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DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

“VOICES OF RESISTANCE”

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE SEWPERSADH
INTERVIEWER: MWELELA CELE
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PLACE: MR SEWPERSADH’S OFFICE
VERULAM

MC: Good afternoon my name is Mwelela Cele. I am from the University of Durban Westville Documentation Centre. I am doing this interview for the University of Durban Westville Documentation Centre, Oral History Project. Today we are interviewing Mr George Sewpersadh. Hello Sir.

GS: Hello, how are you?

MC: I am fine thank you. Sir, can you tell us a bit about the place or the date of your birth.

GS: I was born in Durban on the 7th October 1936.

MC: Here in Durban, where in Durban?

GS: Cato Manor.

MC: Cato Manor okay. And where were your parents born?

GS: My parents were born in Durban. I don’t know exactly where.

MC: Okay, your grandparents, were they born here in South Africa, or in India?

GS: I think my paternal grandfather was born in India; I think my maternal grandfather was born in South Africa.

MC: Okay.

GS: I’m not sure, but I think.

MC: Okay, and did you have a choice as to where, I mean did you have a choice, I mean because in the olden days there used to be Group Areas Act and all that. Did you have a choice maybe of your place where you wanted to stay or?

GS: No well, I was born in Cato Manor in 1936, there was no Group Areas that time. The Group Areas Act was only passed somewhere in 1950. And thereafter, when we moved, I mean we were forced to move because our house was taken over. I mean all - that people in that area, the properties were taken over by the Department of Community Development and people had to move. So I moved to Reservoir Hills.

MC: Okay, people were forced to move from Cato Manor?

GS: Yes.

MC: Okay, when was this?

GS: Well various people moved at different times from about 1960's to 1970's.

MC: Okay, so what work did your parents do?

GS: My father was a newspaper vendor and my mother didn't work.

MC: Okay and the school were did you go to school?

GS: I went to - I first went to Manor Garden Primary School up to Standard Three. And there, at that school, they were not offering education beyond Standard Three, so after that I went to Cato Manor Primary School, from Standards Four Five and Six. From thereafter that, I went to Sastri College and after I finished my Matric at Sastri College I went to the University of Natal.

MC: Okay can you tell us a bit about your experience in Sastri College?

GS: Well in Sastri College, I was a normal student. I studied; I didn't take part very much in sports. I didn't take part in - well that time, there was not much activities beside if you

played soccer and cricket, and athletics. I was not involved very much in sport. I only spent my time mostly studying there.

MC: Okay and at Natal University?

GS: Natal University also. That time the University was not where the present University of Natal building is. We used to get some of our tuition at Sastri College, the high school, and some tuition at City Buildings [Lancers Road]. At that time, there were segregation at the University. The Black students - by that I mean the Indian, Coloureds and Black students, used to receive tuition at Sastri College and at City Building. But after I passed my BA, then I started doing law, at law we were integrated, all non-racial. But we received our lectures at City Buildings, they call it. We didn't go to that - where the University of Natal is now situated.

MC: Okay so when you were doing your under-graduate degree, I mean what year was this, when I mean?

GS: From 1955/56/57 I finished my BA.

MC: Okay, and then when you were doing law why was the institution multiracial at the time? Why were you integrated?

GS: I don't know really, but I presume because these law students refused - it would have been difficult to you know very costly to have separate lectures for Blacks and Whites.

MC: And when was this?

GS: The law I finished on 1958/59/60.

MC: Okay, and can you tell me maybe about the people that you went to Natal with, maybe other people there, like are there any people that you know that today they are involved...?

GS: Natal University I can remember Mewa Ramgobin and Ela Gandhi, they were there. I mean Ela was doing BA with me. Mewa, I don't think was in my lectures, in my group.

And Thumba Pillay was at University with me, about the same time. The others were not people who I can - you know, they were people who are not sort of public figures now, that I can remember.

MC: When did you become political?

GS: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, at the University with me, not in my group, but in the same time, there was a little before me, was MJ Naidoo but he was a part-time student. He was teaching and studying. MJ Naidoo was there. I can't offhand think of anybody else.

MC: Okay, and Sir can you tell us a bit about the time when you became political, what influenced you? Why did you choose to fight against injustice, social injustices?

GS: Well I joined the NIC, I think it was in December 1956. So, I didn't like apartheid and I felt it was wrong I felt I had to do something about, you know, opposing apartheid. And I was influenced a bit by the struggle in India, at that time. Nehru and Gandhi are two public figures who influenced me. And I joined the NIC in, I think, it was in December 1956.

MC: 1956 and at the time where were you studying at the time? At Natal?

GS: At Natal University.

MC: And did you read maybe certain books or it was just that you were influenced by prominent figures like Jawarhlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi?

GS: No there was not any particular book that influenced me, but after I joined the Movement, or before, I used to read books, you know, about politics. And the newspapers there was the New Age, at that time. I used to read it.

MC: Okay Sir can you tell us about your experience when you were a member of the NIC I mean from the time you joined up till the time you became president of the NIC?

GS: Well I joined in December 1956. Well, after I joined we formed a branch in Cato Manor. I think it was called the Manor Garden Branch. I was the chairman of that branch. Well we used to have meetings about once a week and we used to give out, sell the little Congress newspaper, at that time, it was the New Age. So that was mostly what our activity was confined to. And when there were mass meetings held by the Congress Movement we used to give out leaflets. And I know once, during the Emergency, we used to give out leaflets in the night with other members of the branch. If ours was the Manor Garden Branch, there was another branch nearby, I think that was called the Mayville Branch or the Cato Manor Branch.

MC: And then can you go bit further towards the time when you became the president of NIC?

GS: Well I carried on that activity which I spoke about, talked about until 1960, and in 1960, the Emergency was declared, and most of the organization, which formed the Congress Alliance, at that time, were banned. The ANC was banned; the Congress of Democrats was banned; the South African Congress of Trade Unions, I think, was banned. I mean the Coloured People's Organisation was banned. The NIC was not banned, at that time, but most of our members were banned. So then the organisation should'nt function from 1960 until 1971. In 1971 it was - NIC was revived, and the person who actually started the revival of the organisation was Mewa Ramgobin, and we all worked with him. Dilly Naidoo was there; Jerry Coovadia was there; Farouk Meer was there; I think it was revived in 1971. So by the time the organisation was formed after its revival, Mewa Ramgobin was banned, and I was elected as president of the NIC. From 1971 till about 1973 when I was banned, when the banning order expired in 1978 sometime then I was

banned in 1978 again until 1981 or 1982, sometime there. All these banning orders were by law declared to be expired or null and void; I'm not sure exactly what's the right term. And after that, I joined again I was again president of the NIC, and I joined the UDF [United Democratic Front]. I was detained in prison in 1980, when there was a massive school boycott. Kept in solitary confinement for 14 days. And then I was at Modderbee Prison for another 36-days or so, then I was released. Then I took part in activities and then I was arrested in 1985, I think. Mewa Ramgobin, MJ Naidoo, Dr Jessop, Aubrey Mokoena, we were kept in prison for about 50 days, I can't remember how long, and from August till December, we were in prison, in Pietermaritzburg Prison and then in December we were charged with treason. Myself and about fifteen other people, then we were acquitted in May, 1986.

MC: Can you describe the situation in prison or in jail, Sir, during that time?

GS: The first time?

MC: Yes, from the first.

GS: First time we were detained when was that in 1980 it was the school boycott. Then we were kept in solitary confinement. I was detained, Rabi Bhagwandeem was detained, Farouk Meer was detained, Thumbha Pillay, and I was kept at Umbilo Police Station. Well it was very unpleasant there because we were in one cell by ourselves for about the whole day. We were allowed exercise for half an hour to an hour a day. But we were allowed to buy our food and food was allowed to come from home. Only problem with that we had to stay in the cell all the time. After fourteen days we were taken to Modderbee Prison, that's where we all lived in one group. That was more

pleasant, we were about 80 to 100 people somewhere there, together. People of all races and we stayed there and it was much easier there because we were able to mix about with people and all that. The second time I was detained I was arrested when - that was in 1985, that was during the campaign against the Tricameral System, we were carrying on. And we were kept in Maritzburg [Pietermaritzburg] Prison, we were not in solitary confinement myself MJ Naidoo, Paul David, Sam Kekane, two or three others, I just can't remember them, Kader Essack, from Pietermaritzburg. And we were there in a group there we were allowed exercise for one hour a day and but there they had facilities to play table tennis. Food was allowed from home; we were allowed reading material; but we were confined.

MC: Yes. And can you tell us why were you banned?

GS: Well the first time I was banned that was in 1971 that was for taking part in political activity; opposing the apartheid system. Many people were banned I was one of the people that was banned. And all the banning orders were because then, those days, they used to ban people - was what they under generally, what they used to call the Suppression of Communism Act. So I think that was the main Act and many people who used to take part in political activities used to be banned in those days.

MC: Were you ever under house arrest?

GS: Ja, I was under house arrest. I think - I don't know during one of those two banning orders I was under house arrest. From Friday six o'clock [in the evening] till Monday morning, I couldn't leave the house. And then I had to be home by six and leave by six or eight in the morning.

MC: And Sir if we can go back - [interruption]

GS: I think it was during my second banning order, which wasn't very long, during my first banning order I was not under house arrest. I was just banned from taking part in political activities.

MC: Yes, well did anyone harass you maybe during that time or were you ever tempted maybe to break these rules or?

GS: Ja well, they were not very strict with me. The first time I was banned I was not under house arrest. So that I'm not allowed to attend gatherings, social gatherings, but they were not strict with me I used to attend gatherings and all this.

MC: Yes.

GS: The impression I got, the basic purpose of those people who banned me was to not for me to take part in political activities, you see. The second time, well I was banned I couldn't leave my house from Friday six o'clock till Monday morning. But they were not very strict with me I used to go out in the weekends and leave the Durban magisterial area, for quite some time. But towards the end from around 1981, they arrested me for being out of my home when I was not allowed to be out of my home. They charged me, but eventually, by the time the case came to court, the banning orders and all that declared to be sort of void after that and that charge against me was withdrawn.

MC: And during all this arrest and can you sort of tell us about the basis of the charges, I mean?

GS: Well we were charged with - I was only charged in 1980; December 1985, we were charged with treason. And I think for furthering the aims of communism, furthering the aims of the African National Congress, those were the three charges I can remember.

MC: Okay Sir can you tell us a bit about the ANC, I mean your time when you were the member of the NIC and the time

when you - can you sort of tell us about the NIC and the ANC and yourself, I mean, what happened between you?

GS: When I joined the NIC that was in December 1956 that time the NIC and the TIC, the Transvaal Indian Congress, were part of they called the Congress Alliance, which consisted of a number of organisations which worked together. That was the SAIC, which was the South African Indian Congress, the African National Congress, the Coloured People's Organisation, the Congress of Democrats, that consisted of the Whites, and the South African Congress of Trade Unions, they were part of one Alliance, they worked together. And then, well in - after the Congress was revived in 1971 the other organisations were banned till the NIC was revived and carried on working. But basically, we should carry on the same policy of the Congress Alliance.

MC: Sir, during the time when you were under house arrest - I mean how did you manage to sort of remain optimistic?

GS: Well when I said I was under arrest that was in the second when I was banned a second time that was in 1978. They never harassed me very much when I broke the banning order. I mean I used to although I wasn't allowed to leave my premises from Friday evening to Monday morning I used to leave and go. They never used to prosecute me. They only prosecuted me towards, when the banning orders were all declared all expired in a certain day there was a law passed that saying after a certain day the banning orders won't be effective, it won't be applicable anymore. So in the end they prosecuted me and then I shouldn't break the order. I should stay at home. But I used to stay in the premises, you know, my brother's house where there was a yard and all that sort of thing.

MC: And then when you were in jail I mean why - I mean how come you didn't, maybe, give up or maybe you didn't crack

maybe when people were asking you, what made you to be strong and optimistic?

GS: Well, there were many people that there used to be banned who used to be detained and used to come out after the detention and carry on with the type of work. Most of them carried on I mean all of those who were arrested MJ Naidoo, Jassath, all carried on with the struggle. So I mean throughout history many people have you know, been through difficulties and they carried on with the struggle. As I said, I was influenced by Gandhi and Nehru - they carried on. I mean, and Mandela was in prison. That time many ANC members were in prison on Robben Island. So all that inspired us to carry on with the struggle.

MC: And Sir, can you tell me, I mean before you joined the struggle have you ever maybe like when you were very young, did you experience any discrimination or any oppression that sort of?

GS: No, nothing personal.

MC: Nothing personal.

GS: Just the general situation of being opposed to apartheid.

MC: Can we pause?

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ON RESUMPTION

MC: Okay we are back. Sir, how did your family view your political involvement?

GS: My family did not object to my being involved in politics. I think they understood that apartheid was wrong and people had to oppose it.

MC: Yes, okay. So they didn't have a problem?

GS: No they had no problem; they never discouraged me from taking part in politics.

MC: And the members of your community?

GS: No, the community generally welcomed people taking part in politics because many people who took part, I think, in 1946 there were people in my area who took part in the Passive Resistance Campaign. So people generally were opposed to apartheid and thought it was wrong. And the people had no objection to anyone taking part in politics. Especially after the Group Areas Act, many people were upset by having to leave their homes against their will.

MC: And do you have children?

GS: No. I'm not married.

MC: Yes okay. So when you were detained did they torture you?

GS: No.

MC: You didn't experience any torture?

GS: No.

MC: Okay under which act were you detained?

GS: I can't remember the act, really.

MC: Okay.

GS: But there were powers and law under the terms where people could detain you without trial.

MC: Okay, and Sir about your not being married, did you not get married because of politics?

GS: No, it was not because of that.

MC: Okay.

GS: I just didn't get married.

MC: Okay, thank you very much. Sir can you tell us what was the hardest part of life under apartheid. I mean what was, what part will you describe as I mean being the most difficult, the most - I mean the part that is really terror or frightening the most inhuman parts about apartheid?

GS: Apartheid the most inhuman part was it affected the poor people where they couldn't get jobs, the wages were low, at that time, for the Black people, they had to struggle, they

didn't have good housing, they lived in shacks. And the fact that people, I mean, couldn't go to certain places in town. The swimming pools, at that time, were on the beach front and the main areas were reserved for whites. And there were separate queues in the Post Office for blacks and whites, there were seats in town were for whites only. And you sat in the trams, trolley buses, a particular section was reserved for blacks. I think all that upset people. And generally people just felt that apartheid was wrong, they had no vote, they should have a say. Because there was no vote they were treated as inferior to the whites. The people didn't like that.

MC: So as a lawyer, which part of law did you sort of - I mean were you criminal lawyer or?

GS: No not particularly, I just did law generally.

MC: Generally.

GS: Criminal, Civil work, and all that.

MC: Civil work and where were your offices?

GS: I was in Port Shepstone for a while, for about nine months or so, and then after that I came to Verulam.

MC: Verulam. Okay so during the days of apartheid did you work with the other lawyers who were politicians and black lawyers like MJ Naidoo, Phyllis Naidoo?

GS: No I didn't work with them. I didn't work on any big political cases. On my own, I did a few political cases for students, I worked on my own.

MC: Did you ever meet maybe meet with people like Archie Gumede, Luthuli?

GS: I worked with Archie Gumede after we formed the UDF. Archie Gumede was in the UDF with us.

MC: Okay, but your work was only about the struggle?

GS: Ja political, my contact with Archie Gumede was political.

MC: Okay and other lawyers too like Phyllis Naidoo and?

GS: No. Phyllis Naidoo I didn't work with her legally. But I worked with her politically.

MC: Politically, and at Natal when you were still at Natal University, she was not there at the time?

GS: She was there.

MC: She was there.

GS: She was there.

MC: And people like Johnny Makatini?

GS: Johnny Makatini was with me at the University of Natal.

MC: University of Natal and people like Frank Mdlalose who is now our ambassador in Egypt?

GS: No I don't think he was with me at the University.

MC: Okay, so I mean I've heard from other people who were at Natal during that time, other people like Phyllis Naidoo. I mean did this situation at Natal - was there maybe clubs or did you sort of meet and discuss politics?

GS: Well we discussed politics there was sort of the ANC and the NIC people of the Congress Alliance. They were there; we used to work together. And there was the another body, called the Unity Movement - we never sort of saw eye-to-eye on many matters. So that, although I don't think we had a Congress branch at the University, but the Congress people would meet to discuss matters, you know when any political issue came up. I used to oppose the Unity Movement.

MC: Yes what do think about the 1976 uprising?

GS: Well it was a very inspiring uprising. It's part of the struggle for freedom. It did inspire many people and many people were detained. So it did sort of spur us on to carry on opposing apartheid.

MC: Yes and Sir, can you tell us I mean what do you consider to be the defining moments in your life?

GS: There is no real defining moment that I can think of. I just grew up as a person who, in the South African situation, found apartheid undesirable, and I used to hear about these mass meetings, you know were addressed by people like Dr Dadoo, Dr Naicker. And then there was the Passive Resistance Campaign in 1946, when I was a very small boy. And I say, at that time in 1947, India got Independence and as I told you Gandhi and Nehru and the political situation here in South Africa, the political leaders all influenced me to play my part in opposing apartheid.

MC: Yes can you tell us a bit about the Passive Resistance Campaign when you were a young boy, I mean how did you see it, how did you view it?

GS: Well I didn't take part in the Resistance Campaign. I heard about it, people used to go prison and be arrested. And there was one person from my area who joined the Passive Resistance Campaign and he came out. And he described his experiences and I was sort of impressed by it because it was part of the struggle for independence and part of the same path, you know, which had taken Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru in India.

MC: Yes about Mahatma Gandhi, I mean can you sort of tell us I mean what inspired you about him? I mean are there any of his teachings that maybe you sort of believed in or supported or maybe pursued?

GS: Well I was impressed by him; he was a very simple man. I mean he reduced himself to the level of the people by wearing the loin cloth and his struggle was non-violent. That not only impressed me but impressed many people. I felt non-violence was a very good way of opposing; you know; an oppressive regime. Because very often, when people resort to violence, by opposing that regime is overthrown the violence still goes into the local community

and that does not have a very good result. So in India's case, I think, there was non-violence but there was a certain amount of violence after Independence when India was partitioned. But I still think, in view of the big population, the violence was very little after Independence in India. Because after they got Independence there was not much violence within India itself. I mean that is partly due to his non-violent campaign in India. I think in South Africa too the non-violence was the correct method. Because in the end it succeeded in bringing about democracy and there was not much violence after that because if we had a violent struggle when you overthrow that regime the violence spills over among the local people and that makes things quite bad.

MC: Yes and what do think about the armed struggle, Umkhonto we Sizwe?

GS: Well I never really joined the armed struggle, but I was never opposed to it. But in the light of the fact the armed struggle was only resorted to after 1960, when the ANC was banned. The ANC, before it was banned it also followed a non-violent struggle. But when it was banned it couldn't operate here in South Africa because it was banned. And the people had no other alternative, at that stage, but to be involved in armed struggle. So I think from that point of view it was justified because there was nothing else they can do; they had to - if they stayed in South Africa they would be arrested and put in prison. Many people in South Africa were, in fact, in prison. So there was no point in people staying here and being arrested and going to prison, so they went overseas. And they carried on the struggle from there. I think they were justified, in the circumstances.

MC: Okay and about Nehru, what inspired you about him?

GS: Well he was a learned man and also he believed in non-violence. He believed with Gandhi; and he was in prison many times; that didn't deter him as well; he kept on struggling for freedom. And after Independence he was a very influential figure in the world. And he always inspired me; he was one of the few politicians, I think, who was also a learned man, which I think I - which impressed me about him.

MC: Okay and here in South Africa, maybe a South African, whom you will describe as maybe your hero or someone that you?

GS: I can't say I've got a hero; I don't encourage people to have heroes. But throughout life some people do inspire in various fields, people you know excelled in. So there are people who inspired me who influenced me. Mandela, well all the ANC figures Walter Sisulu, Nehru, Gandhi, Mao Tse-tung, Castro, Guevara, Lenin, French revolutionary leaders; all influenced - if you read about them they all opposed oppressive regimes.

MC: As a lawyer, Sir, I mean during the days of apartheid, I mean being an activist at the same time, did that I mean affect your work or?

GS: No I don't think so.

MC: It didn't. You didn't have problems I mean.

GS: No I used to take part in political activities over the weekend and after work.

MC: Can you maybe tell us Sir - I mean this is the question that I've been asking also other people. How come during the days of apartheid most people were sort of involved in the struggle - were people like, when it comes to people who were involved in the struggle. Literate people who were involved in the struggle most people who were involved,

were lawyers and I mean not most black. How come were lawyers more involved in the struggle?

GS: Well it is quite common for lawyers to be involved in politics. In India it was Nehru and Gandhi. In Russia it was Lenin. The French Revolution - there were quite a few lawyers there. Robespierre was a lawyer as well, Abraham Lincoln in America. So I can't say how, but I know it's quite common for lawyers to be involved in politics, you know, in the political struggle. It happened in many countries - that sort of thing happened. So I suppose because they study law, unlike scientists who are more specialized, you know, not involved with the community. Lawyers are more involved in the community. They can see the injustice when they are dealing with people they come across. I really don't know what the reason is but I know that is quite a widespread phenomenon.

MC: Do you think Sir, it's possible that it is because maybe okay they know about law, I mean they know about human rights how to protect themselves. Do you think maybe that they are knowledgeable about this because they are knowledgeable about those things or, in your case I mean, being a lawyer did that maybe make you or equip you with a certain way of defending yourself or of knowing about injustices?

GS: I can't say really. I mean there were people who are not lawyers who were in the struggle. as well. But the lawyers are more, so it so happened that lawyers, I suppose, because their work is such that they have to speak in court, meet with people, discuss with people; I think they are less specialised than maybe people in other professions. Like accountancy and surveying and medicine, they deal only with that medical matters. Where we are meeting people, we are dealing with social matters, as well. I mean we

know there are people with social problems; economic problems; we meet them in our life; maybe that could be the reason.

MC: Okay and another thing Sir tell us, can you sort of tell us in a summary form I mean what exactly pushed I mean the National Party. Or what sort of made the National Party decide to release Mandela and other political prisoners? What was the, I mean besides, I mean if we had sanctions we had violence around South Africa, everywhere people were fighting. People were I mean they were trying to make the country ungovernable. What do think was the main push, I mean which parts of the struggle will you say I mean this was the main thing besides okay we have Umkhonto we Sizwe, and I mean South Africa was isolated?

GS: I think the main factor was economic. Because, before the government decided to bring an end to apartheid; there were a lot of strikes throughout the country; and stayaways and all that. And the economy just could not function you know on the apartheid system. So the businessmen became affected, the International businessmen who had investments here, Americans, British, and other European countries, Japanese, who realised that they can't continue being successful under the apartheid system because the economy is just not going to work. The government passed one repressive law against the other and all that failed to stop the struggle for freedom. And history, in fact, you feel oppressed, people throughout the world, wherever they are oppressed, they eventually rise and they overthrow the oppressors. That happened in China, India, on a massive scale so the writing was on the wall. A minority could not go on oppressing the majority forever and ever. But the basic factor was the economy in my opinion. The economy

was becoming worse. It could not function on the apartheid system. And that is why the businessmen started taking an interest in politics now. They started having meetings with the ANC, the American businessmen starting - having meetings with politicians. And they felt that for them to carry on with the business successfully because their main concern, the businessmen, is to run the business successfully whether they can make the profit on the business. They are not interested very much in, you know, where you can sit, and who is in parliament, whether there is a black in parliament or white in parliament. They are not interested so long as their business is running and they are making the profit. And they exerted a pressure on the government that you have to change now because the economy is not going to work under the apartheid system.

MC: Was there any part I mean that you didn't support, I mean during your days of fighting against apartheid. Was there any part of the struggle that you didn't support, other people they were not sure about sanctions? Like other politicians were saying sanctions I mean will make hungry people; people will lose jobs; other people were not happy about I mean the armed struggle - were saying people will die and was there any part that you like...?

GS: Well they couldn't support sanctions while we were inside, it was illegal. But my own view is that for a successful struggle, it has got to be waged with the people inside South Africa. You know the masses of people here in South Africa, they exert the pressure, and they bring about change. You get more people involved in the struggle, so when the change comes about you have better people to govern, with more people that are involved there. With sanctions you bring in the European big capitalist countries

they apply the sanctions, but their motive ultimately, as I understand it, is for their own benefit. They are not going to apply the sanctions for the benefit of the mass of the people here. So their motive was to try and get the government to bring about change on such basis that the capitalist system will prevail and they will control the economy. That is what, in my opinion, is happening in South Africa at present. The economy is controlled still by the people who controlled it before. And that is what they wanted. Unlike in China, where they didn't rely on foreign power to bring about the struggle there, they are in control of the country themselves. So I didn't oppose sanctions, and I don't think the Castle Boycott, in my personal opinion you know, could achieve much because the main thing is the economy, and if that doesn't function it you'll get change. But my personal opinion is that if you are struggling in an oppressive system it is better if you do it among the people in this country here. So they are involved in the struggle and they take over when they take over, they can be in control of the economy and the government.

MC: Okay and Sir... [interruption]

GS: I am just giving you my own opinion that you asked me. I know many people may not agree with that. But that is my view now.

MC: Yes Sir and Sir I mean do you believe capitalism is the solution to - [interruption]

GS: No. I don't believe capitalism is the solution but you have to go through stages in history. I am impressed by Karl Marx' statement. He says, when I say statement he says, "No social order ever perishes until all the productive forces for which there are room in it have developed. And new and higher relation of production never appear until

the condition for their existence has matured in the womb of the old society.” So I do agree that ANC is right now because in South Africa we are not ready, you know, for a communist system yet. But I don’t think it’s an ultimate solution where it will last forever and ever. People have to work for a new economic system where the people, the majority people won’t be oppressed. But we can’t do it straightaway; we just had one change from apartheid to the ANC capitalist system; and I but I think the struggle goes on now for a new economic system, where it will improve the lot of the mass of the people.

I can’t see it, the capitalist system benefits mostly the American Countries, Europe, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, most of the wealthier countries. It hasn’t improved a lot of the poorer people. In Asia, Africa, South America, Mexico, and I personally, don’t think that it will improve; the lot can be improved under the capitalist system. There may have to be other factors for people to look at. And one of the things that I think, which is important, people can look at is the smaller industry on a mass scale. In India, South America, Africa, Mexico and help them and see how they can bring out a new system, you know, with the starting socialism gradually; you know, nationalising certain things; having government control in certain things. But it was said, even with the Marxist; even by the philosopher, that there is nothing permanent. Everything is always changing. And that will happen throughout history, I mean from the old feudal, Asiatic feudal system. The slave society the feudal society now we have come to the capitalist society. So nothing is permanent you said so from ancient philosopher from Buddha till Marx till now. So life is never at a standstill and in life we become dead if you don’t change and you

don't progress. So if you got this system where the majority of the people in the world are living under poverty economic conditions then we have to change and think of a situation where more people can have a better standard of living and a better society as well.

MC: Thank you Sir. Tell me Sir, what do you consider to be the defining moments in the South African history?

GS: I've never really thought about this, there's no, I think so, any defining moments in life or in history. Life goes on you know from beginning of time for, as we know it. And South African history, the defining moment what can I say was the formation of the first political party here in South Africa, the Natal Indian Congress for Gandhi in 1894. The formation of the ANC in 1912, I think that was - that started the struggle then. It was going to in the end, at some stage or other, lead to the end of apartheid. But life and history carries on and from the beginning to end, something always happening changes always taking place.

MC: Thank you Sir. We will just pause for a minute.

TAPE SWITCHED OFF

ON RESUMPTION

MC: Thank you. Okay we are back. Sir can you continue and tell us...

GS: By capitalism I just want to make this one point. You see, from the beginning of time we had social changes. From the slave society to feudal society the old kings and queens and dictators, the whole basis why people changed is to share power among the people. When the kings ruled, the power is concentrated on the kings, and all that. When a dictator rules the power is concentrated, you know, on the dictators.

Now the whole basis has changed when the feudal landlord ruled, the power was concentrated in a few hands. Now this always leads to exploitation, and abuse and

wrongdoing. The whole basis of change is to get more and more people involved in the sharing of power. Now what happened here when we got rid of the capitalist and the feudal system and the capitalist system came about, although people had the vote the democrats have a say in electing the government, but power again now is concentrated in the hands of a few. The big companies are very powerful, they are monopolistic, the oil companies, insurance companies are controlled by a few, and they are buying up all these smaller businessmen. So power again is going back to a very similar system where the power was concentrated in the hands of kings or dictators. The power is now concentrated in the hands of the few. They influence the people's way of thinking; they control the TV with their advertisements; they control the programmes that they are showing there; they control the newspapers and people only get that one idea that is being put forward you know what are the views they want to put forward they always put forward because the capitalist is very good they don't show the weaknesses of it the wrong points of it. It is based on greed, based on selfishness, and they are always criticising communism, which had certain flaws but it also had certain progressive aspects. Whereas Karl Marx is quite right when he says that a social thing did not take place merely because people want it. It was also influenced by the economic conditions you know existing at the time. Because the Russian Revolution took place because of economic conditions people were exploited by the Tsars they were poor. So they couldn't have a democratic system that time because Russia didn't have a strong middle class, at that time. So that was the system they brought about. Then in the event it collapsed because society is not ready for communism at this stage but in

brought about a lot of progress before it collapsed and that point is not being pointed out. But the basic point that I am making even capitalism today power is not shared among the people it is concentrated by a few monopolies, the businessman really controls society. And there are exactly played an important part in bringing about change in South Africa as well on the basis that they controlled the economy. And power is confined still be a few you know people who are influential although they are not in parliament.

MC: And Sir according to certain historians the reason the National Party was ready to give us a franchise qualification after 1990 is because of the collapse of the Soviet Union. They say it's another contributor, that's another reason because before then, I mean they used to see South Africa I mean they used to believe that if they give a franchise qualification to and release political prisoners South Africa will be a communist country. So do you think that's...?

GS: The change came about very rapidly after the Soviet Union collapsed. That could be a factor because I mean the Soviet Union did support certain left-wing parties in various parts of the world. But Soviet Union collapsed and whatever support the ANC got from them would not be there anymore. So that made it easier for them to you know to give political rights to blacks, but, at the same time, they gave it in such a way that the economy was controlled by the people who controlled it before.

MC: Sir can you tell us how did the unbanning of all the political organisations in 1990 affect you and your family?

GS: Well it was it brought a lot of joy to everybody in South Africa that at the end these organisations are unbanned.

Democracy now was going to come very soon. I think it made people very happy.

MC: Okay and if we can go maybe back a bit I mean before 1990 after you were released because you were arrested in 1985 can you tell us about your political activism during that time from 1985 to 1990?

GS: After 1985 when I was released the UDF was formed in 1982. So that time the NIC used to work with the United Democratic Front and I think we formed, at that time, a lot of similar organisations like the Chatsworth Housing committee, housing committees in Phoenix, we used to work through those organisations. And carry on the political activity although on a non-violent basis and we used to take part in these mass demonstrations, at that time. Which were basically organised by COSATU and the UDF.

MC: Okay what did the end of apartheid mean for you? Did you ever think it would happen in your lifetime?

GS: Well I expected it will come during my lifetime, but I didn't expect to become a democratic society straight-away. I think I expected the government to give rights gradually to the black people, some sort of political rights gradually.

MC: And with the assassination of Chris Hani and the news about a hit-list, what did you think about that? Because just before 1994, I think in 1993, there was news everywhere that there is a hit-list and peoples names, where there people like Joe Slovo and?

GS: Well it was upsetting I mean that Hani was shot and nobody could be sure I mean who will be on the hit- list or not. So but that was one of the things we had to face I mean if there was one, and people were on the hit-list and were shot before, like Griffiths Mxenge, his wife [Victoria] was

killed, so that it was a factor which was of concern to all of us. But it was there; we had to live with it.

MC: Okay if we like go back also before 1990 or 1994 what do you think of the Homeland system I mean this political segregation and the Tribal Act. And the situation of people not being able to go and study in Cape Town or work in Cape Town people who were born in Natal had to do everything here. And people in the Transkei what do think of that?

GS: Well we were always opposed to this homeland system because it was basically designed to weaken the struggle against apartheid by creating there own sort of leaders. You know in the homelands and also in like the Tricameral System created new leaders who were not there before. And gave them a lot of influence you know which they otherwise would not have had. So we always opposed that system.

MC: And about a political organisation like Pan Africanist Congress, I mean PAC, what do think about their idea of ideas?

GS: Well the main thing with PAC was, I think, was a branch-off from the ANC, somewhere in the fifties or so. And the Congress movement never agreed with that PAC policy, at that time, because it was a very radical policy. They used to say, 'Africa for the Africans' or something like that. But gradually, I think, when they were exiled, they changed their policy, they had people of all races there. So but basically, we there were two sort of thinking, as I understood it. They were not so rational as the ANC was. Their demands were far more extremist and unrealistic, and as a result, they didn't get much support from the people.

MC: And Sir what to do you think of your generation after your generation; the generation of people like Steve Biko, Saths

Cooper. What can you tell us; and what do you think of that generation; and their organisations like the BCM movements - like the BCM can you tell us I mean during your time, how did you view their ideology?

GS: Well the BCM was an influential movement; it had an effect. It was formed while the Congress was, while all the congresses were banned. So in that vacuum, they stepped in and they had some influence but we never really agreed with the ideology fully, although we recognised their contribution. The ANC contribution was always non-racial, we didn't have the Black Consciousness idea as part of our policy. And so we used to, we carried on with the non-racial policy of the ANC, which I think, it's a in the end proved to be the correct policy politically. Because that's the only solution to the South African problems. You have to forget the past and try and build a society on non-racial lines and break all forms of divisions. I think society has to progress, we have to try and get over this division not only racial, the religious, this economic divisions, between rich and poor, you know. We can only have peace if you break down this divisions. Well I'm a bit influenced by the Indian philosophy too, the Indian philosophy that says, "you must realise all creatures in yourself, in yourself in all creatures." So that, I think that, is right and I think that we have to not only in South Africa because the apartheid was so long our mind is focused on race, race, race and because apartheid is [no longer] valid we think we have made a lot of progress, which we have, but that is only one step. We have to work and try and get over divisions. I mean if apartheid is gone; we still have people who are very poor; they have got no jobs. They don't benefit very much by apartheid being gone, you see. We have to still work and break this division; bring about parity - rich and

poor. There is also the relative division, which leads to conflict. South Africa is not so keen, but it has problems elsewhere in the world, like in Middle East and in India. So the basic thing is to, in the end as I say, Indian philosophy also says that "this whole universe in one existence." We have to get rid of these divisions.

MC: And Sir, when during the days of apartheid, was there a time maybe when you thought of maybe going to exile or?

GS: No.

MC: No, and was there a time when maybe when people were sort of recruiting you or asking you to join them?

GS: Nobody tried to recruit me and I wouldn't have gone because I believe, generally, the struggles to be effective, its got to be done by the people in country you know working. Trying to educate the people and get them involved in taking this. It can be more useful and more fruitful that way, although I have got no objection to these sanctions and working with the Americans, and all that. But people do not agree with me here, but I feel that those are the countries that work with their own people rather than go into foreign countries and getting them to assist you. Those countries, I think, made more progress; like China, I give you one example already relied on themselves you see. Vietnam and all that countries like that. One of the, I think, weaknesses in South Africa's struggle, it's like a lot of these, it's a big progress getting rid of apartheid, but they still got those people who assisted us in applying sanctions and all that. They are still controlling the economy, as I see it at any rate.

MC: And Sir can you tell us a bit about Indhira Gandhi because I know that Jhawarlall Nehru was your, was of the people you looked up to. Can you tell us a bit about Indhira Gandhi?

GS: Well Indhira Gandhi, in my opinion, I was not very impressed by her. But she was quite a capable leader, you know, she kept India united; and she brought about type, brought about a certain economic reform. By Indian standards, she was quite a capable leader. I think those people who came after her are much weaker than she was. But I don't admire her that much as I admired her father. Her father was a far more vibrant figure, a learned figure, and his contribution is great. But I don't think - I can't compare her with her father.

MC: Yes okay, and when she was assassinated in 1984, I mean how did you feel about that?

GS: I was upset by it. I was in prison when I got the news that she was assassinated. I think she was quite a capable leader; you don't get people like Nehru you know; he was in my opinion a great leader; and she was quite a capable leader, by Indian standards. I think people who came - the present leadership are not as good as her, in my opinion.

MC: Okay Sir, if we come back to this question what were your hopes for the country when the negotiations started in 1990?

GS: Well I expected it to eventually lead to a democratic society. But I say the whole system, as I say, it was done with negotiations and people like [had] to give and take. And the Nationalist Party and the Democratic Party were there to see that the negotiations take place in such a way that the economic system remains as it is, you see, where the power is confined, and the people who had economic power before. I expected that to happen because that was then negotiation took place, that's why the Democratic Party and the Nationalist Party and many other parties were there. They were, we think, clearly that we are going to

have a democratic system with one-person one vote. But they had to safeguard their economic structure.

MC: So what?

GS: Many people will not agree with that, but I'm just telling you what I feel about it.

MC: So what do think about the Sunset Clause?

GS: The?

MC: The Sunset Clause?

GS: What Clause?

MC: The Sunset Clause about the government of National Unity?

GS: I can't recollect what that clause is, but there's I mean in the circumstances, they had to have a government of National Unity in that place because there were various, different people who wanted, you know, to have certain interests to safeguard. So they - I mean they - CODESA was there to see that the interests of all groups were safeguarded to a certain, you know, extent.

MC: Okay, so do you agree I mean with the decision that was taken during the negotiations of government of National Unity?

GS: Well I suppose it had to happen in the circumstances, because I mean we couldn't have another solution to it, because other parties had power to have, you know, their interests safeguarded.

MC: Okay thank you Sir, we are going to pause again.

TAPE SWITCHED OFF

ON RESUMPTION

MC: Okay we are back. Mr Sewpersadh can you tell us a little bit about the situation in South Africa before the 1994 elections, I mean what were your experiences before April 27th, can you tell us a bit about that in 1994, when there were bombings and other things around the country?

GS: But before 1994 the country was for a while, unstable. Many people expected violence, you know, after the elections but the election went off very well. And there was no violence and there were bombings before that, but it was upsetting when they expected more from these radical right-wing movements whom [they] felt they might cause more problems, and it was a matter of concern. And there were a lot of violence in South Africa, which violence carries on today, I think. That was one of the factors that were caused people concern. But after 1994, the right-wing violence from the whites I mean, quietened down, it didn't carry on to a big scale. But violence, generally, in South Africa, it's quite a worrying factor, at the moment, not political violence, but crime and all that sort of thing.

MC: And what do you think about the violence that was between the IFP and the ANC?

GS: That violence was very frightening, in those days. The violence was carrying [on], but I think the ANC - I think did quite the right thing, in the sense of trying to bring INKATHA and work closely with INKATHA. Because if one of the factors - because INKATHA was quite powerful and if they didn't sort of come to sort of agreement with the ANC, there were certain sort of elements who were supporting IFP, they could have escalated the violence. And I don't think ANC was powerful enough to control the situation on its own. And I would say, in my opinion, I mean the ANC's attitude of relying on foreign powers to bring about negotiation, it worked with those people. And those people were also, at the same time, in my opinion, working with the INKATHA. So if the ANC didn't come to a sort of solution with those people that violence would have escalated. And I don't think ANC was powerful enough to control the situation on its own. So from that

point of view they were quite wise to bring in - sort of work closely with INKATHA and sort of cut down that violence.

MC: And Sir where did you cast your vote in 1994?

GS: 1994 I voted for the ANC.

MC: No Sir, in 1994?

GS: Ja.

MC: Yes okay.

GS: But after that, I didn't, to be quite honest with you, I did not vote in the next elections.

MC: Okay in 1994, where did you cast your vote?

GS: In Durban.

MC: In Durban okay, and how did it feel like after all your experiences I mean, after that you have been through jail and how did it feel like?

GS: Well I was quite happy to vote, but I was disappointed in certain respects too, because the ANC was not what I expected it to be, you know, with regards to its policies and the way it worked with people and all that.

MC: Okay Sir, somehow did you agree with the organisations like AZAPO, who decided to leave the negotiations before 1994 elections?

GS: No, I didn't agree with all that. I thought you see, the ANC as I say - because in its struggle for freedom it worked a lot with the outside; it relied on outside forces to help them and apply sanctions. They are not strong enough to do things on its own. And up till now it still works heavily with the capitalists, so in that situation it had to do what it did. You know, come to negotiations and work with those people it. I'd say it's not like those countries, where the parties that overthrow the regime is strong enough to take over the country and rule the country.

MC: Okay so was that one of the reasons why didn't vote in the next elections after 1994?

GS: No I was not very impressed, quite frankly, with the ANC's policy, for the reason I gave you, and I didn't like any of the other parties. The Democratic Party - they are just there to look after the interests of the capitalists - it's not there to look after the interests of the mass of people. Although it criticises the ANC, it totally supports free enterprise, it makes no concessions to, you know, the creative aspects of socialism. So it is there to just to foster the capitalist idea through and through, and if there is any sort of radical movement within the ANC, the Democratic Party is there to criticise it and suppress it, you see. And they have got the press to back him up; they have the capitalists to back him up; they have got the international capitalists to back him up. So that's how I see it, the role, basically.

MC: And Sir when you think about South Africa's future, do you feel hopeful?

GS: Well all I can say I hope for the best I mean the policy on crime on ANC's are not very satisfied. Their ability to control crime, it's not very satisfactory; crime is escalating, going out of hand. And generally there is a lot of - efficiency is not that good among the civil servants, in my opinion. There are weaknesses here, and the rand is falling, the unemployment is not being curbed. And the ANC is not - as I say basically, carrying out the same policies as the capitalist countries. I mean politically and economically. In my opinion, it's not creative enough to feel that we are in a different situation in South Africa. The difference in the Western countries, where the capitalist society suits them perfectly because they are, they control the world economy and the people are quite

wealthy. In Africa, we require new ideas, people that can think of - one of the things that they can think of is smaller industries, where they can reduce unemployment. I don't say it will work, but we require some sort of new ideas here because our situation is different from Europe.

MC: Yes Sir, and if maybe you were maybe if you can be invited to join, maybe I mean join people who are maybe drafting or designing the economic policy of the country. I mean, what will you change about that the economic policy of the country, like if you can?

GS: All I can say, in my opinion, is because I mean communism has failed. You can't nationalise the industry, but I don't think ANC can run the industries, if they nationalise it. And that's why nationalising will not work, but if you have capable people who can nationalise and run the industries and all that, it can make a certain amount of progress. I am just going by Chinese example, I don't think communism has flopped totally - it may have certain drawbacks. People haven't got the faith, they are very cruel, but it carried on, now for over fifty years or so and they have brought about - the economy has grown up. So to me, I would say, if there's a certain amount of nationalisation done slowly, it can work, but it depends if you have the people to run it. You see that is the question mark. I can't see whether the ANC can do it, or can't do it, I'm not certain. But another thing, I think some countries have got a fair amount of small industries, where you can encourage people to do things and do things on their own buying and selling, making mats or making something. I can't see the unemployment being reduced on the capitalist system, where the country is controlled by big businessmen and the factories. I can't see it happening in Asia and Africa and

South America. They are required to think of something else.

MC: So if you were maybe asked to say, advise - I mean to advise our president, President Thabo Mbeki. Maybe if you can be asked to advise him, maybe to spend about two hours with him, how will you maybe what will, what part do think maybe can sort of at least make things a bit better?

GS: Well perhaps we should go into - I don't know - the work in industry. But I think, some thought should be given to it, and some discussion should be centred around it, to see how we can encourage small industries in South Africa, in the rural areas, where people can maybe learn some trade, where they can make something and sell. If that thing can be done, I think it should be done. And I don't think - see the government policy of nationalisation is that it is a lot of influence here by the capitalists, you know, given free enterprise to everything, like Telkom and electricity and all that. And the prices have gone up now so it's difficult for the people to, you know, to pay these things. So but some thought should be given to nationalisation. I mean, not a communist society, but start it and try it, and see how it can work because I don't think capitalism is going to last forever and ever, I don't think it can solve the peoples problems.

MC: And Sir, what do think about the - if do you think maybe if Africa can be united maybe if we can have maybe a United States of Africa, things will change or be better?

GS: It will be better, but the important thing is that people must learn to be more creative, they must think of how to improve the economy. I think all - we will be prepared to learn from the West because we mustn't just do what they are doing and stop there. You must learn and try to have

our own creative ideas also because our situation is different here. So at present in Africa, as I understand the situation, is still exploited by the Western countries, they control the economy; they control the resources; they control the prices. Unless Africa can wake up to the fact that they are still being exploited by the Western countries. But they have to create their own creative people who can think of how to improve the country economically, and be required to think of new ideas, and people who are dedicated to work hard and bring about change, but I don't see that, at present. I think aid - it's quite obvious now it hasn't uplifted the poor people very much, it has, I mean, made them more and more dependent on the foreign countries. I don't think that will be a form - a long-term solution that can work although it may help now and again when people are starving and all that. But if you get dependent on aid, you don't progress yourself you don't make your own effort to do things. So if you have a united Africa country and they try, and what they are trying to do now, as I understand it, is trying to get more help from the West. From a long-term point of view, I don't think that will solve the problem of Africa.

MC: And Sir when you joined the NIC back in 1956, did you maybe - what was your vision I mean what was - can you tell about the South Africa that you wanted to see in maybe in the 1990's or in the 21st century, when you joined back then?

GS: Well when I joined the NIC that time, it was the fifties - that time socialism was quite working in the overseas countries the democratic countries. And people had a sort of basically a socialist vision. The Freedom Charter itself, had a lot of socialist ideas there, you know. It talks of nationalising the commanding heights of the economy;

taking over the land and giving it to the people. So we had some sort of vision of the socialist society, at that time. But now that the communist countries of Europe had basically collapsed, we had to change our attitude. It was not as good as we thought, at that time. And socialism in many countries has not worked very well, even in India when they was bringing more and more private enterprise and cutting down on socialism, the economy is improving. But that's because people are generally selfish, they only work when they are working for themselves, if they have their own self to progress. But I don't think it will solve the problem of the Asian countries, capitalism. I mean there is always a lot about economic growth, but the wealth is not shared among the poorer people, they are still poor. So it won't work, my vision that time was of socialism, but I think now, what I would expect is more concern to uplift the poor. You know the ANC has done certain good work by giving free housing and pensions. But I would suggest, I would expect more commitment to cutting down unemployment and see what methods can be used. But relying on the capitalist also, I don't think it will work. If they can implement some new ideas, but I think like small industries what can it do, how it can encourage people to do things on your own. If something like that be implemented, it will be of benefit to people it will change South African society.

MC: So Sir, in other words, I mean today, the way things are they are not exactly what you wanted?

GS: No not as I wanted it to be.

MC: Not as I mean it's not exactly what you fought for?

GS: You can put it that way, not exactly what I fought for.

MC: Okay Sir can you please tell us about the TRC. I mean what were your feelings about the TRC? I mean what do you think about the TRC?

GS: Really I haven't gone into it in detail but - [pause] - I don't know what to say. But in a certain aspect, it was sort of good that there are certain people, I mean, who did think for political purposes, were I mean, discharged. I think from that point of view it was good. There were many people - most people didn't commit the crime for themselves but who committed it for some idea of for a better South Africa. And it was unfair for them to be - for them to remain in prison. And from that point of view it was useful.

MC: And did you offer testimony in front of the TRC?

GS: No.

MC: No. Why not Sir?

GS: I had no testimony to offer.

MC: Okay because you were - you didn't experience I mean no one - you were not tortured in prison?

GS: No, but it was in that time it was mostly to release prisoners who were in prison for political purposes.

MC: Okay, so even from what happened to you back in the eighties, no?

GS: No, I was not in prison that time, so as I understood it wasn't relevant for my case.

MC: Okay. Sir can you sort of tell us a bit I mean what influenced you, I mean what influenced you, besides the atmosphere that you were living under, what influenced you to sort of support the ideology of people like Karl Marx?

GS: Well Karl Marx was a very brilliant man, no doubt about it. He studied history; he based his theories on facts; on what happened in the past; where social changes took place. But

he didn't exactly benefit the mass of the people. And many of his ideas are quite right in the sense that under capitalism, there's alienation. A worker is forced to work even if he doesn't want to work there is no freedom. And on the capitalist system they say you have freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, and all that. But the freedom ordinary people don't have, because freedom is basically, exercised by a few people because the wealthy people they are in parliament, they control the business, they have influences over the newspapers. They get their views put across. An ordinary person living in South Africa, living in the reserves, living in the townships, I mean his opinion is not heard. I mean he can express it to his neighbour, and all that. So I think but he can't get in the paper he can't it in TV. So Karl Marx is quite right when he says that freedom was a bourgeois thing. They have freedom of expression, freedom of movement. That only applies to the people who - the wealthy people who have the money, you see. And the poor man he has to stay wherever he is. He is an unemployed man; he has to stay wherever he is; he has no freedom even to have a good meal. So I think Karl Marx is right in the sense that we have to bring about change and with the capitalist system; the freedom what he says he wants to abolish is the freedom of property, owning property. He says the people haven't got property in any case, you know what I mean. That freedom only applies to a few people, it doesn't apply to the majority. They have got no property for them to abolish. So all the freedom of the capitalists system is not really exercised by the mass of people in Asia or in Africa. All they have is once in five years, once in three years, they have a right to vote for their party. And I mean if you are voting you are only choosing one party, let's say one

party they don't have a choice of voting on all the issues that are installed, you see.

So I feel we have to look at these ideas, but I agree that I take a step in the time as I said earlier, on that no social order perishes until all the productive sources has developed. The capitalist system has just come into existence about 100, 250 years. It has to carry on for a while, bring about whatever improvement it can. But in the meantime, as I say, everything is changing all the time. There are people throughout the world, in Asia and Africa who are thinking of the new ideas and new society and they are working for it, and in due course will come about. And if society and the human race does not perish, we should get a new economic system in due course.

MC: And Sir if we can go back in discussing the TRC, what do you think about reparations for victims during that were paid by the TRC?

GS: I have no objection to that people who suffered badly; they got reparations. I think it's fair enough.

MC: Okay Sir, some according to certain scholars and historians, they say that I mean in South Africa we had the reconciliation; we had the Truth and Reconciliation. But they are saying that I mean how we can have Truth and Reconciliation without maybe having I mean true restitution and then Reconciliation. According to them we have to have Restitution first, before we have Reconciliation. Can you tell us what you think about that?

Do you think Truth and Reconciliation I mean, was in the right order I mean we were supposed to hear I mean testimonies and then after that we have Reconciliation or are supposed to hear testimony and then have Restitution's and then from there Reconciliation? Because according to

some people who were involved in the TRC, I mean there was no restitution?

GS: Well, I see it is difficult to solve all problems at the same time. But the fact of the matter we had a new democratic South Africa. It did bring about certain new measures, where at least, they tried to have about Truth and Reconciliation. Let's say to a certain extent that's one of those drawbacks. I think it was a good move in trying to bring about Truth and Reconciliation you see. You may not succeed all the time, you can't sit down one time and work out all the solution to society's problems, you know, once and for all. You have to go by trial and error. So you try one thing, it failed you try something else, as long as you are moving on when you fail, you come out with, you know, new ideas and try new things. If something happens I can't, I wouldn't say that it shouldn't have happened. When you examined what happened you - it failed where its drawbacks are then some day you take the next step forward and do something else.

MC: Okay according to certain sociologists here in South Africa the problem of poverty can be solved if maybe we start to sort of concentrate on our trying to help people with the rural areas. According to certain people in South Africa we are neglecting the rural areas, we are only interested in the urban areas. Do you think that's the truth?

GS: I can't say that is the truth or not, but I think there is as I have heard the people in rural areas are poorer and they, it's throughout the world that is the problem. I mean the agriculture workers are the poorest; they are not paid well. And how do we help them. I think we should try and see what we can do to improve the wages and improve society as whole. As I say, to see what new thing they can do when I speak of small industries these new things they can

make and sell. But I think the agriculture worker is up for South Africa need a system but it's like that throughout the world, I think.

MC: Do you think we have an agricultural revolution here in South Africa?

GS: Do you think we?

MC: Have an agricultural revolution or?

GS: I don't think we have an agricultural revolution, at this stage.

MC: Or we have an industrial revolution?

GS: I don't think we had either; we have a revolution in recent times. We had a change in the political system in that the votes are given to everyone and as a non-racial democracy. But the industrial situation is, as I see it, as basically still the same as it was before and the same with the agricultural situation.

MC: So about land, do you think that the way the land is divided, what do you think about that?

GS: Well the land is basically controlled by a few people who have large tracts of land. But if the land can be divided, but at the same time there must be make sure that people can work if you know the land must work and be productive they can try a sort of communal farming for a start - see how it works. But it's impossible to, you know to, sit in one place and few people to work out a blueprint for the whole country. I think you have to have a trial and error method and since we had a new democracy we have got to try and bring about change now. We should try and experiment in certain things instead of just saying you know this will work and that won't work we will never know unless we try it.

MC: So do you think maybe in South Africa, because according to certain papers that are written by certain scholars in

South Africa is in danger of having the same problem that was experienced by Zimbabwe, earlier this year and a few years back?

GS: No I don't think we are in that situation here in South Africa. I think the ANC is a better government than the government in Zimbabwe and they are more alert to the problem in the country; that they can't just take over farms and ruin the economy. It will drop; I mean they are working with the people throughout; the most sensitive to international opinion; they are in touch with you know foreign powers. But I don't think it will be same, as Zimbabwe that sort of situation will apply here.

MC: Okay, thank you Sir, can we pause a bit?

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ON RESUMPTION

MC: Okay we are back Sir, can you tell me if you have a favourite philosopher?

GS: I won't say I have a favourite philosopher but the person who was influenced me quite a lot is the Buddha.

MC: Okay.

GS: I don't know if you heard of him but.

MC: And why is that?

GS: I think he is a man of great wisdom; his method of philosophy was to when he was, before he died he says: "Rely on yourself do not rely any on any external help. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp; hold fast to the truth is your only refuge." Do not any allow on external help you have got to rely on yourself, I think that is very important.

MC: And Sir do you have a favourite writer?

GS: Favourite writer or novelist I think I like Joseph Conrad.

MC: Which one?

GS: I like his novels generally, you know; I don't have particular novel of his, which I like.

MC: Okay why, do you like the style that he uses, or the things that he writes about?

GS: Ja I like his command of the language and the way he writes. And I'm also influenced by - I think I would say my favourite writer will be Achirus, the Greek playwright.

MC: And why?

GS: I think he is a man of great depth I like many of his quotations in his books, which he writes.

MC: Can you say one?

GS: He says: "no man may hope to spend his life untouched by pain, some grief is with us now, others time peace will send." And he also said: "mans happiest hours are pictures drawn in shadow; when real fortune comes and with two strokes of a wet sponge wipes the drawing out." He has got many quotations, I think he is a very wise man.

MC: Okay Sir and Sir can you tell us about - can you recite for us your favourite quotation?

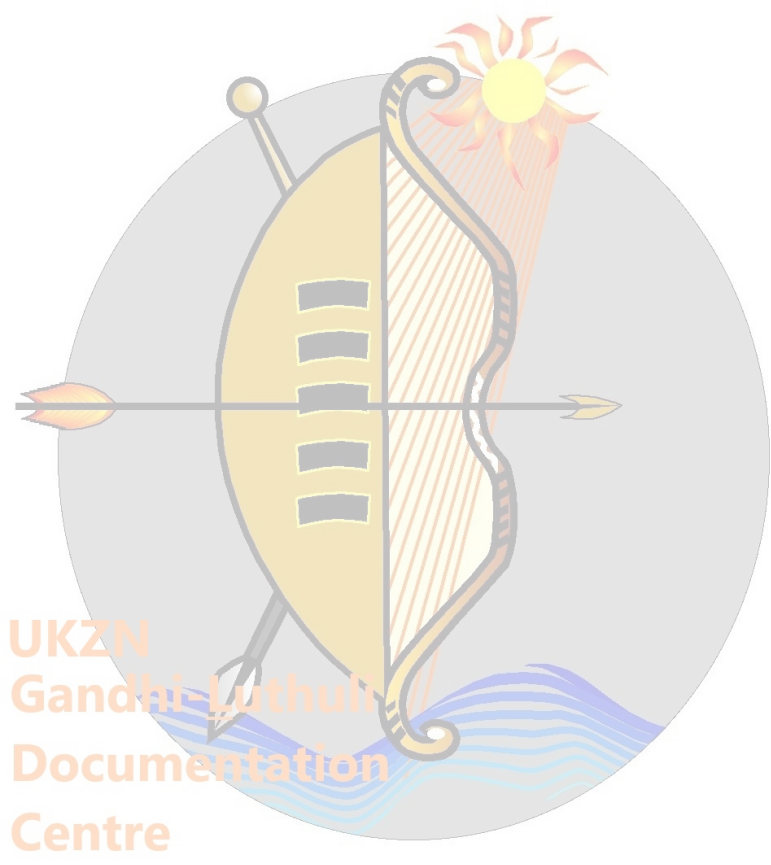
GS: I won't say I have a favourite quotation, but one I always remember is from the Upanishads. It is: "Realise all creatures in yourself and yourself in all creatures."

MC: Thank you Sir. Thank you very much Mr Sewpersadh thank you Sir.

GS: Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS

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