin was a proponent that it should be held locally? And that Archie argued strongly against it?

YM: Okay, ja. That probably is, probably makes sense.

JS: You can't recall it?

YM: No. The point is that I know that there was a debate, but I can't recall who was arguing what. I knew Archie was the major proponent one way, and Pravin obviously would have been the other way. I think Archie was saying that, look, because Mabhida was from Maritzburg, as you would know, and because of the violence there. I suppose the argument from Pravin's side, if he was, and whoever was on that side, would have been that it would have been a mobilising thing, that Inkatha wouldn't have been able to disrupt and so on. Okay, but I think that eventually it was, it all blew off, for whatever reasons, I am not sure whether it was because of that debate, or whether it was, there were other reasons that didn't allow the body to come back. And then I know that there was a... Archie and Curnick and quite a number of persons actually went then to Maputo.

JS: The next thing I want to ask you about. Thinking about the issue of the violence in the Maritzburg region again, especially during 87, the escalation in 87, you were holding a lot of meetings with people, Maritzburg people, COSATU, and so on. To what extent was you strategising simply concerned with ways of legal responses, negotiations and so on, or to what extent was your strategising also concerned with defence units and other forms of response?

YM: Okay, ja I think, look what we, the way we used to do it was to say that, those things needed to be discussed, but not at the, not at our level, you know with the

kind of people who were going to meet with the church leaders, or the business guys, should know that people are organising defence committees. So we would give a general directive but because of where we stood, we weren't going to be involved in the logistics and that all we would give would be a broad directive.

JS: What do you mean by a broad directive?

YM: No, well, broad directive would be that there must be defence committees. I mean what we would then do is that informally there was certain youth guys who wanted some advice on what they should do on whatever particular problem, one would actually act as a ... [?]. In my role as like secretary, and in the discussions which if it had been on that kind of basis, REC would simply say look, we do need, but what we used to call them, and I think the formal discussions, even at a national level, I remember formulating that our law makes rights for self-defence.

JS: I'm sorry?

YM: The law. So you can have a committee, everybody has the right to defend himself if he's attacked, if there is an unwarranted, unlawful attack. So people could form a committee to say if they felt that they were attacked, or the possibility of an attack on them. And we discussed those committees, and we said that, at a national level, we were saying people should look at the possibility of, well things like the M-plan or some kind of street formations, or how you do it in blocks and so on. But I think, again, like it just depended on how townships were structured or where people lived. And a lot of the other points also that a number of the places where the violence was were not necessarily like say where Maphamulo came from, or some of the other guys, and I mean you also had Contralesa beginning to enter the scene at a particular point. But I mean in those areas, they would have some kind of formation around a kind of the chief, or induna, or so whatever he was sympathetic on one way or another. So I think it was left broadly at that level. I think the youth actually would work out the structures, to have more detailed workshops and so on, and a number of those ... I mean one was aware that they were being conducted. I actually didn't participate in any of them.

JS: To what extent, I mean, how much concern was there amongst the UDF about the level of organisation in the areas affected?

YM: I think it was a, it was a major concern. That there wasn't organisation and sometimes, and I know, more so because one spent a bit more time within the Midlands area, of actually developing organisation. I mean because I think when you have a thousand activists detained in the Midlands area it was because we were making a lot of progress, in terms of actually organising the youth and so on. And I think that the fact that they, that they were detaining numbers that went up to a thousand, because there were, initially, a hundred and maybe then slowly more, and they weren't breaking the back of it because you got some guys detained, and new guys replace them as organisers. So there was a large pool, and then they just decided to break this thing, what you needed was to just go on a massive scoop. So I

think we consciously looked at that. But, also, even here at that point, 87, 88, because also I acted for a lot of detainees, here, not in the Maritzburg lot, because that would have been handled by..., but at Westville, because that was, the prison was opened there. But there were a hell of a lot of guys, from Clermont, etc, etc, but it was in stages. They kept on just destabilising. Indeed I don't know how, but key guys like Lechesa and Jabu Sithole and so on got detained, ... [?] emergency, and we were sitting around these chaps' homes, and people knew that something was coming, so hoping that Zac wouldn't have been around. But they got caught, and then you had a whole lot of other guys, and these guys got released and restricted, and you have a whole new batch who had been operating underground, getting picked up, I mean, guys were getting caught all the time. And when detainees came out, it took them some time, to, although they might have been getting reports and so on, because they weren't incommunicado, I mean, but they were actually out of touch, now two years later or one and a half years later, you are getting released. And the guys which have been operating are actually getting picked up. And I think that cycle was going on, and that created its own set of problems.

JS: How did the REC, or whatever, continue to operate under the emergency? With difficulty?

YM: Ja, well, it continued to operate. I mean, look, there were a lot of... It created, and I mean that's what created a number of the tensions, because part of the reason why it wasn't elected, although logistically, I think, the 87 NWC was held here, and so on, and so one had the capacity to pull those things together. The difficulty was that, you see, it operated because you used to get safe venues, which always changed, and nobody was told a venue, people were given pick up points. But you operated by underground rules. So usually, I mean, it would be REC members who had vehicles, not all of them, who would be asked, if guys could get an unknown vehicle to be at point X, and then if you are not there in ten minutes, this is sort of like an underground rule of operations, he left. And we took a decision at the REC that, look, we need to continue functioning so that even if we weren't quorum, we waived the quorum rules and had to sort of discuss and take decisions. And then because we were using other people's homes and so on, one had to be tight about times, because you would make requests to somebody that we would use your house for two hours. And sometimes one was sitting right in their living room or whatever it was, you couldn't impose on them for longer than what was contracted. I was very strict about that because a lot of those things would have happened in the Indian and coloured areas, the homes and so on, and one didn't want to, actually, kind of take undue advantage of this. And I think people accepted, there wasn't resistance for those kinds of disciplinary requirements. The problem more was, some people started, I think it would have been the less disciplined elements, because obviously they didn't keep to times strictly and so on, who were used to strolling up at meetings and phoning at the last minute and because those who didn't have such

good time management and so on were feeling that there were a lot of decisions being made, and then there were accusations that some grouping was deliberately, or sometimes it was individual and so on, deliberately could have waited for five more minutes, their wasn't such a security risk and so on. And people were saying, but we are not assessing that because it's a rule. I looked at my watch, this is the time, I waited until this time, I left. And this guy says, but you didn't want me at the meeting, because I had a different viewpoint. So one had to... Those were the kinds of tensions that it created. Because previously, and prior to the emergency, the meetings were held openly, the guys knew where the venues were, they were circularised, they walked in half an hour late and there wasn't any problem, they were part of the meeting. Now if they were half an hour late, they missed the meeting.

JS: How many of the REC people didn't really adjust to this discipline?

YM: Ja, well I think, maybe two processes occurred, let me just get that list and I will give you an idea. You see for an example, JORAC became, during part of that period, became non-functional. The RMC as well sort of didn't really function at times, during that period. Diakonia had observer status at their own request, I think as I have mentioned the last time. So I think they actually didn't participate in the REC meetings, and so they weren't really, as observers we didn't invite them, after, for that, during that period, so they weren't represented. So I think some of the structures had actually not operated and what had actually happened, is because we were not able to have elections, we didn't replace Rev Xundu, and Victoria, you see, because after her death, he was detained with me in that August period and then after his release, shortly after that he went off to the Eastern Cape. So what you had, firstly, was that certain structures, well for a while I think, like this guy Russell [Mpanga] was around, he attended part of the emergency meetings, but he had been in, he was an ex-Islander, but then he skipped, and then you see he was coming to meetings, partly, but he was also involved in other, which I gathered afterwards, because he skipped the country, in ANC activities. Not that I had a problem, but the problem was that..

JS: This Russell...?

YM: ... Mpanga. So somewhere in that period, suddenly he just disappeared, and one was trying to get him and he was RMC, so although his structure might not have been meeting, because he was okay, we didn't have a problem, but he disappeared. And once he disappeared, there wasn't anybody who replaced him from that structure. Now, what we had then is like the students guys, broke, we had by that time SANSCO and also NATSCO here, which had replaced the COSAS formation, so we gave both sides a representation, because there was a problem. Then NUSAS, also, how do we facilitate, because we had a lot of tensions, because the SANSCO guys are not reporting to NUSAS and NUSAS people were sometimes complaining that the SANSCO guys were getting upset, that we were having direct lines with NUSAS,

because they were the reps. So there were lot of small tensions like that. But I must say, also you see, the other problem with the student sector is that the SANSCO guys are round for just more than half the year. They come in about February, they won't be around in July and then by October they are writing exams, right. And then we used to have a lot of problems with them because they felt, they are coming sort of like periodically, and a lot of things happen in between, and they say: When were these decisions taken, and how do we not know about them and this and that. And then you might have a guy who is not from the area, who is the delegate, and he goes away, and they say, ja, but he was replaced by so and so. Now so that was one of the organisations we had a lot of problems with. And then what you obviously had were runners. So it wasn't a problem with me, because I wasn't the guy who, I was underground myself, so I wouldn't go to the campuses and so on. I mean it was just risky. I mean we had people who would do that for us. And then they began to develop problems with these, because they were activists, I mean they had to be kind of disciplined people, but they were not on the REC, but they were people that they knew. They might have been students or ex-students or something. And I don't know what, sometimes there might have been past tensions between them, but then there were accusations in the REC that we don't want this guy to send messages to us because he deliberately doesn't give. I mean I actually knew the person, sometimes, who was a very disciplined person, nobody else was complaining. So you had to deal with that nature of a problem. But I think the large majority, it wasn't a dominant problem. I am saying that it came sometimes from some sectors and it just had to be, wanted to be explained and say Okay, we will try and be more... But it was a difficult climate and I am maybe just elaborating on some of those difficulties. But it wasn't, I am not saying that it was so difficult that it created that kind of problem, but it did. The other issue that was coming up from time to time was, and I think, I am not sure when, but during certain periods other regions actually did begin to have elections. And I think then there was the criticism that we are not having elections, that we wanted to remain in perpetuity and so on. And the problem was that... I mean you see there were so many criticisms, one was trying to balance the interests. Because on the one hand, that was the one criticism. And then the problem was that some affiliates on the other hand at different points, had many of its members in detention and the problem was that you would get a feedback from that side that look if you have the election now it is unfair to us, because we can't be there. You had to then balance the question of regionalism. You couldn't have an election because now, how did you want, what should the REC be like? Because there was the criticism, I found out earlier from the subregions, that this REC was actually a Durban REC that was taking decisions for the whole province, and there was a disproportion in favour of a particular subregion. The problem was that at different periods different regions were just too disorganised and one said: Okay, people came out of detention, you regroup and you

reorganise yourselves and so on. And then I think you've got problems occurring then, I mean at a later stage, within the subregions. I mean at a point when, after Harry came out, there were a lot of tensions between him and the regional UDF, in the Midlands region. And the UDF just stopped functioning in that subregion. And when we were saying: Can we try and mediate and resolve that problem, and see how you can actually sort it out? So I think that those are the kind of processes that were going on.

JS: How often, or how many people would pitch up to most REC meetings? Like five or ten or twenty? During the emergency.

YM: During emergency? On average about ten.

JS: And there would be a number of people who were very regularly coming along?

YM: Ja.

JS: And that would be people like yourself, Curnick, Pravin...

YM: No, Pravin was not on. You see, Pravin was... You see Virgil [Bonhomme] was actually the DHAC rep initially. Then they put in somebody else, Trevor [Bonhomme?], and Pravin was only in the very late stage, because Pravin... Yes, Pravin wouldn't have attended the meetings until about 89, I think after I had been restricted. Yes, it's a fairly late stage. So Virgil originally... Let's say that the office bearers were there regularly, which would be Billy, or when Curnick was around, he was there fairly regular, because ... [?] used to bring him up. And Sandy, who was effectively playing the role of secretary in the formal sense, because she was not underground. Anything where...

JS: Why wasn't she underground?

YM: Okay well, I think what had happened was that she had been detained prior to the emergency, declaration of the emergency, because her husband was an MK guy, and he was involved.

BREAK IN TAPE

JS: You were saying that people, ... [?] Sandy, the people who fairly regularly attended meetings during that period, Curnick, Billy Nair, Sandy...

YM: Archie.

JS: ... Archie, yourself.

YM: Archie, okay and then, I mean, until his detention, Martin used to come with the Maritzburg people, say Martin and S'khumbuzo. S'khumbuzo might have been detained, before Martin, but he would bring other people from Maritzburg, some township persons who were in there. The point is I had a lot of complaints from the NIC guys about Jerry, because he wasn't consistent. Lechesa, I think, Lechesa was fairly consistent up till his detention. Russell was fairly consistent up until he left the country, right. Ndaba became acting Treasurer, I mean, Ndaba was detained until late 87, but then we, although he was, ja, you see afterwards, ja, I think we

defied the restrictions so all of us continued to operate, even though later on those restrictions stopped us, right. So Archie, myself, Ndaba, were kind of restricted guys. Then what was happening was some movement towards reviving the civics. Not DHAC now, but not JORAC, but now it is called SONACA, or something, you know this national thing. At that time it was SNCC or something. And so again, because it was replacing JORAC, we had even two guys, and I think Jabu Sithole was then elected from that, the revived civics. He attended once, that was about 88, 89, he started attending. And then Thami, we used to try and get him fairly regularly there. He was, I mean whenever there wasn't clashes he used to be there. And then the student guys had different guys. Now this guy Simphiwe, who was one of the guys who raised a lot of the complaints and the problems, he was detained for a long period, also, in between. So that there was, there were different guys. And also from the NASCO sector, but they were consistent. Then you had some youth guys, initially, who were fairly consistent. Si was there until he sort of moved into National. Once he was, there was - what's this guy? Ntuli, but the guy got killed in the township violence. He was assassinated in KwaMashu. So there were the youth delegates and then Baba took over, Baba. And then what happened in the later period was that we actually employed organisers, two organisers who came out of detention, was Baba Dlamini and Mawenza Msani. So they were regular. So what I am saying is that what you had is there was, when I say there were ten persons, it wasn't, I think that if you take Archie, Billy, myself and Sandy during that whole period, they would be about the four core people who remained and who weren't detained at all during that period. Curnick got detained for a while, but it wasn't for a long period. And then I was restricted because I... Those were the sort of four people who I think were as like office bearers were the core. And also most of, all four of us, from time to time would attend NEC meetings and so on. We would actually be the core. I think from the rest of the names I have given you there would be, depending on who was not in detention, at different stages, all those people would attend. And you would then get that quorum of ten.

JS: Okay. There are a lot of other things we could talk about, but we won't really have time now. One thing I would like to ask quickly, is to do with the strategy of the organisers. Now for a while, while Valli, Murphy were detained you were playing a very prominent role at the national as well as the regional level. I'm not sure whether it was then that, because there was a flood of money coming into the country, meant that the UDF began expanding its employment of organisers rapidly. Several people have said to me that they associate Yunus Mahomed with the strategy of flooding the country with organisers.

YM: Well, it was actually Valli's strategy. And that was prior... You see, actually, I think strategically, I think we had agreed, that the decision was taken to, at the NEC level, at some point to do that, but the Southern Transvaal and... I think you need to talk more to Valli, because...

JS: I haven't spoken to Valli.

YM: Ja, because what happened was that they employed a lot of the organisers. It also became a problem because Natal didn't actually have a lot of organisers, as you can see. I have given you those guys, and then the other guys... I mean we might have had some guys that we actually, in the Northern Transvaal, not the Northern Transvaal, the Northern Natal areas and so on, who might have said, okay you guys, they were given the job and they would have paid for themselves and they were given a vehicle at a point. It was just difficult to maintain accountability, but compared to what happened in Northern Transvaal, I mean, and the Transvaal was actually the region where there were the largest number. Eastern Cape and Border also had a fairly large number, so if I recall, I can't, I think we had the least number. But the major problem occurred in the Southern Transvaal, because what had happened was that while Valli was around he actually had these organisers. After he and Murphy were detained these guys went kind of... Well, the problem became, I don't blame them, I don't think it was a personal problem, it was just a structural problem. Who were they then accountable to? How were they accountable? Who was directing what they were doing? And each guy was going out on his own hat, and then you just found that the Transvaal region was accumulating amounts, or deficits. And basically we, at some point, you ran into cash flow crunches. Because it was a kind of consistent large expense of salary, and what happened was that the problem became compounded because you had detained guys getting paid, and people employing guys to replace detained guys, so your wage bill, or your salary bill just kept on going up. I think at some point the NEC took the decision that we had to start firing people, or terminating employment because people weren't getting paid, they were, it was very, and it became quite... At the time I think there were tense situations around that issue, as well.

JS: What happened in the NEC when Valli and Murphy were detained?

YM: Well we took on Titus as the, as full time. Titus and Eric. So Titus and Eric were... Eric, ja you see, they are the same. Billy, Curnick and I used to spend a fair amount of time, because we were underground, trying to help pull this thing together and direct it. But, formally, Titus ran the thing. There was another guy we called Jeff, I don't know his name now...

JS: Yes I know ...

YM: You know about Jeff, right? So Jeff came in after a certain stage, and he and Titus then ran the thing, after Eric got detained, I think, Jeff came in. And then Murphy and Valli got released, I think, in that period and they came... Ja, and when they were released, it was quite an unconditional thing, because they went to the Embassy and all that, the Consulate. They then came back and they could actually start running the thing again.

JS: And funding? Was funding generally, throughout the emergency period channelled through Azhar, and Head Office? Or ever through, did much ever come through regions or through other individuals?

YM: No, it all came through national. There was no regional. ...

END OF INTERVIEW