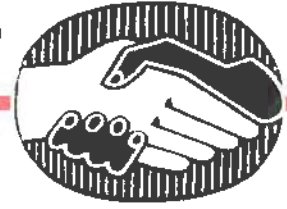


95770 21  
-

**The Alan Paton Centre  
& Struggle Archives**



RECORDING THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE

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

Interview with Jean van Riet,  
Liberal Party member, at his farm,  
Baralong, Excelsior, Free State  
on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998  
conducted by Prof. David Welsh  
and Peter Brown

3<sup>rd</sup> interview in a series of 4

The interviewee has agreed to open access for use by researchers,  
students and members of the public.

Researchers are to acknowledge the Alan Paton Centre,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
as the source of these interviews,  
when they include them in their bibliographies.

These transcriptions are not for publication.  
Copyright belongs to the Alan Paton Centre.

# KWAZULU-NATAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Third interview with Jean van Riet at Baralong Farm,  
Excelsior, Free State, on 15 September 1998,  
conducted by David Welsh and Peter Brown**

**(‘J’ shall signify the Interviewee and ‘D’ (David) and ‘P’ (Peter), the Interviewers.)**

9 J: On one occasion I went to Thaba ‘Nchu and I usually go and have a chat with my friend, Dr  
10 Jim Maroka. And he was a very famous doctor in the area - people came to him from all  
11 over the country and anyway I chat with him over there and I said to him ‘Jim, I’m going to  
12 Swaziland next week - do you want to go to the ?’ He says ‘It’s nice country - you’ll enjoy  
13 it.’ I said ‘No, I’m not going for a holiday - I’ve been there before - you could go there. I  
14 want to go and buy ground.’ I said ‘With this political business I ? buy ground.’ He says  
15 ‘What you want to go there, don’t be silly man.’ He says ‘You know you’ll have all the  
16 trouble in the world, there’s so much diseases there, and your inspectors of animals you’ve  
17 got to get a permit to - to pull the beasts from one place to the other and one thing and  
18 another.’ He said ‘Why don’t you go to Botswana?’ I said ‘Jim, what’s that? Botswana?’  
19 It’s ? there’s a map - it’s on there any names. He said ‘When you talk like that it shows you  
20 know nothing about the land.’ I said ‘I tried, I don’t know.’ He said ‘Now look here - I’m  
21 going to give you a letter to my nephew, Seretse Khama.’

22 D: Nephew, huh?

23 J: Yes, yes...

24 D: ...that’s interesting.

25 J: He said ‘I’ll give you a letter to Seretse who is a lad - who is married to William...

26 D: Ruth Williams?

27 J: Ruth, ja Ruth. And he said ‘You go and have a chat with these blokes.’ So I came home.  
28 I said ‘Johnny, I’ve just had a chat with Jimmy,’ - he says ‘Are we moving over to

1 Botswana?' I said 'Nothing lost ..' I said 'Come on. Let's go over there.' So we went over -  
2 Botswana in those days was administrated from Mafekeng directly by the government - by  
3 the government at ? So we went to Mafekeng, spoke to the authorities, got the - as much  
4 information as we can - then only did we find out that an outsider could only buy ground in  
5 the Thuli Block - with a title concession, or in Ghansi? You see. But anyway we got a lot  
6 of pamphlets and we went to the old ? Marapatsi and we stayed over there for a whole day  
7 and he was lead - and I was ? read his wish - we started discussing the matter. And so then  
8 we decided to travel all along the Limpopo River - they call it the back line - now that Thuli  
9 Block is all the way - right from the south right up to the Thathi? Circle. Now the old chief  
10 there - was afraid that Paul Kruger would attach his farm - his land at some time or another -  
11 and to make sure that he would not lose his ground and that he gave that whole strip of  
12 ground to England, Britain and that was the time of Queen Victoria and he gave all that  
13 ground over - that whole - all along the pit? So if Paul Kruger had to get out to cross over  
14 the British line and then of course that would save his bacon - he was a wily old boy you  
15 know - so that's how the Thuli Block was known. But the called the road the back line  
16 which goes all along the back and you have farms going down in small strips down to the  
17 river and there the British put settlers and many British people - and you have one of their  
18 farms over there - they're all Letashi, Oxenham Rand, English names on the farms over there  
19 and we travelled down this river - going down to the river. But there the southern part of the  
20 river is only a small little spruit you know but it gets bigger and bigger when the other river -  
21 the Motlabas and the other river also come in and the Kosati, then it becomes a big river you  
22 know. Anyway, none of those things appealed to me but what we could not understand that  
23 the cattle were so fat in it and the grazing seemed to be very poor. Then we found out it's  
24 the pods - they got fat on the pods of the trees.

25 D: What sort of trees?

26 J: Mopane trees.

27 D: Mopane?

28 J: Mopane yes, and also Rossyntjebos and Harde Kool - oh there're quite a different - kind of  
29 different ones that they eat. Anyway we - there was one farm there belonging to a Hollander

1 - we had a look over there and - and he wanted a certain price or something. I said 'Well,  
2 we've - we'll first have to look.' But we got to a place called Sheerwood, Sheerwood Ranch  
3 - near the Groblersdrift - Lancer's Drift, there's a hotel over there and a chap Ampras was  
4 the proprietor, anyway when we got there there was a lot of farmers there - they'd had a  
5 meeting or something and we were going to sleep at the hotel that night but it was full.  
6 People by the name of Swart said 'Oh no,' we must go and - they have a farm deksel we must  
7 sleep there but they - there they told us there's a chap now twenty five miles downstream a  
8 chap van der Merwe -he wants to sell his ground - a place over there. So Johnny and I  
9 decided - we stayed over that night and these people - the Swarts, we don't know them at all  
10 but just they - you know - they're so hospitable - very hospitable - Van Riaan Swart - he's  
11 got a big farm there of twenty thousand morgen and anyway the next day we went down to  
12 this farm there - Twee Riviere - it belonged to this chap - van der Merwe and well, when we  
13 got the to Mount David? you know - there was this pool of water - and with huge trees and  
14 I saw this - I saw this huge - you could see down this side - all water and so on - when old  
15 van der Merwe was not with us I said 'By jolly, ' I said 'Heere here - I'm going to buy here  
16 man - look at this I said - look at this - this is beautiful.'

17 D: Now this water was that the Limpopo River or was it?

18 J: It was the Limpopo River, Limpopo River, so we went and looked around - asked what he  
19 wants for the ground - ten pounds per morgen and I said 'Well now look I will go down to  
20 the Free State - first pay my ? and come back.' Because there you got to pay cash for  
21 everything - there is no land bank or anything like that - you've got to pay for it. So I said  
22 'I'll just go..' I think he thought that we'll never come back you know. Anyway I came back  
23 and just paid the money arrangement so we went back and I said to him 'Hell ..' 'Yes' he  
24 says 'It's all right.' But he says his - his attorney lives in Springs - in - around here. I said  
25 'No, no trouble - get in the car - we go to Springs.' So off we went to Springs and we got  
26 to his attorney over there and said we wanted to buy the farm and so on you know so this  
27 attorney said 'Excuse me a minute, I've just got to go...' I think he went off to find out  
28 whether my finances was all right, you know because when I was in the office I immediately  
29 twigged what was happening you know. And he came back and he said 'No we won't worry

1 about that .' I wrote down the contract - I said 'I'll pay out half the price now and the other  
2 half I'll pay on the registration.' So we bought that farm as a political funckle? That's what  
3 it was bought for.

4 D: Which year was this Jean? Can you remember?

5 J: I, I - it's now forty-two years - work it out..

6 D: Ja, so that's in 1956, hey? Yes. It would have been 1956.

7 J: Ja, well that's right. I know that I've had the farm forty two years and then I bought that farm  
8 and we planted citrus trees and cleaned up the bush on the side - put up centrifugal pumps  
9 and started irrigating and on one occasion I produced four hundred and fifty bales of cotton -  
10 which is a lot of cotton - and we do moneky nuts and of course we - but when we bought the  
11 farm there was foot and mouth disease. And no animals could be accepted?sent there at all.  
12 This van der Merwe then had me let his farm to a chap Steinberg who had seven head of  
13 cattle that were on the farm over there - but he - they - his arrangement was with Steinberg  
14 that if he sell the farm - if he sell the farm then his lease would be cancelled. Now what  
15 happened actually was this - the van der Merwe - he and his brother came to an arrangement  
16 that he buy the farm and his brother would give the money for the cattle to buy in a tractor  
17 and tools? and that you know - but when he bought the farm his brother pulled out - so there  
18 he was - he could raise no money anywhere - he had a farm and he would have to do nothing  
19 - he was absolutely - he - ? penniless?. So anyway, then we bought that farm and no - it was  
20 a - ? became a wonderful business proposition. We eventually did very, very well with it -  
21 and today a thousand pula a morgen won't buy that farm - which we bought a morgen for ten  
22 pounds. And I had not been there long - a year or three when my neighbour, Richard Swart -  
23 which is an English name and he can't say yes or no - anyway I bought the farm- eight  
24 hundred morgen from him - next door and we had the two farms now. Then a couple of  
25 years after that - across the river, Hansie Oosthuisen - he came to me and he - he asked me  
26 he said couldn't I get a buyer for his farm - Heng man, David - I was so astounded - that's  
27 exactly what we want - straight over the river you know and I could hardly get my breath -  
28 here I am already - when he said that - I've already bought the farm man. I said, after a while  
29 I said 'You know Fransie, man, Hansie' I said 'Hansie - if you don't - what's your price? If

1 you don't charge too much, ...' I said 'We can talk business.' He says he wants thirty five  
2 pounds a morgen. I said 'Man that's a lot of money you know.' 'No' he says, he can't take  
3 less - he's bonded so much and that. I said 'All right I'll buy it.' So I bought that farm and  
4 now about five years ago - four years ago - Petoos, offered his farm again and we bought that  
5 - we had to pay three hundred and fifty rand a morgen for that. But as I say those properties  
6 today is worth a lot - that's how the - that's how I bought those farms over there - that's  
7 where my grandson - John Doe is now farming - but he is now with the ground that we've  
8 got over there - he's one is - the first one is one thousand six hundred and fifty and then  
9 Swan is eight hundred morgen and the two farms on the republic is eight hundred morgen  
10 each - with that works out a lot - round about five, something like that. But with the ground  
11 that he hires too now - he's now farming on eight thousand morgen of ground with a lot of  
12 cattle and he - and a wonderful proposition going over there.

13 P: Jean did you ever speak to Seretse? On the basis of what Dr?

14 J: Yes, oh yes. First of all then Johnny and I went and said - then we went to Serowe after we -  
15 we went to Serowe - we went to - when we got to Sir Seretse's house, he was away there and  
16 they had - we were drilling for water - these people - some two hundred years or so - three  
17 hundred yards from the house - so after we greeted his wife she said where he was - we went  
18 off to see him and we got over there and I greeted him you know and he was busy with the  
19 people - I took the letter out and said 'I have a letter here from your uncle.' And I gave him  
20 the letter. And he read the letter 'Oh' he says 'Come on - come on - come on we're going  
21 home.' And he left there and we went home and of course they - did we - we had lunch with  
22 them over there and he said 'No I'll tell you what is going - hey.' He says 'Come here.' And  
23 he says 'Botswana is a wonderful place.' And that's it then we went looking for a place and  
24 then I bought that farm. You see this chap Seretse Khama - he used to go home for the long  
25 holidays - but for short holidays - he was down at Fort Hare - long holidays it's too far and  
26 too expensive to go all the way over there - so he stayed with his uncle in Thaba 'Nchu - with  
27 Jim - for the short holiday - for the long, holidays he'd go home - in Botswana, you see -  
28 that's right, yes, yes.

29 D: And you thought - you liked Seretse -I mean he was obviously a very...

- 1 J: Yes, well I went to see him quite a number of times after that because I started a school over  
2 there and I wanted him to get involved in the school business you know but he said 'No.' that  
3 they didn't have money so we were running the school on our own steam - just like we  
4 started over here - 'till eventually the kids' school was handed over to their administration.
- 5 D: Did you by the way ever meet Patrick van Rensburg?
- 6 J: Oh. I know Pat very well - Pat, he was at Serowe, and he started the school business over  
7 there - when he was started there - he and - oh damn, what's his wife's name - Elizabeth.  
8 Elizabeth, yes, Li - oh - ag it doesn't matter - but they - they ? wonder around for a bed - ?  
9 we all slept the four of us in the same rondavel that time - on the floor - we slept on the floor  
10 and then Pat was just starting this business over there - he said he'd got ground from Seretse  
11 to start this school business. And I said 'Pat, man,' I said 'Have you got water?' 'No' he  
12 says 'They're drilling.' I said 'How do you know you drill - you won't get water, man.' I  
13 said 'Pat, look I'll give you ground and you start to come down to the school - to my place  
14 over there.' But Pat would - he was afraid - I think Pat was afraid they'd go over and nab  
15 him, and that's why - because we were on the river and I don't think - I think Pat was afraid  
16 they'd nab him and that's why he didn't go around. And then - but he made a success of me  
17 ...
- 18 D: What was his school called - the one - a famous school which he founded?
- 19 J: Yes, I - he didn't - he also had a boarding school - I saw him quite a few times - as a matter  
20 of fact as - at a certain stage they bought a lot of oranges from us too - from the farm where  
21 we - no, I saw Pat quite a few - I slept at this place afterwards too when he had the house and  
22 a decent place and I saw Pat then.
- 23 D: Is he still there in Botswana?
- 24 J: Yes, yes, yes - he's still there - oh yes, he's still there - still there - he came down - he came  
25 down to the union a little while ago - yes, yes, yes. Well now this - that was the farming...
- 26 D: No that's interesting...
- 27 J: ..business over there - now we can go to the bonus? I'll have to tell you something about the  
28 bonus?
- 29 D: I'd love to hear that.

1 J: The bonus system was started really round about 1937, '38. What actually happened - I think  
2 with a - with farming you have three essentials that you must consider first - you must have  
3 water, you must have labour, and give food to your people - I think those are the essentials  
4 and if you build houses for them and so on - that also adds up to the thing - so that's when  
5 I when I did - but I called my staff - the staff together and I wanted to start this bonus system.

6 D: How many staff did you have then?

7 J: At that time I think the staff was around about twenty - it was round about twenty- twenty  
8 one or so labour. I said 'Look, I'm going to give you of every hundred bags of maize that  
9 we reap - I'm going to give you five bags - if we reap two hundred bags of maize - you get  
10 ten hags and a thousand bags you get a hundred bags. So the - that is it. more or less five  
11 percent basis - so that worked - then that year it happened that we had a good crop of maize -  
12 something over three thousand bags and their share was a hundred and fifty bags - was their  
13 share so they came together and they divided this meal and when the bags didn't work our  
14 right so they took a skerrie skerrie - a tin and they started measuring out and giving  
15 absolutely to the last basin - giving each one his correct share. So that was all right for the  
16 mealies and that was all right for wheat too, but then I grew lucerne and I also had a dairy.  
17 So what are they going to do with so many bales of lucerne or so many gallons of milk? We  
18 had - they used to get the skimmed milk over here - we have a certain amount of skimmed  
19 milk - they used to use it - so I said to them now - I said 'Look, we - I want you to also have  
20 a share in the dairy because..' man I could see they are very keen on this agriculture part -  
21 because they were astounded when they got that first a hundred and fifty odd bags of maize  
22 you know and they were very pleased about that. And then the wheat and then I said 'Now  
23 we put it on a cash basis.' And I said 'We sell the stuff and on every hundred pounds or so?  
24 we make - you get five pounds - five per cent on our gross.' You know. And there were two  
25 people - two of the men - one was John and one was Elias - they said 'No.' They - the others  
26 they understand, but this they don't want to go into...' Well' I said 'That's - that is going to  
27 be the law of the land and that's all.' So John and Elias went off and after a couple of  
28 months Elias came back but John never came back again - he went off - Elias stayed and he's  
29 stayed with me all the time - eventually Elias got on the old side and he came to me one day



1 and he said to me 'Baas,' hy se 'This thing with the bonus,' he says 'Nee,' he says 'Ek kan  
2 nie meer sak dra .' By that he means he's not pulling his weight. He's not entitled to his  
3 share. You know. I said you 'Elias, you're talking nonsense.' I said 'You helped me - and  
4 I - we built the dam, and these people - these children today, they're living well on our sweat  
5 and I say you're entitled to it.' And so on. He shook his head - he's not happy with that. I  
6 said 'Well, what are you going to do.' 'No' he says he doesn't know. So as the things ? I  
7 said 'Elias, hang on - look here what about the shop? You know the shop.' 'Ag' he says 'Ja.  
8 Winkel, winkel.' I said 'Nothing to it - actually all you do is sell and sell.' 'No' he says he  
9 doesn't know. Anyway he went off. I said 'All right, go man.' I said. After a day or two  
10 he comes back and he says 'Ou Anna,' that's his wife 'Ou Anna en ek ons het baie gepraat -  
11 ons het baie gepraat -' Hy se 'Dic winkel - ek sal hom probeer.' I said 'Come on - come on.'  
12 Because Liza and I we didn't keep a man we used to look after the shop ourselves - and we  
13 opened the door - the people must buy quickly and we lock up again we go on with our work  
14 and there was no clerk. And I put him into the office I said 'Now Elias all you look - see that  
15 you get the right change at the time - and that's all.' You know - David - before I knew what  
16 was happening - boy my stocks were just going ? I couldn't buy quick enough - the people  
17 had to buy with us before we got our ? 'What do you want, what do you want?' before -went  
18 in quickly and get all - well, I get on without it - what happened ? you know - but Elias had  
19 all the time in the world and if you had a pound boy - he'd sell you a pound's worth and he  
20 was a very - he could play this what they call Maraba raba - you know what Raba raba is?  
21 It's a special game - you put - three in a row then you take a ? from me - it's a square with  
22 lines around and nobody could ever beat him with Raba raba - he's a fantastic player - it's  
23 like chess - like but now that's their chess. Anyway he's in the shop now. So I said 'Johnny,  
24 now Elias is in the shop, our other people get bonus - what are we going to do about  
25 bonuses? They get the usual wage, but what about now the bonuses they make.' He's now -  
26 he's going without the bonus - we decided we'd give him one percent on the gross sales -  
27 here's his salary and one percent on the gross sales - so good, that's fine I said 'Now, now,  
28 to keep everything right,' I said 'When you want something from the shop, I want - we got  
29 to pay it at the till to keep our money matters right.' You know when you take stock and you

1 enter your sales and your purchases properly, hey? So I said 'Now we've got to..' Man,  
2 David - I wanted to write a letter and the desk - we had - our office was in the shop - I went  
3 to sit down and do this - and I was writing - I said 'Elias, I want this and that.' Just a couple  
4 of odds and ends. I still remember it was eight shillings and sixpence worth. I finished the  
5 letter. I said 'Elias, hoeveel kos dit?' because I pay into the till you see and he says 'Dis eight  
6 and six - maar jy - jy kan vat vir ten cent.' I nearly fell from the - I ? stuck - now that was  
7 typical of Elias you know - you can have it for ten bob - yes, you know - oh, he was a  
8 fantastic man - yes, that's old Elias. Anyway - this bonus system then - we put it on a cash  
9 basis and he remained on a cash basis all the time. Now the people working on the farm then  
10 twice a year - at the end - at the end of January and at the end of July we pay our bonus - that  
11 is the summer crop and the winter crop. You see - got five per cent on the gross sales hut  
12 then the money was - they kept their ordinary salary - this is extra - but the - now -uh, yes,  
13 they share equally - if there is five hundred pounds in the kitty each one divided and each one  
14 gets his share. Now Johnny has changed that over the time - it now works with merit - they  
15 have a committee - that if a man - well just say for arguments sake - it's milking time and  
16 he's not over there - at the milking time - he'll have a point against him. Over the weekend  
17 they divide it by the three so that they - the third of them look after the milking over the  
18 weekends and things but if he's not there - he's perhaps gone to get a party or something like  
19 that - it'll be a point against him, and they hit - in a - they keep the marks and when the  
20 bonuses are taken into consideration - your good marks and your bad marks and they fined  
21 for that - with the result it's now worked on a merit - not on an equal basis.

22 D: And how does the merit system work?

23 J: Yes and they - they themselves, they have a staff - they have a committee of themselves and  
24 then they fix it up and it works very well. And you know they were so keen because the  
25 incentive is there - the better they do the better - on one occasion I was away and I came back  
26 on a Sunday and they had each spanned the oxen - they were working on a Sunday and I said  
27 'Nee, man, stop,' I said 'We don't work on a Sunday.' But they said that it had rained - you  
28 can't - when it rains then you must give it ? you know - when there's rains then...they said -  
29 I said 'No, no, no, no.' I said 'No farmer would - with any ? get away from their work, they

- 1 get away..' But the incentive was so that they even on occasion worked on a Sunday and I  
2 stopped it. Ja.
- 3 D: Jean - where did you get the idea from in the first place - was it just...?
- 4 J: I think, I think ah, I had seen a film 'Boys Town' many years ago and that appealed to me  
5 and I think the idea of that sort of thing came into my head and I got them on that side - ja.  
6 Now on a Monday morning - before work starts - they go and have a meeting and the  
7 workers say what they think what should be done like this or that and they discuss the whole  
8 affair - uh - what sort of programme and so on you know, ja. So ...
- 9 D: So - but it - I'm sure it meant two things - two things - one that you'd - you kept your labour -  
10 I mean you didn't have the problem ever of people wanting to...
- 11 J: There was no problem with labour here at all - if there's an opening over here - there'd be  
12 ten to grab it because they're earning - huh, two - three times - four times as much as anyone  
13 of the other people because they earn so bloody well and like for instance now - when Johnny  
14 paid out now - the - they were each getting well over two thousand in six months time -  
15 besides their wage - which is a lot of money on a farm - you see.
- 16 P: And the other thing - they're obviously more productive - they work ...
- 17 J: Much more productive - not only that but your machinery - with many of the other farmers  
18 if the tractor breaks down - he will take his time to walk to the farmer 'Baas the tractor is  
19 stukkend.' Boy - that's - if something happens to that you talk to the farmer and he says  
20 'Rubbish, there's nothing gone wrong.' You travel out and get it going. It's another feeling  
21 altogether and as I say so many of these - you see people being killed on the farms - I don't  
22 think - I can't imagine anything ? when they have the discussions over here they talk about  
23 all these murders and things like that - I pity anybody that comes here with any idea like that  
24 - I think he'll be dead before he knows where he is because it's a wonderful - it's a wonderful  
25 spirit on the whole affair you know.
- 26 D: Jean, what did the other Boere in the district think about this?
- 27 J: Well, you know - of course there was - there was - I must still tell you about that - then at the  
28 time there was a meeting - against me - what really happened is this - that is really in that -  
29 as I said 'the incidence' that I want to tell you - I can tell you this one now - it is a - this -

1 people get on the road - they had what they call a padwerkers' bond. It was a sort of a society  
2 - if any of them killed that there's a little bit of money for their widows and things like that  
3 and once a year these things would come around and collect money. This chap Dippenaar,  
4 he was on of the - Dippie came here and he asked for a donation - I used to always give them  
5 five pounds for that - five pounds for whatever - for their - their -

6 D: For their bond?

7 J: Ja. So, I gave them and the next day low and behold here comes Dippie back and he says hy  
8 bring my he says he's bringing back my five pounds. And 'Now' I said 'What's the matter.'  
9 The other farmers said if they take money from him none of the other farmers will give any  
10 money. I said 'Dippie.' I said 'Man, what's wrong with them?' He said 'You know there's  
11 a meeting against you tomorrow? They're - the Farmers' Union is having a meeting?' I said  
12 'Yes? I know nothing about that.' 'Yes' he says 'There's a big meeting against you  
13 tomorrow - it's all over the place ..' he says 'I know about it all.' Boy, I get into my car and  
14 I go to old Naas Rautenbach - he stays about fifteen miles the other side of Chelsea - there  
15 by Kronenberg and I went over the berg and I said 'Naas' and he knows me well and I said  
16 'Naas, Naas ek verstaan die - die Boere Vereeniging het a bo - het a meeting Boere - hier teen  
17 my?' 'Ja' he said. Ek se 'Maar Naas, ek sal - I want to attend this meeting.' And so I said  
18 'Look, if I - I'll pu - I'll write down a note and will you read it out to them and let me attend  
19 this meeting?' You know. 'Yes sure.' So he gave me a piece of paper and a pencil - because  
20 I didn't have it on me and I wrote over there requesting that I attend the meeting. He said  
21 that he was the Chairman - Naas Rautenbach. So the next day - all the people - all the  
22 burgers - the Town Hall was full - some of them were leaning through the windows - there  
23 was no more place inside and they got the police - the captain of the police - of Thaba'Nchu-  
24 from Bloemfontein out over here with this . So I went over to this meeting over there - but  
25 I went over to Kaasie Kriel - Bullie Wessels and I said 'Jong - here's my purse and here's my  
26 wallet -' I said 'I'm going to this meeting - I don't know whether they're going to donner me  
27 -' I said 'You better keep these things for me.' So I went over to the meeting - so I stood  
28 outside and I'm waiting you know and when Naas read my request they said 'Don't be silly -  
29 we don't want to see him.' They don't want to know about me you know. I though Man,

- 1 this - if they wanted to know what is the trouble. 'Yes, he's building houses for ...' You  
2 know those days they didn't build any house...
- 3 D: This was what - about '38?
- 4 J: '42, no this was about '43 - '42, '43 and he said 'He's building houses for his ? and he's even  
5 paying kaffirs - he's even building shit houses for his staff.' Ja, and 'what was that - and he's  
6 got a school going over there and the children that look after the - the herd people.' they said  
7 'they're going to school and all that sort of thing.' So the police were fed up with this lot and  
8 they went over - but they said 'There's nothing against the law that this man is doing.' The  
9 whole thing turns out to be bugger all you know. And the meeting broke up - but of course  
10 I could never make friends with the people over here - I just have my couple of friends like  
11 Willie Wessels and old Peter Theunnisen and Kaasie Kriel and one or two Ernie Paxton and  
12 Bernard Holland and a couple of chaps you know. But even some of them - they were more  
13 in favour for the other way - old Vic Toos - he was the only man - he was a little mite - but  
14 he had his - he was a big shop owner over here. But he knew, if he backed me he may as  
15 well as close the 'Jean, if I take your side properly in this way.' He says 'I won't tell - I just  
16 keep my mouth shut - I don't say - but if I do - ' he said 'I'll have to close my shop.' The  
17 place you just must tell?
- 18 D: Now this was before you became politically a marked man, hey?
- 19 J: Ja, well...
- 20 D: Because I mean it's not - the Liberal Party only in 1953?
- 21 J: Yes, it must have been, it must have been - you know - I don't know whether - there's a  
22 timetable there and I put it out. Yes I told you about the - twice yearly paid out hey?
- 23 D: Ja.
- 24 J: Yes well I built fairly good houses for those days you know - burnt brick - with three  
25 bedrooms, a flat roof, three rooms, and a little diningroom and the kitchen - with burnt brick  
26 - in those days nobody built houses for Black people - they just had to come onto a job - they  
27 would go and build a ...
- 28 D: ...build a pondok?
- 29 J: Yes, he's got to make his own pondokkie. Yes. I told you about the school - how they dig

1 out the daga and how they made the school? Didn't I? Ja. Then another thing - old - I don't  
 2 hire a man, the - the staff hires a man. If there's a man dies here - or something goes wrong  
 3 one way or another and the - he's ? out - he's not ? they get the ? stage he's got to leave or  
 4 something like that well then I tell him to go - but they have a meeting on it - but they also -  
 5 in other words, the staff hires and fires - a person that comes onto this staff over here - I don't  
 6 hire him - the staff hires him you see. I have - I only have the proviso - the right because I  
 7 can veto it if I - but I've never had occasion to do so. So they do their own hiring and firing.  
 8 Then also we had a vegetable garden going - their maids used to have a little vegetable  
 9 garden and get the water over there and they grew pumpkins and vegetables for themselves,  
 10 ja. As I said - but now that - now that is done on a merit system and as more ? boys ? now -  
 11 the money that the pool- remains the same but of course but it is not equally divided any  
 12 more - ? from there. And then the staff - I think on the staff today I think there's only twelve  
 13 because it's - the whole business has been mechanised so much - it's two thousand four  
 14 hundred morgen - so you can imagine - it's a lot bigger ? you know - but on account of  
 15 mechanisation - like for instance the pivots - we've just put up a pivot now..and a new pivot  
 16 over there - it cost four hundred thousand rand.

17 D: You must - verskoon my - as ek steedeling - wat is a pivot?

18 J: A pivot is a - a - it's a water pump then - and the pivot moves around like that - it irrigates.  
 19 The one that we put up now - bigger - there's a big one over here that we bought many years  
 20 ago - then we paid a hundred and thirty five rand for it - but that's long ago. You buy that  
 21 today, you'll pay nearly three quarters of a million rand. Now the one we've just put up now  
 22 for four hundred thousand is a much more a - a - complicated pivot - much more effective  
 23 than the old one over here - if something goes wrong then you've got to go and stop the water  
 24 immediately. With the new one - automatically - if something goes wrong - stops it itself,  
 25 you know, and this - the one that we just put up now - really we should have - a take the car  
 26 and go and have a look - it does twenty two acres - hectares - hectares at a time - but it is  
 27 moveable - we have a rider and the pivot goes onto that and does a circle for twenty-two  
 28 hectares then you hook it with a tractor - pull it over to the next rider - put it on there and it  
 29 does twenty two hectares there again - so it can do four different - we've got it down in four

1 different places - but we'll only do two at a time - and leave the other two for next season -  
2 we do two at a time - with this pivot.

3 D: Jean, what happens when - what - what plan do you make when some - one of your staff dies  
4 or - you know becomes too old - how does your - how does the staff committee...?

5 J: We have, when we have old one now - where he stays on the farm and when they get over  
6 the age of certain - they're entitled to a pension - now the pension of course is not like the  
7 old days where they discriminated against the Black - they get the same pension now - round  
8 about five hundred rand a month. And he gets his - he stays on the farm over here - we - we -  
9 they just remain here - like old Elias died over here - old Moses died over here - old Amper  
10 died over here and those were the olden days you know they died - there's a whole graveyard  
11 here of people that died over here and the old girls that was our nanny many years ago - I  
12 have a picture in my - in my bedroom over there - she was our nanny on the - old Anna, but  
13 she, when she got old I had her stay - I had a special room for her over here and I had two  
14 people to look after her - one for the day and one for the night - she had her own room over  
15 here - she died about six years ago, ja, ja. Well that was the bonus system, hey - well that's  
16 all then.

17 D: Do you want to have a bit of a rest now?

18 J: No, it doesn't matter to me ...

19 D: Are you sure?

20 J: Ja, no - no I'm...

21 D: Well that's good, that's good...

22 J: There's political one?

23 D: Let's hear the political one.

24 J: Ja this is the political one - ja, do you want - shall I tell you something more or less before  
25 we start?

26 D: No, go straight into it - I mean - elke woord is a perel.

27 J: Ja, no, I think a - like Peter of course asked me and others also - how did you possibly - how  
28 did you come to be involved in politics? I think a - my father as I told you before - he was  
29 in the Volksraad and he was in parliament afterwards you know - a member of parliament

- 1           until 1915..
- 2     D:     Did he break with Hertzog - did he go out..?
- 3     J:     No, no - no - no, no...
- 4     D:     He was a Smuts man? Botha?
- 5     J:     No he was a Smuts man - Botha man - the first Prime Minister was Botha and then
- 6           afterwards Smuts, but in 19 - Hertzog broke away in 1912 - and in 1914 there was a rebellion
- 7           and my father at one of the - he was a prisoner of war and he had signed that he would not
- 8           fight against Britain so when the rebellion broke out he was against the rebellion and General
- 9           de Wet and others you know and he had - my father lead the Thaba'Nchu commando and
- 10          they fought against it - and then here at Maqwa they had a fight and my father was wounded
- 11          over there and then - ? eventually they went in and they fought in South West Africa and
- 12          cleared out the Germans then Vormorker, I think it was went to East Africa to clear them out
- 13          there - but more of our soldiers were killed by malaria - much more by malaria than by war
- 14          action - by the Askaris.
- 15    D:     Jean do you remember anything about the rebelling in 1914?
- 16    J:     The rebellion? Oh yes, I remember when - when the message - I was at school when the
- 17          message came through that my father was wounded - we were really very upset you know.
- 18    D:     You were still then in Thaba 'Nchu?
- 19    J:     Yes, and I was at school at the time and - yes well - I was born 1904 ? but I was ten years old
- 20          and they excused us and we went home - straight away to mother you know because we just
- 21          heard and we didn't know how serious he was or anything - we just had a - which afterwards
- 22          came it wasn't very serious - but anyway he didn't after that - that was - he didn't take further
- 23          action because he was out of action.
- 24    D:     Was there a lot of support for the rebellion in this - in this district - I'm sure there was?
- 25    J:     Yes well you see before the rebellion, now we had a political meetings you know - I
- 26          remember going to one of the Nationalist meetings and then this chap - my father who was
- 27          standing against a chap by the name of Charlie Trichaard?, and it was a Nationalist meeting
- 28          and I went and I said - I shall never forget this - but then I was rather - I was a boy already
- 29          of about fourteen or so and they - I remember - it was rain and wet you know and Charlie



1 Trichaard, he said 'Ja,' he said 'the wereld is Nat.' And hy se '? Sal die Here help as dit Nat  
 2 wees.' And 'Nat' means 'Nationalist.' I thought 'Oh, you silly people - a silly joke like that  
 3 amuses you.' This is how I thought - oh you silly people - a bloody silly joke like that - ja,  
 4 ja, as I said my father was in the Volksraad, yes, of course my father was engaged in 1910  
 5 he was in parliament, in 1914 the rebellion with Charlie Trichaard. I told you. Now many  
 6 of my friends - I had quite a number of Jewish friends so I was well informed about the  
 7 atrocities that were committed by Hitler - I mean it leaked through - it leaked through - like  
 8 old Smittie - and the Richenbergs - the Richenbergs that I played tennis with and they - they  
 9 got - they knew more or less that things were bad - ? and a I think as a Jewish friends and  
 10 they...

11 D: When did you - I mean in the early days, Jean, did you vote for Botha and then for Smuts and  
 12 then for - you were a SUP?

13 J: Yes I was in the SUP - I never go to...

14 D: Well, there wasn't anything else?

15 J: Yes, no I voted for the South African Party, yes. Looking at it - the old - there was the old -  
 16 there was - not the Nationalist Party - it was the Unionist Party - one would say - 'the paake  
 17 as also man?' What he said - home to him was England, home not with South Africa - that  
 18 was the Unionists say - yes I remember that time - we have quite a lot - in this area over here  
 19 there's quite a number of settlers after the Anglo-Boer war a lot of these farms that were lost  
 20 by the farmers - Boers aren't here - there's nobody - these farms were taken by the  
 21 government and settlers- like you have over here - the McPhersons - and you have - Crouch -  
 22 Usher, Flannigan, oh quite a number of them - Englishmen.

23 D: In the Westminster area.

24 J: Ja, quite a number of English people in this area over here - you know - we had quite a  
 25 number - but not sufficient to beat the SAP? in any case - but there was quite a lot of ?  
 26 coming up, ja, ja, ja. Now....yes, and as I say - that if Braam, Braam Fisher and Bernard  
 27 Berejay? I think they also had a ? they - they really fought hard for the underdog you know  
 28 and things like that - they were very good - they were communist all right - along with Joe -  
 29 Joe dinges - Joe Slovo and Moses Kitanc - I don't know if you heard Moses Kitane? And

- 1 those people you know?
- 2 D: Yes, I remember.
- 3 J: Ja, ja, ja. Although I knew Moses Kitane he came here to my farm one day to visit me -  
4 Moses, yes.
- 5 D: Did you? When - Jean when - I mean when was it that you sort of realised that racial  
6 discrimination was a bad thing and that you...?
- 7 J: When what?
- 8 D: When you know - sort of more or less when in your life did you realise that racial  
9 discrimination was a bad thing - early on?
- 10 J: Oh I - I think when - when - with the farming business over here and I could see some of the  
11 farmers over here - what they - the way they were treating their people - they would give a  
12 farmer perhaps a piece of land to plough for himself, and at the time he had to reap it the  
13 farmer would chase him off the farm and grab the stuff for himself and that sort of thing and  
14 I knew about these things and that worried me. I thought that's a ridiculous - it's bad you  
15 know and I think that made me prejudiced against the way we - European people were going  
16 on and I think that made me more and more become liberal minded against - against the  
17 whole system which eventually became this - when this apartheid became this ? you know.  
18 In 1933, of course there was the - we got it all with the goldstone - we've got two Van Roos -  
19 then Hertzog and Smuts of course mos joins hands and ....
- 20 D: Die smelters?
- 21 J: And the smelters and that worked until 1937 of course when the - the Smuts went - and so  
22 by a small majority and then of course the war went out to break - but of course as then my  
23 story is now - when the war broke out I - I landed in hospital and I didn't go and after I got  
24 well. afterwards - then I joined the Home Guard and I was promoted to be a Sergeant Major  
25 eventually in this thing - because that was the time when some of these people - employed  
26 in the Post Office made things bad... a chap Vorster.
- 27 D: Well this was also... I would...
- 28 J: ...he was interned in Koffie...
- 29 D: Koffiefontein, ja...

1 J: ... and those were that - ja.

2 D: Was this? I mean this was, I mean this whole area was strong Ossewa Brandwag country  
3 wasn't it?

4 J: Ja, oh yes. Yes, this was a - their....

5 D: So to join the Home Guard was also quite a controversial thing to do wasn't it?

6 J: Did what?

7 D: I mean um - to - to join the Home Guard - was also...

8 J: Oh yes, they used to - oh yes they used to make bad remarks about this you know because  
9 we drill and see them together - I know first of all when I joined the home - I was still not -  
10 I was still recuperating from this trouble I had and Fendic - Fendic and Pienaar, they were  
11 the leader of the Home Guard here and we would go over to Wynberg and over there to drill  
12 and we would drill these people that come over there and made bad remarks and things like  
13 that you know - especially in 1942 - things were pretty tough then you know '41 '42, things  
14 were bloody tough then and Hitler of course- I shall tell - I was in - in - in Excelsior one day  
15 in the street over there - there's a chap - Ratty Wessels - a very wealthy farmer and Joop  
16 Siemens - also a farmer - and we were over there and just then the - the battle had started at  
17 Stalingrad, and I said to those two chaps, I said 'Goodbye Hitler -' I said 'He's had his  
18 chops.' 'What, what?' I said 'I'm telling you.' I said 'He's making the same mistake as  
19 Napoleon.' I said 'Hit the winter now, ' I said 'his lines of communication - he says - he  
20 can't, I'm telling you he's finished- forget about him - he's had it.' 'What' they said 'Do we  
21 bet you?' I said 'Bet of course I'll bet you.' I said 'What do you bet.' They said 'We'll bet  
22 you for five pounds you know.' I said 'Alright, I'll put in ten - you pay your five - but don't  
23 just talk - tomorrow we go inside - the British Offices there at the Attorney.' I said 'Bully,  
24 Ratty and Jaap want to bet - here's my ten pounds - put down your five pounds.' Now I said  
25 that's the end of Hitler - he's had his day I said 'You'll never - they'll - he'll have hell.' I  
26 said 'The winter's going to catch him and fix him up.' And then you know - old Bully  
27 laughed - he said 'Gat you can never tell.' I said 'I tell you he's made the same mistake as  
28 Napoleon, boy.' I was sure about a year after that - funny that I met the same people again  
29 in a ? 'Ek kan maar die sand vat.' I came home and tell my people 'Ek het tien verniet gekry -

- 1 here you are - divide it - have some.' Yes, and my brother he - he was Intelligence in the Air  
2 - in the Air Force - and he was a Captain in the Intelligence in the Air Force. He really  
3 lives/died in Bsika? Yes he was two years younger than I am.
- 4 D: So was your whole family - I mean you could really say they were blood sapper - I mean your  
5 background?
- 6 J: Yes, yes, yes. Yes, the - the van Riets were all - but the de Wets - but some of the de Wets  
7 were barons? were Nationalists you know and my wife - my wife's people too - Terblanche -  
8 they were also Nationalist - but they were not - how shall I say?
- 9 D: They weren't hard liners?
- 10 J: Nothing bad about the person - as I say they believed in the Nationalist Party -. Like Lisa, my  
11 life - she believed that you could divide us up in the country and put everyone apart and have  
12 them divide the country, and I just said 'Sweetheart - it's just junk - we can never - so we're  
13 scroungers - like families - you can't undo it.' I said 'It will only become more mixed and  
14 mixed as time goes by.' And that is proof of his words - that here in Excelsior - some eight  
15 people - they were as far as I know - were all Nationalists - they - they were had up under the  
16 Immorality Act - and this case was going to be started here at ten o'clock in Excelsior and  
17 there were reporters here from all over the world - were over here to report this case you  
18 know - it was quite a big to do and then the Public Prosecutor came down - he says 'The case  
19 has been cancelled.' Just like that - just like that - they dropped the whole case - I think it  
20 was too much of embarrassment to the government and because there's so many of these  
21 people over here who are pucker, pucker Obs you know and the - the case was just dropped  
22 like that?
- 23 D: This was 1967 or '8 if I remember correctly.
- 24 J: Oh yes, it must be - I haven't got the time - but I mean that is what - that is what happened -  
25 but that shows you - those very people that were pucker Nationalists - they were the people  
26 that were prepared to pass those laws and they over-stepped the mark them very selves - and  
27 I mean there you are - it's - I mean - any person knows that - a thing like that could never last  
28 - it was just out of the question and that is exactly and that is what will happen in the future.  
29 In another thousand years time you wouldn't know who the devil is Black and who's White.

- 1 D: That's right.
- 2 J: They're bound to - it's bound to - it will take time - but as - it'll - it'll accumulate - it'll get -  
3 to go faster as time goes on as more and more get mixed up. First of all in the beginning it  
4 will be a bit of an odd thing to get married across the line - but as time goes on more and  
5 more get and eventually it'll just be like the Coloured people like the Cape - I mean when  
6 you look at the Coloured people - so many of them are van der Merwes and all that - yes you  
7 have the Dutch names with many of them - or English names too you know - yes, that's what  
8 it is. ja, ja, ja.
- 9 D: Are we going? Are we stopping for some lunch?
- 10 J: Down in the Cape Town called the 'Liberale Vereeniging' - the Liberal Association - started  
11 by...
- 12 D: Margaret Ballinger?
- 13 J: Volenteno? And Margaret Ballinger and some others and I immediately set the battalion up?  
14 and I'll tell you - I sent them a telegram in Afrikaans and if I can't put my hand there -  
15 Maimie she was the Secretary of it and she wrote me a letter back and sent me a photo - I'm  
16 a member of the parliament from the Party - and that's how I became the first member of the  
17 Free State - later to become the Chairman of the Free State Branch - with Arend Border? as  
18 Vice-Chairman - did you know Arend?
- 19 D: Arend?
- 20 J: Le Borre? R Lebona?
- 21 D: No. Never met him.
- 22 J: Ja. he was an Anglican priest in Thaba 'Nchu and - and Patrick - Patrick Duncan was our  
23 Secretary.
- 24
- 25 End of first side.
- 26
- 27 There is nothing on the second side.
- 28
- 29