

NB: This interview was conducted with considerable background noise, and much of the tape is inaudible.



JS: Right, we're with Lechesa here. Before actually talking about the state of organisation can you just tell me very very briefly about your own personal background - I know you are from Lamontville - But how you came to be involved in civic activities in Lamontville and in the Durban region.

LT: I came to Durban from Bloemfontein to join a magazine, called ... Basically as a translator and subsequently I wrote for the same magazine. But I, on or about the same time I began work with some people in Lamontville to form a youth structure. What had happened before, there had been youth organisations before but these were more social entertainment oriented kind of structures. We were concerned with the kind of organisation that would be responsive to community needs and we were then at a definitive stage, in other words we were beginning to critique past the work of the youth organisations and so on, and we wanted to create a youth organisation that would begin to address community issues as well addressing these other needs. In other words a youth organisation with a community consciousness. And I then, because as I said earlier on I was working for a magazine there, I quickly became bored with its narrow sort of approach to issues, and I began to write for a community newspaper which we produced in Durban called Ukusa, U-K-U-S-A, which we ran as activists. And Yunus Mohamed was the secretary of the organ, of the structure. So we were working there. And we were using it actually as an organisational tool. There were a number of struggles taking place around the Durban area and other parts of Natal. But these were unco-ordinated - there wasn't sufficient structures on the ground. One of the problems of that youth organisation, for example, in Lamontville, one of the things that we had to do as well was to raise awareness in the community, aware of working with other service organisations like the Community Research Unit. We drew up surveys and went house to house asking people about housing, whether they were appropriate, what they felt could be done. And we were in that time consciously working towards saying that we needed a community structure for example, other than the youth organisation. This work was being done by the youth as part of its own project to be involved in community work, but it also had an important objective as well, to get people talking about their problems and to lay the foundation for when we subsequently, for example, formed a Rent Action Committee. But one of the things that we were very conscious of was that the tendency, generally in a number of townships, was a very parochial approach to dealing with issues. People were locked into their own areas only [?]. I think we played a leading role in breaking that parochiality. The Rent Action Committee then went on to link with other townships to form the Joint Rent Action Committee. And incidentally even at that time we had very close contact with a hostel, called Glebelands, we had problems at that time breaking through to the one closest to our township in Lamontville, which is the Smith hostel [?], but with the other one we managed to work together quite successfully, even the Joint Rent Action Committee. We even at that time, we had the Joint Rent Action Committee in all the townships they were under the then Administration Board, right up

to Tongaat, the township there called Hambanathi. And even beyond there, in Shaka's Kraal, we had Inkatha members at that time, who were part of the Joint Rent Action Committee. That was significant because what brought us together was the fight against rent, and those guys there - even if they came to meetings with their Inkatha colours and so on, ties and things - but one thing that did matter was this issue around rent control and we were strategising together on how to deal with the Administration Board on that issue. However, what began to happen was that it became clear that this movement was intensifying and was ... [?] itself, it was having a particularly, we had a very good media strategy at that point in time. I think some of us at that point were able to use the media effectively in terms of liaising with newspapers and so on, and that was because also of the activities that we used to organise. One of the issues that became very important at that time was the issue of transport and we formed what we called the Joint Commuters Committee, the JCC. Again in our approach this went beyond the Council which was there, and included councils outside of other townships, Claremont and in fact St Wendolins, all the townships in which the Durban Transport Management - the DTMB, Durban Transport Management Board - buses operated. Those were very important campaigns in that it laid the basis for working together across the barriers that were then set already in the townships. And I think it was about that time that we - oh, by the way that youth organisation I spoke of was, that's the one through which it was the first youth organisation that affiliated to the first UDF.

JS: What was it called?

LT: It was called Masibosane Lamontville Youth, Malayo for short. M-A-S-I-B-O-S-A-N-E Lamontville Youth. Malayo for short, M-A-L-A-Y-O. There was a person who worked at the University of Natal, she wrote a piece then on that period as well, it was published in Indicator - you knew this publication?

JS: Yes

LT: Around '83, '84.

JS: Yes, there was somebody called Claudia Reintjies, perhaps there's somebody else. There are certain people who looked at JORAC and the role of Harrison Msizi Dube and others at that time. I don't remember any of them mentioning the youth organisations so much.

LT: That has been always the problem with some of us who were involved with... We formed the youth organisations and the youth organisations did so much work on the ground. That's then, JORAC emerged from that, in the sense that the youth organisation laid the foundations for the development of the Joint Rent Action Committee. We actually played a critical role, for example, in linking Msizi Dube to Ian Mkhize, who's now with Diakonia. He was then ... [?] in Hambanathi. That was the course of our context [?], a series of networks that we established in the other ... [?] and so on.

JS: When did you move from Bloemfontein down here to Lamontville?

LT: '79

JS: '79?

LT: I arrived here in October, the sixth if my memory is correct. I remember it because I didn't know a thing of Zulu when I came here.

JS: Oh really.

LT: Yes. It was a particularly interesting thing. This work, community work, is what speeded my ability to speak the language because I was forced to speak it to people here, I had to speak the language that the others speak.

JS: I wish I could say the same thing.

LT: Unlike many who have come here, I don't think they have that kind of situation where they have been forced to integrate with people. And as a result of that ... [?], a lot of pamphlets were produced. We - because of my media skills there - I had contributed towards writing I mean preparing those pamphlets and so on, even if they were in Zulu. And I was learning, a very useful experience.

JS: Do you have, had you been involved in student organisations in Bloemfontein?

LT: Actually no. I was, we were involved, during school days, in, let me call ... [?], but even then ... was interested in debate and so on. Otherwise I was, before I came here I was a member of MWASA, in media work.

JS: When you arrived here - and this was October 1979 - this was clearly a key period in terms of many people changing their views about for example, the role of ...

LT: ... One of the reasons I also - because of ... objective ... [?], you know - when I arrived here I knew some people from our MWASA days. I mean, because as a member of MWASA then, I still remember coming back from Durban. But I was frustrated [?], we used to have meetings here, ... and so on, after which we would go ... and so on. It frustrated me because I began to, back in the township, I realised that - I met some guys there, you know, I contributed a couple of poems, one or two poems, to Staffrider for example, I had contacts in ... and Ravan Press. I had met people and I was telling them there how it would be necessary to start a poetry group or something like that, some interesting stuff. I used to enjoy identifying guys who write the banned type of poetry and then get it published through Ravan Press and so on. So that was my intention, to do that when I came here. But then during a discussion with some of the guys I realised no, there was a lot more that we needed to do than merely that, so I abandoned that for organising the youth, and also doing community work, and I think that partly contributed to my In fact, those meetings then were .. and ... [?] but I was never a frothing BC member. Those extreme positions didn't attract me at all, so I didn't have problems leaving and beginning to, in the non-racial movement, I have had no problem there.

JS: Now JORAC was formed I think in early 1983 - at much the same time as the UDF - but clearly in the period '80/'81/'82, you say that you had been involved in youth organisation.

LT: Yes, we laid the ground work from which later..., and the kind of survey work that we conducted - that was a very controversial thing, we were talking about rent, we were talking about transport, we were talking about a number of things that affected people. And if you look at the campaigns that emerged later, we had the campaigns about rent, the we had the campaigns about the Commuters Committee, the transport issue, those were pressing problems. Then around '79 an announcement was made for example that the rents were going to increase, and that opposition began at that time. And this fellow, Msisi Dube, entered the council system ... [?]. We had paid those ... [increases?] and... It was as a result of those ... that his work there, you see he had a very interesting stance, unlike many of these township councillors. He actually had this ANC background, ..., but what was important was that he had that background and he was able, because of what he was also seeing on the ground at the level of the youth and so on, he was able to use his presence there in a very practical manner. He exposed the ... councils, and he invited people to come there to ask them ... [?] and see for themselves how those guys conducted. And that was a very useful mobilising thing, and more importantly he consciously mobilised his area into committees and so on, ... That is what distinguished him from any of these other councillors, they never used to do that.

JS: As youth leaders, for example, and people ... like Yunus Mohamed and NIC people, how did they see his strategy? LT: His strategy?

JS: Ja. He was participating in a council? This is unusual.

LT: Yes, you see. They were involved in, Durban Housing Action Committee and NIC as well, and on that we were involved to some extent. We actually, a number of, some of us actually challenged him on that, Msizi Dube, personally. And he was able to say no, look, in the first place I did not want to participate in this thing, I had been pushed by people into doing this, because they were frustrated, because these fellows here are messing things up; they pushed me into this thing. We finally ourselves, from the ... [?], we decided no, there was no way in which we could force this guy out of this thing. The right thing to do was for us to do our work outside here and begin to expand his, where-ever we can, which we were able to do - because I referred earlier on to the question of parochial tendencies - and by linking him to others in transport for example, to other townships to other areas ... and so on, and especially because of the, his, the image that he gained throughout ... - as an outspoken critic of the system in which he was, he was involved in - sort of elevated him. I think, so our task was how best to work with him in a way in which his person and his, the kind of style that he developed, has positive effects on the work that we do. And it contributed, a commission of ... [?] we considered his success in that way. You see as we were youth leaders then, he was an adult, he was, so to speak, a very important asset to us.

JS: Yes.

LT: He was able to do things that we wouldn't been able to do on our own. And the arrival of Reverend Xundu - who you had heard about - we met, we made contact with Reverend Xundu, and we linked him to the UDF, which was very good because when Dube died this fellow was in the community, it was like, almost he moved into his steps as the bullet hit him. What we used to, you know, an outspoken leader kind of person, and that is a particular problem you see, on the other hand, in that we were, here we were trying to develop a democratic style of working, which required collective leadership and so on, but we were for mobilisation purposes etc etc, we co-operating with highly, what do you call it, an individual person.

JS: A very individualistic person?

LT: In a sense, ja. But I think we had very... On reflection that role was very important, especially in terms of image. We were able to, the famous Asinamali play, some of the guys who were in, this fellow Bongeni ..., I remember him coming to Lamontville about, he wants to write a play, and we said, no go for it. And he was one of the first to take these guys out ..., he has taken a lot of photographs of Lamontville and other townships. He was a member of Afrapix.

JS: What's his name?

LT: Phakade Magwaza. P-H-A-K-A-D-E Magwaza M-A-G-W-A-Z-A.

JS: That would be useful, we'll be needing pictures. And he was taking photographs from '82/'83?

LT: No then he was a member of our organisation, our youth organisation, very active, very interested in theatre. We used to use what we called skits for educational purposes, and we used to act in those drama, illustrating for instance, role playing, and so on. We used to do these things for educational purposes in the townships, for the youth. And I think it was around '82, I had a very ... - the first time, I think it was the second time - the first time I went to Cape Town I was sitting on my mother's lap so I, all I remember is I was very scared of the sea. The second time was then '82, we went to visit Grassroots. That was a very important period for me and the fellow that we went with. Leila Patel was then the organiser, Johnny was banned, Johnny Issel was banned. In a sense our appreciation of the whole of the media de-

veloped dramatically by looking at what Grassroots was doing. We used to go to the station and sell, people threw questions, comment and so on, a very useful experience. Just looking at that collective news gathering, and how they produced, and so on, getting to know a lot of people around Cape Town and so on who were involved, it was a very educational experience. We came back and quite got a lot of the ideas that we picked up that side, ... here just in terms of correcting, we did a lot of different things. We were very successful around here. The UDF, you see, at all UDF functions, that were organised the township was able to pass matters so that people would have paid their fares long before the days of subsidised transport and so on, we were very good. So ok, so that period was '83/'84, the relationship between the youth, there was a very important kind of crime-combating activity there. I think, that was a spin off to the educational campaigns that we conducted, ..., that I am talking about and so on. The issue emerged as a problem and so on, when Dube died there was an explosion of anger generally and long before he was arrested word was already flying around that ..., and the anger spilled out, even to the criminal element that were known to be terrorising people with impunity, the police doing nothing about it. A lot of them were clobbered, and there was a hell of a lot of peace for a short time, which unfortunately wasn't given a chance. But then Inkatha was planning to invade the township, using as a base the closest hostel there. That was also a very, ... During the rent campaign, the government announced that they were going to incorporate Lamontville into..., and that's when, one of the reasons for rejecting was that we see ourselves as integral to Durhan, and the campaign for, we were saying that therefore we see ourselves as working towards a democratic Durban, which ... redistribute resources in all these parts of, surrounding, that we against this incorporation into Kwazulu, because experience indicated that all these townships that fell under Kwazulu, the level and the standard of service seemed to have deteriorated, and the government was deliberately giving pittance to this area, that we would not willingly go to that kind of solution and so that these campaigns which we have spoken about, we started raising those issues then of a single tax page at that particular time. That was a very significant approach.

JS: Can I take a step back? I'm thinking about '83 when you were, I mean, before the incorporation issue really became the big issue, there was the campaign over rents, just after the campaign about transport, ... transport. At that point, this is when the UDF was getting off the ground. Regionally it was launched at almost exactly the same time. How involved were people from the youth organisations in Lamontville in the formation of the UDF?

LT: Like I'm telling you our youth organisation was the first youth affiliate to get involved. You didn't have a lot of youth organisations then, they were in their formative stages, like in Umlazi and so on you had that grouping there, but they were not properly formed into a structure, and the formation, the formation of the regional UDF here, from the office we began to channel staff into these areas. And one of the things that we used to do was to go to as many organising workshops, and then in this way also largely around youth as well. In other words the process of contributing towards the formation of youth, was a very important aspect of the UDF there. There was a youth structure called the Youth Forum. This was operating at Diakonia. But its approach was sufficiently non-party political, as they considered it. Our organisation was a founder member of it. And then we began to see our responsibility going beyond that, and strategically we began to question that, because later for example, in 1985 which was the International Youth Year, one of the strongest debates amongst the youth organisations was how should this year be com-

memorated. Some of us were maintaining that we, that campaign must be taken under the banner of the UDF. Whereas others who were the original organisers of the Youth Forum, they argued that it should be non-political, and so sort of be all embracing of the youth and so on. But our position finally was what happened. It was organised under the banner of the UDF. And even now on reflection, we still maintain it was, had a very important politicising impact which had been all along our intention, but we felt that level of our work was not going to be enough breakthrough [?]. Although others might still debate the issue of the extent to which we could have laid the ground for forming the youth on the ground who would be able to carry the task forward, which one usually tries. We saw, opened the political space so that a lot of people emerging, from whom you begin to get key leaderships, which then assume the kind of training in workshops which you conducted. And that's what we did in ...

JS: The first region executive, for example, of the UDF seemed to have mostly been, well obviously a lot of people from the NIC, a lot of people from the Durban Housing Action Committee, and some senior, I mean Reverend Xundu and...

LT: Jabu Sithole.

JS: ... But not so many people who were, not so many younger people, activists. You say John Sithole was one from Lamontville

LT: Ja.

JS: ... But not so many from, who were active in other townships, is that true?

LT: Yes, it's true. The other, the NIC and DHAC had a longer tradition of political organisation, and I think this is what would have influenced that, the situation in the first UDF, in the first coordinating structures so to speak, you wouldn't have many of them getting involved, you would have a certain number of people from areas.

JS: How many of the African areas were organised? Clearly Lamontville was well organised by youth...

LT: There was a level of organisation in Clermont and in Umlazi.

JS: In Claremont there was a Residents' Association...

LT: Isolomuzi, ja.

JS: Was that quite active, would you say?

LT: Ja, it was, you see... Archie Gumede, in Clermont, he was there. And in terms of youth involvement at the leadership level, the UDF and the way it was formed was such that you had organisations affiliating there, and therefore ok many of the office bearers would be something else, but the first of the executive would be heads or representatives of the affiliated organisation. For example, during the period when I was part of the executive, we had what was then called AZASO represented by, for example, ex-students. We had the Women's League represented by someone else as well. And then you get the UCC, United Committee of Concern, represented by someone else; the NIC by someone else - Yunus was the secretary and Billy Nair was the vice. When Dube died, he was the treasurer.

JS: The other areas, for example, KwaMashu, Umlazi?

LT: Yea, there were people there like, you see the problem was factions. There were, KwaMashu had organisations ... at the youth level.

JS: KwaMashu and Umlazi weren't so involved, they fell under Kwazulu...

[INTERRUPTION AS TAPE TURNED OVER]

LT: The manner in which people were elected were not on the basis of which township they come from. General Councils, for example, that's where elections were held.

And people would come from all these different areas into... I was elected in 1985 as the Publicity Secretary at the General Council. And we had people there from Clermont or KwaMashu, all the areas around here, this is how people were elected, so that it was not necessarily based on the townships and so on.

JS: Right, surely. But clearly some areas were better organised than others?

LT: Exactly, and this is what we influenced [?]. We had two people in the executive from Lamontville, we had Jahu in the first executive and in the second executive I became the member of the executive, and in the youth, in the Women's League, for example, later on we came to have a, I mean the (what was it called?) the Natal Organisation of Women which was an affiliate of the UDF we had a person from Lamontville there, people from Lamontville were strongly represented there as well. So that was the reason that influence came to the executive because of the degree and level of organisation and the extent to which an area so-to-speak sacrificed people for regional work. But also there was an important... Ja, I think that would have been the key sort of ... [?] to those issues, in terms of the area with the most active ground base, which was key.

JS: Did JORAC have much contact with the Durban Housing Action Committee, or were they, did they organise quite separately?

LT: We organised quite separately, however, we, for example, used the same resources like the Community Research Unit. We frequently used CRU to provide us with whatever facilities that we wanted. And DHAC also used the same facilities, in fact it was, I think it was partly their initiative, DHAC and all that, had people working there.

JS: What is the CRU?

LT: The CRU. The Community Research Unit.

JS: Where is it based?

LT: It is based here, it is no longer there, it as since merged with the what-you-call-it, the Centre for Community and Labour Studies. They would have a lot of material there if you are interested.

JS: Well this is another question that I want to ask, you know, where I might find any kind of documents or material from the 1980s.

LT: Yes, you must see those comrades at the Centre for Community and Labour Studies.

JS: Where is that?

LT: They are based at Teachers Centre, on the ninth floor.

JS: I've got to go there this afternoon.

LT: Didn't Yunus tell you of any other place? Yunus Mohammed?

JS: No, he didn't mention this. He suggested a couple of individuals who might have some papers, Paul David for example. But he thought that there are problems finding anything.

LT: Yea. Check with, because I think there might be files and so on.

JS: Who should I speak to there, anyone in particular?

LT: Ask for Vish.

JS: Ja. You were actually elected to the REC in 1985. Did you go to the National Council at Azaadville? Did you go to the National General Council which was held near Krugersdorp, Azaadville, in April '85, just after the regional elections?

LT: '85, I don't remember. I don't remember leaving Natal, you know, for the...

JS: You didn't go the UDF launch?

LT: No, no, I went there, I was there. If you see the video, there is somewhere I am appearing, at the beginning of the video, at the door. [LAUGHS] I went there with a lot [?]. And then PE, I went there also.

JS: The PE conference. What do you remember about the PE conference?

LT: That is a long time ago. I can't remember.

JS: In the conference the big issue was discussing whether there should be a call for a ethnic referendum,

LT: That was it. Ja, in fact, already here, you see the, there were a lot of discussions on these issues here... [?]

JS: There must have been, I mean, presumably NIC was arguing there should be an Indian referendum and a lot of other organisations were saying, no that's not...

LT: Yea, definitely there were those kind of divisions in terms of, ja, the emphasis is like more on reflection more like the ... [?] hold a referendum ... [?].

JS: Right. So you were elected for the REC in 1985. Did the, I mean in the period 1985/6 before, so what were the main concerns of REC during that period?

LT: Rent issues. Violence was one of the key issues, a large political issue. I think '85 was the same year that the State of Emergency ... [?]. We were very, I've told you about that other state of emergency, through the activities of Inkatha. I think the old man was, must have been, went to a rally the same year ... [?], where he was beaten... Where the issue of Inkatha was raised as well. It was, you see COSATU was formed in 1984...

JS: '85, December.

LT: One of the key issues was our relationship with the organisation, what do you call it, trying to consolidate our relationship with the trade union movement, because up to when the, I think, '88, those relationships come to ... [?] township ... operation in a number of ... They began there, in the preceding years, there were debates how to ... the workerists and the populists. [INTERRUPTION]

JS: You were saying how in '85 the major concern was consolidating the relationship with the trade unions, and how this affected your relationship with Inkatha also.

LT: Ja, you see there was an approach of dealing with the violence which was a very important thing because it was obviously hampering the extent to which... There was a lot of ... [?] around that time. You should remember the, I think it was, must have been end of '84 when the ... a number of ... [?]. I was among the people who volunteered to ... so to speak, man the office, and that was ... terrible ... [?]. It was kind of tough. Because it meant we had to find ways other than the usual of meeting actual ... questions ... [?].

JS: Consumer boycotts, for example,

LT: One area which we, we were working with the Midlands, the ... [?] ...

JS: The relationship between progressive organisations ... [?] and Inkatha was clearly affected by the position taken by COSATU at the launch here in Durban in December 1985. Within COSATU there was afterwards quite a lot of criticism of the very strong position taken at that launch. Do you remember had there been much discussion between organisations in Durban prior to that, prior to the launch?

LT: Yea, you that I'm saying, that issue comes along with the issue of which position should we take, one of, I think that as the UDF we basically felt strongly that ... we played a, so to speak, a very important role in terms of laying the ground also for ... the rents ... [?]. What was then described as the proposition. We would have felt very strongly that that position in a sense was important to take that position. We didn't, you see, ... to the... about the ... what do you call it, party political position which would influence the extent to which we would mobilise and so on. But at the same time there was a need for people to be much more accepting of that position. One of the problems - I think it also relates to civics as it were - that tended to play a very highly political role. I think one comrade explained it, Henry Fazzie, proper-

ly when he said in terms of because the political organisations were banned, there was an overriding need to push the politics of the Movement, and that was what was driving many of us at that time. And tactically for example, then I think was difficult and our assessment as well what the conditions were, we very strongly that it was long overdue for that position to be asserted very strongly. ... [?] ... that was not being challenged sufficiently, we were feeling that some of the trade unions, some of the people in the trade union movement were actually dragging their feet in terms of asserting the strong opposition and more militant position ... and challenging this tremendous ... which was dangerous. ... We were very, I think we were very sympathetic to that position of the

JS: Were you detained before 1986?

LT: I was the first executive member of the UDF to be detained.

JS: When was that?

LT: '86.

JS: '86

LT: Yea, not '85. I mean under the general State of Emergency.

JS: So when were you released?

LT: August 11th.

JS: '86?

LT: Yea, same year. And redetained on December 12th.

JS: And when were you released that second time?

LT: February 23rd.

JS: Were you detained again after that?

LT: No.

JS: Why were you released in August? Why was the detention so short?

LT: There was an application which was lodged by the UDF there.

JS: In your name?

LT: Yes. We actually discussed it in detention. That was very ... they ... for my name to be released because I was then the only official of the UDF and that this needed to be taken organisationally and not individually, and individual taking up an application, it was a political campaign issue, so that's how. When the Durban judge decided to set me free, but ... [?] ... Subsequently, the Pietermaritzburg fellows took a different decision. Well we subsequently lost that case on an appeal. That's what I believe were the reasons for my release. But subsequently I think it was more like political ... [?] ... The police just wanted to get me, they actually put me under section 29 the second time. No, section 29.

JS: Were you, did they say they were going to try and set up a charge against you, a trial?

LT: No. What I'm saying is that most of the time I wasn't being interrogated. I was interrogated briefly for a brief period. Although there were a number of threats and attempts at ... [?], but those were what they did to everybody.

JS: Now obviously, when you came out in '87/'88/'89, the violence would be the major concern for organisations in Durban.

LT: Ja, that was a very heavy period. And there was this attempt at the initial peace, and so on and so forth. The old man, because of the youth to be inundated with calls ... [?] ... and so on. And that was one of the preoccupations that we had then, developing an appropriate approach to this issue. On the one hand Inkatha was seriously attacking these communities, and at the same time they wanted to talk peace and so on, it was like a contradiction, you know, ... [?] that we were facing. ... [?]. In fact there was still debate about whether it was appropriate to talk to Inkatha.

JS: What was your personal view?

LT: It was a difficult to make, to say no we must talk to these ... [?], but how we do it must be such that we are going to be able to advance our work in terms of first making the point, exposing them. We shouldn't do it in a way which is going mean our not being able to talk and expose what are we doing, because that thing had the elements of that, you know, that was our major concern. We accepted these talks, about bringing peace. We were very suspicious that all they wanted was to, where a situation in which we wouldn't be able to, as a result of agreements that might be reached there, to continue to expose what they were actually doing there. So, I agreed that there was a need for that but in terms of bringing about the right conditions and this is why often the criticisms that we were, for example, letting the president [i.e Gumede] do the work alone, when in fact what was happening was that I think there was a bit of, a bit of a knee jerk reaction, because of the nature of the thing, without sufficient discussion of the issue. And appropriately in conditions with everybody else. You see we were, we didn't want to a situation to develop where we would be seen to be taking initiatives which we hadn't sorted out with people on the ground, who were affected themselves. Because people were talking, were talking arms, they wanted arms for ... [?], we were inundated in the office physically with requests for provision of arms and so on, and it is those conditions that made us make some ... [?] about how to approach the talks. On the ground, on the one hand, grassroots, people were feeling no, these people are fighting us, we need to fight back as a way of defending ourselves and it would be wrong merely to ... [?], they were saying, we need some guarantees and so on. That influenced us strongly, it was rushed into ... [?].

JS: Who was particularly active in that period in so far as the UDF? Obviously a lot of people within COSATU were very involved, [but] who was active in the UDF itself?

LT: Ja, like I'm saying, the old man Archie Gumede was one of the most active ... [?], the Natal Organisation of Women representatives were active, the students in SANSCO and so on were very active, in the UDF. So it was quite a bunch of people who were active. While giving their constraints, students only get involved up to so far and not further because they just didn't have that kind of determination required. Those organisation, for example, in AZASO and so on, some of the varsity members very, provided a hell of a lot of back up, in the work of ... [?], in a number of areas ... [?].

JS: The relationship between the UDF and its youth affiliates - SAYCO and SAYCO structures in Natal - were they, how were... SAYCO was very weak in this region

LT: Ja.

JS: ... relatively weak. Is that right?

LT: And they, for example, they were... You see one of the problems was, ok, organisationally, those people who set on the REC to represent the organisation, there was a problem of the extent to which they were able to relate back and thus relate back to their constituency, what constituency, the discussions that were taking place there. And also be able to put into the discussions within the UDF what exactly happened on the ground, and there was always a tension in terms of the extent to which that, in other words in terms of tensions at the leadership level. There were complaints at some stage about the extent to which the UDF was ... [?] at the executive level, effectively reaching the ground. And reflecting what was happening on the ground as well. And part of the problem was precisely that. Their stability, strength or weakness, depended on which affiliate it was and the extent to which it was able to effectively channel the discussions that were taking place from there into its con-

stituency and so on. And those were organisational weaknesses more than anything else.



JS: And of course due to the conditions of the time also obviously affected the development of the civic movement in the region.

LT: Exactly. It did because those areas with student structures of some kind, you found them - ok, you see when the UDF adopted the Freedom Charter, for example, as a guiding document, one of the burning questions was ... [?] was a discussion of those issues ... [?] ... etc etc. Some of the civic structures were such that the idea was to ... [?] say OK, where the conditions on the ground influence people to want to get involved in civic matters and so on, but the political issues as well were pre-eminent, and it was always a struggle to go there because civic activists from the, like I said earlier on, because of the absence of any other way of expressing political issues and so on, these were important vehicles for mobilising people and communities.

JS: You, I mean obviously from a certain point your major concern became setting up civic movements?

LT: I'll tell you what happened after 1987, because I think there was a period ... for the rest of '87, during which I took, I think it's what they call 'burn-out'. I had worked for, I had worked in this manner from those kind of ... and so on without any break. The concept of taking off was non-existent. I actually took a lot of TB out of bad eating habits, we had very little time to eat, ... [?] or do anything of that sort, we were working particularly hard for long periods of time. And I married in 1985, incidentally, on 7th March. And so I think the pressures began to mount, so to speak, the family and responsibility, and those kind of things. I discussed it with some of the members of the Executive, ... [?], no, I need a break, I can't ... [?]. And finally, I relinquished my responsibilities as regional publicity secretary, you know. And I took a long break, during which I didn't become, during which I consciously stayed away from activity, but I generally remained in touch and when I, so to speak, came back it was through the media, alternative media, so to speak. Just, I think, '87, there were discussions about the need for a publication in Durban, a newspaper in Durban, and a group of journalists actually consulted us, the REC, for the need for a formation of an alternative newspaper. [INTERRUPTION] So, we obviously supported that on principle. One of the big questions was in what language it will come. And because we were concerned that struggles were taking place in Natal which were not being reflected in any of the national newspapers, the commercial press was doing, was actually doing a hell of a disservice to, you know, to the people of Natal to the extent to which and the amount of ... [?] was being done on the ground, wasn't totally being reflected in any of the papers, and so we supported the idea of being democratic and so on. So this is where I went when I came back, I went to join the 'New African' as a freelance journalist. Then there were a number of trials taking place, a number of ANC people ... [?]. I've always been a journalist of some kind since I was ... [?] - in 1984, by the way, I worked briefly for that year for Diakonia, that is Ecumenical church-based, as the communications organiser, I produced their (what do you call that?) 'Diakonia News' - it's no longer there. Ja. So I started writing for the 'New African' on a freelance basis, and briefly did their distribution as well. On and off I used to write for them, but then I... Because of that work inevitably I came back, in the township of course I was involved in the civic and so on, and that year, in the middle of that year, I got absorbed in civic work, quite strongly. Partly because of the, we were trying to fight the authorities to come back to negotiations. ... [?] in negotiations ... - incidentally we're going there this afternoon - with the NPA, ... So that pushed me back into, at the regional level and so on.

JS: Was this the time of the formation of the Southern Natal Interim Civic structure?

LT: SNICC? Ja, what happened is that SNICC and the Natal Civic Organisation started to approach the unity process and once those structures lapsed into one I got involved in the workshop in the process that mobilised the workshop which was going to report back on the unity process and arising out of which a programme of action was formed which included the division of regional structures. And I've been involved in that process since then up to where we have now successfully launched three of these new structures in Natal. This is the Southern Natal Civic Association and the Northern Natal Civic Association as well as the North Coast Civic Association. We are now left with the Midlands civic structures. By the way, now that we are a unitary structure, SANCO (the South African National Civic Organisation), these will be SANCO regional structures.

JS: Right, so the three Natal regions have been formed, you say North Coast, Northern Natal and Southern Natal. What does Durban fall under?

LT: Southern Natal.

JS: Right. And the Natal Midlands is not formed?

LT: Not yet formed.

JS: Is it because of the debate about the relationship between civics and the ...?

LT: Partly yes. But we are having discussions with those comrades, some members of the REC there. And as a result of those discussions they discussed it at the full REC and they, we are told, we haven't been yet formally informed, that they don't have a problem, we are now going to meet with the local government department. And the reason, you see some of the people, there are a number of civic structures in some areas they are not properly formed, but in some of the areas there are people who are keen to move into this area, but because of this perception they have of what individuals, our understanding was that, as when we spoke to those people, there are individuals within the REC Midlands who do not see their way clear to the civics, and so on, and...

JS: That's putting it very politely.

LT: [LAUGHS] Ja. And therefore, that is not a ... [?]. So we briefed them on what we are up to, what resources we have and also how we see ourselves cooperating with political organisations such as the ANC, that we saw ourselves doing that work in that region as well, and I think we ... [?] not have problems.

JS: How do you assess the strength of civics through the different parts of Natal, like the Durban area? How strong are civics in the Durban area, would you say, compared to other parts of the country?

LT: We, I think we have reached a stage where now we can say that they have in a sense forced themselves onto the stage. In all the areas where they exist they are normally ... [?]. There is a policy ... [?] where before you had the authorities ... [?], they have found that they are unable to move an inch. As an example in KwaMashu, for example, the LKDP, which is a, some development agencies and so on, has received a ... [?], an amount of money to develop KwaMashu, its infrastructure, community schools, and so on, through the Joint Services Board, as we understand it. And they have been desperately trying to get involved, to get them to talk to civics in the area, and so on. And on the ground as well you see the most important area is the civics ... [?] ... communities. ... number one, but also they are beginning to ... themselves on the development front, which is a critical area, one of the areas which ... [?]. So I'm saying whereas in other say, in the Transvaal for example, I think people have gone a step ahead because of the ... [?] achieved very concrete results and so on. We have not yet reached that position here.

J: You mentioned, crime-prevention and anti-crime activities. My impression is in Natal, because of obviously the violence, is that civic organisations have had to confront the crime issue far more directly and far more formally than civics in many other areas, which have done it in a more uncoordinated manner. Would that be true?

LT: Yea, relatively, yea it's true, and you see we must be able to distinguish between the political violence - for example of Inkatha moving into an area, recruitment and all, a fight between Inkatha and so on - and crime ... township, ... [?] for instance. And often what happens with people from outside, they actually think that every area is violence ridden, in the way in which it comes across in the media, they actually are surprised how we survive. My relatives in ... [?] and so on, always wonder how the hell I survived. They think I wear bullet vests and things and that's, I think because of the way the media treat what is actually happening in different areas.

JS: For example I know that, I know that Jeff Radebe and Linda Zama organised big meetings, last year I think, where it discussed the whole question...

LT: I remember that workshop.

JS: ... the workshops, on people's court type issues.

LT: Ja, look OK the issues around that because of the level of organisation that was developed and... Those things have actually died down, the fragrant abuse of procedures. In a sense people have found other ways of dealing with ... [?], I mean because of the level of infiltration [?] and so on, and it's no longer ... [?] an issue in a sense, although there are still problems in a number of areas. But people have been able to bring the level of crime down significantly, in a number of ways. Civics have played a critical role. The act of moving from area to area, street to street to form the structures, ... [?]. And in terms of the political violence, I think in places like Ladysmith where that issue is still there, ... [?], I think, when was the Peace Accord, ... [?]. ... Inkatha ... And we persuaded them to stop the people's court, and so on. And we heard this when we went to oversee the launch of the Northern Natal ... [?]. Now, what the comrades ... [?], but they are saying now what these people are actually telling us to do, to dismember or want us to be able to allow Inkatha to, because Inkatha wants to move into this area. And able to do so because of the level of confrontation in the area. And then they were so sharp that they have been thwarted at every attempt at an aggressive entry into that area, so they actually almost ... [?], to dismember those types of things. Because what those structures actually do, a very alert alarm system, any aggressive effects that might ... [?], and so on.

JS: Interesting, because in many other part of the country my impression is that, I think, at the local level even magistrates are now more sympathetic to crime prevention activity than they were in mid-1980s and now that they are willing to, very often to turn a blind eye, to even encourage crime-prevention activities, but of course here in Natal there is this extra dynamic, the political factor.

LT: Ja but you see they are, some of the areas here where that exists, some of the police have got, have taken this position. For example, in Inanda, some of them have done there... [?]. You have spoken to your committee? ... [?].

JS: And these are KwaZulu people?

LT: No, they are SAP. The KwaZulu police, they don't even get, they are often on the warpath, you see.

JS: But clearly in many areas the attitude of, presumably Ladysmith is an example, local security police and other police see their roles very much in political terms.

LT: Exactly and you see they are also, this is because of their relationship with the KwaZulu police on the one hand... It's a, what you call it, an anomalous [sic] situa-

tion where on the one hand there was fights on the other hand they would cooperate and so on and so forth. You can never tell what is actually going to do. But very clearly they actually see their role as being political and they are still fighting that political war, as far as they are concerned, and they would try as much as possible before the ... of different political practioners.

JS: Were there particular police, in Durban, who were in charge or the security police who were responsible for monitoring UDF, harassing here. The reason I ask, is because one thing we are trying to do is to get back documents too from the police. The police seized, collected lots of documents.

LT: Definitely. Now that you mention about documents, when I was detained. a hell of a lot of stuff was taken, the stuff you are looking for...

JS: From the office?

LT: No from me, but the UDF office as well, a lot of material was taken from me: handwritten notes, pamphlets, posters, discussion documents, you name it, they were taken from me. And when I went to get them, on several occasions I couldn't - this was in 1986 when this was done - Several attempts were made to get them and failed. I went there several times accompanied by lawyers and I have not been able to get that. Finally, it was only in February after the unbanning of the ANC, one guy who works for the 'New African', he had come from the Soviet Union and the police had confiscated his material, only for a week later for the press to be unbanned, so he contacted the lawyer, in ... [?]'s office, who then after the unbanning got a phone from the police to say tell your client to come fetch his stuff, so I remembered, why shouldn't I go at this time, I went there and he phoned and he told them I must go and fetch my stuff. And when I got there they only had two typewriters and as for the material they took, no, the law says it if you don't claim your things within six months it will be thrown out. They tell me no those were destroyed, rubbish - which as far as I am concerned, is actually nonsense... You see the other source of possible documents, lawyers. You see I don't know why Yunus couldn't ... [?].

JS: He said he was very security conscious, that he destroyed them.

LT: But speak to - I don't know if you can get to speak to Zac Yacoob. Because as senior counsel they used to have access to this material and so on.

JS: You say you went with lawyers to the SAP.

LT: Ja, at C.R.Swartz Square to fetch my material, I went with Archie Gumede himself, and one guy called, who used to work there, they were all from Yunus Mohammed's office.

JS: OK. I think it is very unlikely they destroyed ... documents.

LT: I don't believe it.

JS: I know that in Jo'berg, in John Vorster Square, they've got, apparently they have got tonnes of documents.

LT: Ja, they are our best librarians. [LAUGHS]

[END OF TAPE]