

UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

"VOICES OF RESISTANCE"

INTERVIEWEE: YUNIS SHAIK

INTERVIEWER: DIMAKATSO SHONGWE

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PLACE: DURBAN

DS: Good morning, my name is Dimakatso Shongwe from the Documentations Centre and today we are interviewing Mr Yunis Shaik. Welcome.

YS: Thank you.

DS: Thank you very much for your time. Would you like to tell us a little bit about yourself, where and when you were born?

YS: I was born in 1957 in Kliptown, Johannesburg, and Kliptown is now sort of famous for the fact that the Freedom Charter was drawn up in that town. So I grew up in Kliptown and then in my schooling years we came down to Durban.

DS: Okay, you started schooling in Durban?

YS: Ja.

DS: Your primary level?

YS: Yes. At a school in Springfield, it's called Hindu Tamil. It was wonderful and it was a really good school in the sense that that school was set up by the community and was built by the community. And it was a school that was a working-class school and we were probably the one or two, a few sort of mixed origin children in that school and it really gave me quite a good insight into the Hindu and the Tamil community because we would participate in

all their religious festivals because the school had quite a religious tone about it.

DS: Okay, so when you say 'mixed origin' what do you mean?

YS: Well, I have a mixed background. My grandmother was Afrikaner, my mother was Malay, my father was Indian, so I come from a mixed tradition.

DS: Okay, so would you like to tell us a little bit about your parents? Or even start at your grandmothers, or grandparents basically.

YS: I don't know much about them. Part of the fact that I don't know much about them is reflected of our own society's tensions. When my grandmother and father got married, firstly he was sort of Indian and she was Afrikaner, that already had its own tensions attached to it, and just about I think shortly after I was born, the Nats started to introduce some really difficult race legislation, so I think even their own marriage had to be conducted in some secrecy, or tension was attached to it, and half her family sort of disowned her and would not recognised her offspring and so on. So it had a lot of tension attached to it and some of her children sought to be White, some sought to be Black, and she herself was quite active in the struggles of the time. She would march with Albertina Luthuli, they would be part of the whole movement around marching to Pretoria, so it was a very difficult time and it was the beginning of, at a working-class level, when the race groups were being shaken apart and all put into their property classification. So there were the odd groupings of people, such as my grandmother who had already - because it was quite a mixed

neighbourhood, Kliptown and Sophiatown and the region, and in the fringe of South African life, particularly at working-class level, there already was a beginning of a racial integration that was taking place.

And if you think of Sophiatown, if you think of Fietas, if you think of even here in Durban, Cato Manor, Umbilo, in those areas the working-class began already to live side by side, whether it was African, Indian, White, or as we called them later, Coloured, it was this integration that existed to some degree.

But when the Nats came into power they, as is now history, they sought to move that to a point where there was strict separation. Now what do you do with those who already started to integrate? Obviously with the benefits of separation some individuals thought it's better to be classified White, and some thing, 'Shit, a White classification would mean I've got to leave behind other members of the family'. So for us it was a very difficult time to figure out which side of the line you stand.

I think it was difficult for my grandmother rather than me. It was difficult for my mother, but things had gone too far for her I think and she had made up her mind that she was going to hold herself Black as opposed to White. So my mother, for example, really thought of herself in every sense of the word as part of the Black community. But her sisters, on the other hand, would think of themselves as part of the White community. So they won't greet us or acknowledge us, and if they did it was rather grudgingly, and so I don't think my dad

felt comfortable at all. So I think roundabout 1965 he decided to return to Durban.

DS: Okay, did that have a negative impact on you?

YS: No, I didn't think of it as a negative impact, I didn't think of it at all as a child. I was in the school, which is not far from here actually, it's just probably 3 or 4 hills away, and they used to call us when we were growing up as kids, 'You guys are so white' like you'll be called Whitey or something, but we were like a novelty in the community. So I never thought about it in race terms as to why were we so fair in a community that's otherwise dark and how it came to be that we were there, I just moved along with it.

DS: So tell us about your high school.

YS: High school was just wonderful. We had a teacher by the name of Mrs Cooper, her son was quite politically active, his name was Saths Cooper, he's now Dr Saths Cooper, and in the year that she came to teach me Afrikaans was the year I started to get politically active. My dad had taken me to a rally and this was known as the Frelimo Rally. It was a ... [interruption]

DS: What year was that?

YS: Probably 1974, and it was arranged by the Black People's Convention, was known as BPC, I think it was, or it was SASO, they had arranged this rally in Durban, Currie's Fountain, and my dad at the time was quite a politically active man and Black Consciousness was beginning to assert itself, and my dad identified with the Black Consciousness Movement although he comes out of Congress tradition, but at that time in the resurgence of

politics Black Conscious Movement had emerged and ANC was absolutely by that time crushed.

So he took us to this rally and in the event we all were set upon by these dogs. You know, pictures like that are very common of what happened there. And when we went back to school the next day we heard the Mrs Cooper's son was also picked up by the police. And he was then sentenced to I think it was a 5-year prison-term. So it was quite a charged environment, you know here's your teacher, her son's in prison and it was a difficult time for her and we were youngsters, probably about 15, so you're already beginning to see the signs of fight and the consequence of fight.

And there were other things happening in our community at the time. My dad was quite politically active in sport in an organisation called SACOS. He was campaigning around sport and trying to promote a sport boycott. So sport and Black Conscious Movement asserting its presence, that was my formative year in politics.

DS: So would you say the rally, that's when you started to be politically active, or were you?

YS: Well, it was my first sort of political event that I participated in. Consciousness began to develop much earlier, but it's the first time my dad ever took me to a political event. And I went to my brother, Moe, and singularly Moe and I as a result just became - by the time we had finished high school - we were up to our neck in politics. In our second year at university we had got so steeped into it, by the time I left university I was already in the ANC's underground unit.

DS: Okay, tell us about your life at the university.
Which university did you attend?

YS: You know, just trying to get a university was a headache. Firstly, I was classified Indian/Cape Malay. Now why they would classify me Cape Malay is amazing because I've never been to the Cape, my mother's never been to the Cape, but they couldn't find a classification for an Indian and an Afrikaner offspring, so they gave it the tag called Cape Malay. There's nothing Malaysian about that.

Now I couldn't get to this university. I applied and they said, 'No, you've got to go to the University of the Western Cape'. So I applied to the University of the Western Cape, they said, 'No, sorry, you can't come here, you've got to go to Durban-Westville'. So I thought, 'I'll use the opportunity to go and stay in Cape Town', I was quite excited about that prospect. So I applied to the University of Cape Town and they provisionally accepted me to go to read for Law.

I bought a car, packed the car and the next day I was about to go and I get a letter the night before saying, 'No, you can't come to University of Cape Town, you've got to get ministerial permission', and blah, blah, blah. So I couldn't get to Cape Town University.

So then finally we decided to have a meeting here with the Rector - what was his name - Olivier. My dad came here to Olivier and I came with him and I saw my dad like completely beg to admit me. It was problem because he's quite a political activist, he's got to deny who he is, so we were all like - because he [Olivier] was in the time in the

Broederbond, so we were worried whether he's going to know our political background, our traditions, is he going to use the opportunity to say, 'No, you can't come here.' So anyway, my dad just grovelled and, 'Fine', he [Olivier] says, 'we'll register your son'. I was quite excited about that, finally got to the university.

But that problem plagued us all through my school years. You couldn't go to an Indian school because you were Malay, they wanted to send you to a Coloured school, you couldn't go to a Coloured school because they thought you were Indian, so every year, every school year was agony, particularly for me and my three older brothers. Going from school to school was a real problem for us because we had to get these exemptions and what have you.

So I got here, at university in my first year and I started to read a Law Degree. First it was pretty uneventful, except for the fact that we were becoming alive to the traditions, the tensions in our society. It was probably roundabout 1976. There was like an enormous tension in society and that tension was beginning to feel itself on campus. The students were beginning to sense that they need to do something, they need to participate in the broader struggles of the time.

But this campus also had a rich struggle tradition. In the years before that you had other students who were quite active, you had Pravin Gordhan, Saths Cooper, Strini Moodley, sort of chaps who were legends in their own time politically. So they created a certain basis so this

was not a sort of neutral campus, this was a contested ground. And the kind of contestation that was taking place was around whether you use sporting facilities on campus or not. So you will not have any sporting facilities, we don't use any of the sporting facilities. There was an SRC I think it was disbanded, something had occurred at that time.

So the campus was quite charged when I got here. And I got into it, and I began to sort of make, as young students would, you know you talk in the campus, you meet people, and invariably you sort of met people who had a political orientation. And then we would start to think about what can we do, what can we do on this campus, what can we do in the community, how do we advance our national democratic struggle?

And then came like a significant issue. There was a young student by the name of Pinky, she was an African student, and she was admitted to the residence. Now for reasons of the fact that only Indian students could stay on this campus and the residence - at some point in time I think permission for her to stay on this campus was withdrawn and they were going to evict her from the campus. So she in turn mentioned to other students and all hell broke loose. We formed this Committee and we went on a student boycott to resist this.

And for me it had such resonance because I was in the same kind of shit she was in, I was also on permit and it was a very insecure existence. Each year you had to get your goddam permit and now when Pinky got evicted, or was going to get evicted, that was the right issue to fight about. It

was right also because she was an African woman. Now you could identify with - there was like a visible identification with the struggle.

So the students went on a boycott and I got onto some committee to champion this cause, and I got thrown in the slammer. So my first detention occurred I think in '78, '77, don't know any more, it's somewhere there. Under Section [6] of the Terrorism Act, so that was Section, I think, 22 or something. And I was sent then first with Thumba Pillay, he's now a Judge, I went first to a little police station in Brighton.

I was so terrified, the cops were going to kill you, or something, because growing up you'd hear all these stories. What had happened was an uncle of mine was killed in detention. He was severely tortured and he died, his name was Dr Haffajee, and so now you have like an uncle dying in detention and you think, 'Oh God', and now you, and you're like this is it, this is like all hell's going to break loose.

But, to be honest, it was just preventative detention, the interrogation lasted all of 3-hours and I was for 2-weeks in detention. I then I thought I'd go home but no, they then sent me to Modderbee Prison. And then I sat in Modderbee Prison until August, I think it was, and - ja, August, about there - and then we were released. So then we returned back to the campus. And of course during the time there was just an enormous amount of political activity on campus that was going on.

I may have got these dates wrong, let me just see. Just give me a second. It could have been in

1978 there was the struggle around a student called Pinky, I don't remember her surname, and I think it was in the following year, '79 or '80, it was another sort of struggle. It's a bit hazy in my mind, I just don't remember any more. Perhaps if you can check out the facts it would help.

But at any rate then we were in detention, this whole group of us, students from this campus, other community members of the campus. There was older men like Mr Thumba Pillay, he's now Judge Pillay, there was Dr Farouk Meer, there was a lawyer by the name of MJ Naidoo, there were others. And then we were also grouped from around the country, Titus was there as well, he's an adviser to the President presently, and a whole range of other students. So we were all in prison in Modderbee.

And that was quite a difficult, trying experience because you're away now, you're in Modderbee Prison and you really didn't know what was going to happen, whether you were going to be released, not going to be released, whether you'll sit for the exams, don't sit for the exams.

But it was good on the other sense because my political education underwent a qualitative transformation. I had an older generation of men there, they would share with us an entire nation's history of struggle. So I'd got to locate the struggles we were in at the time to the struggles that went before, I got connected to a whole range of people and families who were involved in the Movement at the time. I also got exposed to different political thought. I got exposed to the

thinking's of the Black Conscious Movement, the thinking of the African National Congress Movement, I got exposed to the thinking of the party at the time, and also I got exposed to the thinking of the Labour Party.

You know, the Labour Party at the time was sort of like participating in the Tricameral dispensation, and so on, so it gave me a broadness to thought. There was not much written literature you could go and read, let's say if you wanted to go and get involved politically then you couldn't go and find a book out of the library to tell you who the ANC was and what their programme was. You didn't even have a copy of the Freedom Charter. So it was very difficult and it was an oral history that had to be handed down.

DS: So you had to get the information from people?

YS: That's right. Now it's a big - oral history perhaps is a big thing in the African community, or the Indian community where stories are handed down from generation to generation. But in political history it was a very difficult tradition to hand down. It would come family to family because we all trust each other, but out of community, between communities, between families, the information is much tighter, unless you of course - the whole subject was taboo, you don't want people to know your political work and so on.

So all of this meant information could not come to you, if it came to you it got distorted and so on. So to me it was a wonderful university of learning though, being in detention in Modderbee Prison.

By the time when I got back it was then August we were released. So we went into jail in April, we came out in August. And exams, we had to write the exams in October, the first week of October, or something. So I probably just had 2-months, and I had 2-months, a month of lectures, I think it was March, and then probably a month in October somewhere. And I applied if I could write the aeggro or the supplementary, I think aeggrotat is when you are ill and supplement if you fail. So I applied for the aggro and they wouldn't give me that and I was registered for 9-courses as a Law student, and that was courses you had to do, you had to do 9, 10 a year.

And it was very difficult trying to play catch-up, and I was doing my third year and I had a wretched lecturer called Ranchod, he was Prof Ranchod, he was teaching us Contract, the Law of Contract. Trying to get the notes from him or trying to get any briefing from him was just impossible. So in the event I got to write the exams, and of the 9 I wrote I passed 8 and I failed 1, and that was quite an important one, that was the Law of Contract because you had to go into the next year to do contracts.

Having failed that, I had to think now it's hard on my dad, we are five sons and if I had to repeat the year he would have had to have paid the school fees again, and I was worried about what the impact it would have on my other brothers. So I decided to go and do Articles at the same time and study through UNISA. So by doing Articles I would get

some money and that would pay for the university and so on.

So I went to do my Articles, and I got Articles with a great lawyer by the name of Paul Davids. He also has got a long political tradition and it was in Verulam, and subsequently I changed my Articles to go to another lawyer, his name was Pat Poovalingam and he too was involved in politics, but he was involved in Tricameral politics. But I'm running ahead of myself a bit.

But at any rate, after I did my first year at university, after we had come out of detention, we came back, set up the SRC, or SRC was already set up and we participated in that, but it was towards the end of the year and everyone was starting to prepare for the exams.

The students who were left behind had gone through quite an interesting and challenging experience. They were campaigning quite furiously for our release. But there was a defining moment that had been achieved on the campus. There was a huge amount of political conscientising of the campus, a lot of ordinary students who would not otherwise participate in marches and protests started to participate. They began to embrace the democratic struggle in a way that, in my generation, was not seen. It was a real sense of deep commitment, a willingness to fight, they had also in their minds I think crossed that threshold around whether we fight or we don't, and what kind of fight.

So it laid, I think, a very significant basis for the years that were to follow and the political work

that was done subsequently. Also, it helped us to establish connections, and intergenerational connections. I established contact with people like Thumba Pillay and so on, other students established contact with people like Pravin Gordhan, Yunus Mohamed and so forth. Now this intergenerational contact meant that we could engage in a whole host of activity. Like you go back to the community, start raising community issues and engaging in community struggles, so you take the struggle out of the university into the communities.

We had the energy for that as youngsters at the time, that you could take the guidance out of an older generation person at the time in the form of Thumba Pillay, who was also a practising lawyer, so if you did get into trouble he would defend you and he would give you guidance as to what you should do and how you should do it. So that connection then began to feel the impact on us. And we fanned out across the community but we focused on working-class communities in particular.

DS: Why working-class communities?

YS: They were suffering particular hardships around water, cost of housing and so on. Communities in Phoenix, in I think it was also Chatsworth, but the poorer area of it, and their hardships were of a different kind but they needed relief.

And also we took a view - well, at that time the more senior took the view, and I just sort of feel in step, like Pravin Gordhan, he is presently Head of SARS, but he was quite an intellectual giant and he took the view that the future of our struggle laid not in the hands of the merchant class and

intelligentsia, he wanted to shift the struggle from out of an intellectual struggle, because that's what the struggles against apartheid in the '70's was, it was like a whisky and wine circuit where lawyers and doctors over a wine and cheese will bitch and moan about how bad apartheid was. And the intellectualism of SASO, so to speak, was among students, it was vibrant. But it was not involving masses of people and it was not located around the struggles, daily struggles of people.

So what Pravin sought to do was to say, 'Your struggle is about better housing, your struggle is about better welfare, about safety in your community and your people that you are struggling for, or the communities you're struggling to uplift is working-class communities, because there are some Indian communities that are quite well off, you know in Reservoir Hills or Westville or Greenwood Park, for that matter.

You can't fight a war and a revolution where all the soldiers of your movement are affluent, or relatively affluent. I mean, everyone else can be dirt poor but you've got a house, you know?

DS: Ja.

YS: And we became alive to that, we became alive to the fact that the heart of the struggle could not be located on the middle-class and the intellectuals and the intelligentsia.

So you sought to move the struggle and locate it in working-class struggles. And I liked that. I went with that. So we would campaign in these poorer working-class areas.

DS: So you got support?

YS: Ja. But because of his [Pravin Gordhan] articulateness, his cleverness by which he put his idea, he persuaded all of us to go down that route. So literally I think the sort of entire '76 generation went down that route. As to whether it was right or wrong, history can judge us later. But it was a good, in my mind, step because now the struggles were becoming around housing, rents, around lights, cutting of water, these were emotional struggles. These were struggles for the basic necessities in life and now you were getting thousands of people standing up in the community saying, 'I won't pay my goddam rent unless you reduce it'. Or, 'Don't evict this woman for not paying her rent because she's unemployed. Her husband is dead, she's got 5 kids'.

Now those were people struggles, those were human struggles, those were struggles around living. It was not a theoretical struggle, one man one vote, power to the people, these are abstract concepts. In '76, '78, '79 they're abstract, you can't eat the vote, you can't, so we couldn't relate, we even couldn't think of us - what will we do if we get the vote - beyond the second step of saying, 'We'll elect Mandela', we had no programme, nothing.

So from the community people couldn't even embrace the idea that we could vote, or that we should vote. But we could relate to the idea that you shouldn't evict this woman because she can't pay the rent. So hence now the struggles had this feel, this texture, about real life people. So we could fight and say to the Durban community, the Town Council whatever the then Mayor was, but,

'Hey, Margaret [Winter], you white bitch, don't be so insensitive to the fact that this woman, her husband has died, she's got 6 kids, you can't cut the lights off'. You had to juxtapose this struggling people with this affluent, sort of liberal, you had to take the mickey out of the liberalism. You had to confront them with the effects of their policies, and it was shocking on them. Absolutely shocking. Margaret [Winter] in time became an ANC Councillor, and she is still today.

But that consequence of that where you juxtapose this liberalism with people suffering was to change the dynamic of the struggle, from our point of view. But quickly then in the community, the community became charged around rates, around housing, around schooling, around everything.

DS: So mobilising the community became a success basically?

YS: In my view it had an enormous amount of success. Ja, it had an enormous amount, but you can't measure the success in how many people's evictions you stopped, or how much of a rate reduction you got, or how much of - you should measure it in terms of how many activists you could field, how many activists were born in that community and charged and became cadres of the Movement, in that respect we had hundreds coming out to participate in the struggle.

And we changed the dynamic of the struggle because there's no more a political struggle, in a strict sense we're no more fighting for the vote. So under the disguise of local issues you were really waging a political war. So we succeeded in giving

the cover for political activity, but without using the slogans of political acts, we are not demanding the vote, we are demanding houses. But the struggle techniques were the same.

So that switch became quite good for us because it gave us cover to launch a political struggle under a disguise.

DS: Okay, let us go back to this point, it was when you were in the university basically, or after?

YS: Both. On the university he would call us out to go into communities. So it was a way of also keeping alive, after a boycott, our political commitments. And we would recruit from the campus students to work in various communities.

DS: So I believe that you said earlier on you ended up enrolling with UNISA?

YS: Ja.

DS: So you finally graduated there?

YS: Ja, I finally got my degree through UNISA.

DS: Alright.

YS: And that's another story. Subsequently I was imprisoned again and I was in solitary confinement for about a year, so it was a great time to learn Latin, and then I did my Latin course and so on. But ja, I subsequently finished my degree through UNISA, which was okay, you know, it was you can learn the Law through the books yourself, really. And then I did my Articles and finished.

But by 1980 in my own mind I'd undergone significant changes. I think it was the year in which I went to jail again, it was the year in which we participated in community struggles. It was the younger grouping of us in the Natal Indian

Congress, a younger grouping of us who were on campus who had acquired a certain militancy and began to embrace the idea of the armed struggle.

It wasn't an acceptable idea at the time, it was a very dangerous idea because that idea would, in time come to compete with the ideas that Pravin Gordhan was espousing at the time, which is community struggles and build the movement on the back of a community struggle, you know.

The armed struggle idea was dangerous because if you were in a committee that's dealing with housing, Housing Action Committee, for example, and it was discovered that you were an MK operative there you exposed that entire committee to danger. You exposed that entire work to danger. It would have taught the Security Branch that really we are using a cover, there's something else going on. So there was some resistance to this idea.

But at any rate, by 1980 I crossed the - I mean, I literally finished university, a week later I drove to Swaziland looking for the ANC. I was quite naive then.

DS: You just drove to Swaziland?

YS: Ja. I had a distant girlfriend, I knew I could see in Swaziland, but I just drove to Swaziland to try and find the ANC.

DS: Can we pause here?

END TAPE 1A

TAPE 1B

DS: Okay, you can continue from there.

YS: I must get my dates right, but I went into detention I think for 2-weeks in '79, I went back into detention for about 9 or 10-months in 1980, and it was in that year that I was in my third year and I had failed this one course, but also I was becoming quite frustrated. Also in that year we started - well, we started by '77/'78 into community struggle, shifting the struggles there, but still I wanted to take our struggle even further. And to me the conditions were ripe to launch a recruitment into the ANC.

There was various generations of people in our community, and if I could give you sense of this, Thumba Pillay, for example, was in his mid-to-late '40's, Pravin Gordhan was in his mid-30's, my generation were in their early 20's. Although now I am 45 and when I look back at the time Thumba Pillay was the older generation. And then beyond Thumba Pillay there was Swaminathan Gounden and Mr R.S. Pillay. Our community had a sort of unbroken line of generation after generation that will find its way all the way back to, I imagine even Gandhi, of political activists to hand down or engage each other or lead one another.

So anyway, my generation, that's like the 20's, thought the time, the popular uprising that was occurring around '76, the community struggles that occurred in '77/'78, had produced a set of people, a grouping of people who were ripe for recruitment into the ANC's MK. We no longer thought of ourselves as Indian, we no longer thought of ourselves as Malay, Coloured. We were Black, we wanted to join the ANC rather than engage in a housing struggle in an Indian area. We wanted to

move the struggle beyond the confines of say, the Natal Indian Congress. Not that we in any way disagreed, but we wanted to participate in the main line activities of the ANC.

And also at the time the ANC was undergoing its changes and the ANC until I think the mid-'70's or even '80's were not recruiting Indian people or White people into the ANC. But then they began to open up their structures to recruitment and so on. And we thought the timing was right. We already had 3, 4-years behind us, two or three detentions under our belt, lots of engagements with the police, we began to have a sense of them. We had a sense of ourselves and we had a sense of the opponents, at the time. And we felt the time was right to recruit amongst the Indian community, or the youngsters, we were young then, into the ANC. So I went to Swaziland, didn't know a single person, who to find,

I didn't even know who the ANC would look like.

DS: If I may ask, did you parents know about you?

YS: No. About my political activity?

DS: I mean about you going to Swaziland.

YS: Ja, they knew I was going to Swaziland but not why I was going to Swaziland. I told them I'm going for a holiday. Third-year student, you've got your own car, it's not a problem. Dad allows you to sort of wander a bit further than the confines of your neighbourhood.

So off to Swaziland, and in my first year sort of sent out lots of signals I want to join the ANC,

finally a chap comes to meet with me, I don't remember his name now, but he was directed by Mandla Kuswayo. Mandla Judson Khuzwayo in time became the High Command in the ANC and he was assigned to Zimbabwe. He had sent this guy to meet us.

Anyway, he met me and he didn't know what to do with me, I didn't know what to do with him. There was a whole divide even between us, I don't know what he called me, I still can't make up my mind what am I, let's say here he presents to him this Indian chap, he's a young African cadre that comes out of Transvaal somewhere, he doesn't know what to do with me. I mean, he can't I think embrace the idea that this guy came across the border looking for the ANC. He didn't know am I a spy, or what am I?

So we fumbled with each other a bit, he began to - where was I detained, 'Who were you detained with? What kind of work you did?' Later on as I became a recruiter myself I understood what was happening, at the time I didn't. What he really was doing was he was drawing a lot of information about my world, my contact points, my network, and he passed it on to Mandla Judson Khuzwayo. He died some years ago in an assassination in Zimbabwe. But he was checking out.

So people who are going to detention he would cross-check that, he would cross-check with Thumba Pillay, they would cross-check who is this boy, where is he from, how did he perform in detention, how did he perform under interrogation?

And he gave me a sort of marginal task to do in the year. We set up certain ways of communicating, I had to carry certain messages to people, but low level, he was just trying to assess me as an operative. So he gave me some messages to hide in a toothpaste. He set up certain drop boxes that I had to go and leave things, he set up certain meetings for me to have with people that was based on just a 5-minute interval. Someone will come from Swaziland, you be there and you be there exactly at that minute and if you're not then you're going to lose your chance to meet.

So he was assessing me and he did this all through the year of '81. So I would have these encounters, he would try and put it in different places, like in West Street, 'Walk past this shop at that time, you'll see a woman with a red cap, utter these words to her and take that parcel that she's going to give you', in that form. And I think in time then he would get his report back as to whether I was diligent, whether I was disciplined, whether I was innovative, whether I could react to different circumstances, suddenly this woman is late, she's not in the place where she should be, she speaks the wrong code. She had to introduce herself by saying, 'The weather is good here', and she would get it all wrong and she would say, 'Weather's quite bad today', I'd think, 'Is this my person? Is this not my person?', but really what she was doing was assessing me and my ability to be calm and to assess when all your pointers are falling around you.

Anyway then I had to go back at the end of '80 to meet with him again. And along the way I had to

recruit people. Now I was particularly scared, who would I go and recruit in particular, because we had to set up a recruiting structure that you can't just rush out into the community and say, 'Listen, join ANC, you and you', because that would expose the ANC to quite a danger. So he said, 'Recruit only three people, only three people you can absolutely trust and not more than that, and don't tell each of them they are in the ANC'. So okay, I will try.

So I recruited Mo, my brother, I mean he's the love of my life, him and I have built our entire dreams together as kids, so Mo, he's my first man. After lots of discussions we agreed to recruit Jay Naidoo. So Jay Naidoo, Mo and myself were constituted in one unit. I'd go back and report who I recruited, my activities and so on.

And then a year later he told me that, 'Look, the ANC accepts your recruitment. You have performed in this way, this way, this way, we don't think you're suitable to be called out to go for arm's training'. I was devastated, I thought, geez, I'd fantasised, I was going to be like a soldier running around with guns and bombs. He says, 'You are better suited to engage in logistics and you are better suited to engage in a recruitment drive in the community and you're better suited for intelligence', anything but like throwing bombs and he said, 'We simply don't take the view that it's appropriate for you to do that any rate because if you're engaged in armed struggle at the moment you'll be caught within 6-months of a bomb going off, your community will then begin to feel that to join the ANC is a terrible mistake because the losses are

quite devastating. It's you young and you're well-known with your detention and Jay Naidoo is well-known because his father is well-known and if you three guys get whacked do you think 50 other youngsters will come join the ANC?'

So he reasoned, he rationalised, he was clever, he was good, and I saw the point. I didn't like the point but ... [interruption]

DS: But you understood?

YS: ...but I understood the point. So he says, 'Also, on account of this we are switching who's going to be your handler, and we think it's really odd an Indian chap having an African handler, I don't understand your community, I don't understand what the possibilities are in your community, but we're going to give you someone who does and someone who comes out of your community'. So he gave us Ivan Pillay.

Ivan Pillay, by that time, was already in the ANC in Swaziland. In the years before, in the '74 sort of period, he had already gone into exile. And he was quite established in the Swaziland hierarchy. He then took me over and he in turn was under the command of Jacob Zuma, who at the time was the Head of the Political Military Council. So he became my commander. And then started a series of events.

DS: What year is this?

YS: Probably roundabout '81. Ja, '81. And then I took Mo with me, we both met him, and there was such a chemistry. And it shows, at the time, how good the ANC was in the question of recruitment, deployment and so on because as I said instant connection with

Ivan Pillay and us. He could locate us, we could locate him, we could all understand what were the real opportunities, what were the maximum opportunities for deployment, how should we be deployed.

But the other thing about Ivan was that he really loved us, and that's a weakness in a commander, to love his soldiers because he's fearful about how he may deploy them lest they die. So he kept on deploying us at the level of building the unit. He wanted a unit built and he wanted to build our capability. So we rapidly built, I mean the ANC underground under our command, had become quite big. I forget how many people we had at the time, probably about - my brother, Mo, will know better - but I think about 65.

And interesting things, he wanted us to set up a computer database on how we were recruiting. He wanted us to constitute the groups in a particular way, that apart from the Central Commander of our group nobody else will know other people. He wanted that done. He wanted different people constructed in different ways, this one engaged in propaganda, this one a women's sort of group so they could do certain kinds of surveillance.

So we spent the years '81 to '84 building this underground network. And it was a formidable network, but all young, we were all like 20-something, I probably was the oldest amongst all of them, and I at that time was 23. So at any rate he wanted us deployed, 'You in NIC, you in - ', at that time UDF also took off in '84 - 'you in UDF, this

crowd, you get involved in this'. So he dispersed the unit.

So this was a unit of graduates or undergraduates, studying, wanted Engineering students so we had to recruit engineering students, it was women, it was men and it was spread out. Sure, it did all that, rapidly it developed then.

And then in 1984 he says, 'Listen, your unit has been appointed by Oliver Tambo to prepare the ground for the return of the ANC's leadership into the country. The assessment of your unit is you're an A-1 unit, you're just an absolutely fighting fit crowd, you've got resources, financial resources, you've got intelligence networks, you've got this, you've got that, you've got a certain amount of capability'. So Oliver Tambo had appointed this unit to participate in the return of the ANC's leadership, 'But there's going to be a first operation to test you all and to prepare the unit and the ground and this will improve your preparation'.

Now this is 1984. Unbeknown to me at the time they had in mind that they were going to return the ANC's entire senior command leadership into the country. They were returning Simphiwe Nyanda, the present Chief-of-Staff of the Army, they were returning Ronnie Kasrils, they were returning Mac Maharaj, everyone who was involved in the Political Military Council, all commanders were sent, 'You've got to return to South Africa, the fight's not in Europe, the fight's not in Africa, the fight's in South Africa'. So they wanted the entire military leadership returned. And he had assumed like almost personal command of this operation. It was

a tight command structure, it was known only to Joe Slovo, Oliver Tambo and certain people in the military command, including [Jacob] Zuma.

And knowing all that at the time I would have said, 'Please, not me, take this other unit'. But naive and so on, Ivan Pillay, he loved us and he was worried and I should have read the signs but I didn't. In almost abject apology and humility he says, 'Listen, I have to surrender your unit, you're considered mature to a certain level. Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim is now going to take command of your unit and I wish you lots of luck', and he gave me a shake and a hug, and he walked away. I could see he was like visibly emotionally moved, I thought that he lost command of his unit and he was upset, but I think he knew of things to come so he wanted quickly to break the emotional connection and move on.

Ebrahim Ismail came then. He briefed me that, 'This is what you're going to have to do and it starts today. You start your preparation to return me into the country, I'm going to be the first guinea pig'. Now Ebrahim Ismail is a significant guy because he had already spent 20-years on Robben Island at the time when I met him. He had been appointed to the ANC's Political Military Council that was in charge of the Southern Command and based in Mozambique. He was a senior-ranking political officer and for me the highest I ever met in command.

I was quite intimidated by him but he's a very gentle man in other respects if you should meet him. He quite quickly settled me down and then he set

out the terms of engagement, not to disclose his name, not to do this, not to do that, 10 don'ts: 'Don't tell you mother about this operation; take you entire work now into a new level; start disengaging with girlfriends and everybody'.

Something I'm mindful of, he set a time that I was to meet him in a forest in Swaziland border, somewhere near Golele or Manzini, some place. Ladybrand, anyway there's a place on our border that meets Swaziland and I had to meet him there at a particular time and a particular day and in the early evening.

Anyway, so I go back, these were the instructions, we had to prepare the base, so I go back, hire a car for that - no, what do I do, a hire a car? Ja, I bought a car for the purpose. I bought the car from my brother who was buying and selling cars. And I told Mo about what was going to happen, so we had to hire a flat, furnish this flat, we had to change all our relationships with the people in our lives and just place the entire unit on alert.

So huge expectations, this was our first really dangerous mission. Anyway, so I drove to meet him. At this appointed time and date I stopped the car, saw a flash and out from the forest comes Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim and gets into the car and I drive back home. And in the meanwhile he's changing, he's putting on a disguise, he didn't have a beard, he puts on a beard, glasses, so on, and we drive home from this border. And we come and I put him in his flat and I leave.

I tell you, my nerves were absolutely shot by then. But anyway, we started now, he's there, he needs support, so he needs food, he needs access to telephones, he needs cars, he needs money, clothing, he needs a support structure, so we start building the support structure. And it was good because now we started to understand what was needed, what do you need to support a person who's a commander and who's got a mission to build an entire military operation in the country?

So quite quickly we started to do all of this. At the same time, in 1984, and as part of that initial encounter, an opportunity presented itself to join the Labour Movement, and I asked if I could be assigned to the Labour Movement and that assignment was approved. They said, 'Sure, you can go join the Labour Movement'. And then I went to go join the clothing industry, the Garment Workers Industrial Union.

Now this appointment was particularly important because it's working-class people, it's Indian women, and my own thinking was that if you win women over into the political struggles of the time they will commit their sons and daughters to participate. And hence, we went into this union.

So two things started. Indian boys joining the ANC, preparing the military life. Secondly, Indian boys getting involved in trade union work. Now there were lots of us, there was me, there was Jay Naidoo, Jay Naidoo became General Secretary of COSATU, and then Jayhendra Naidoo who became the first Director of NEDLAC, and so on, and others, three or four, whose names I cannot at this

instance recollect, but good guys. So we fanned across in the Labour Movement and we were entering the ANC's underground.

At any rate then, Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim came into the country. Moe at the time, had just started a practise as an optometrist and all of this was happening in Overport area, Sydenham. My work in the union took me increasingly away from home and I had to fly around and strikes were going on, it had it's own tension.

Moe, on the other hand, was more focused on ANC work. Our work began to mature, develop, Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim was building networks around the country, domestically he was building networks, he was also meeting with other commanders, they were arranging arms supply, money supply, because a movement needs a lot of things. A movement to fight a struggle needs millions of Rands, how do you get those millions of Rands when this particular group needs to produce 10 000 pamphlets on why you should not pay your rent? Who's going to pay that? Who's going to pay for the pamphlet? Who's going to pay for the buses when everyone goes to a meeting? Who's going to pay for the hall? Anyone of these things cost R10 000. Who's going to pay for this union to survive? It's not getting any subs, it's battling, who pays for this logistic operation?

So the ANC needed a way to get money into the country. You can't be running around from Swaziland, or from London to Swaziland with packets of money, you know, you had to have systems where money could like be passed out in

safe ways. You needed places where you could move arms in a secure fashion and store. You needed to house your cadre all across the country, you needed to have a communication network between different units, or the commanders of different units. You need an interface but not too close a relationship between the then UDF and the Labour Movement and the MK operatives. We can't all be sort of like chummy chummy, having dinner together all the time, it just compromised all the units.

So this broad architecture is what Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim was working around and we as a unit were being tested and the limits were being tested of what is possible, what could we do? How many people could we return? How many people can you house without this unit being stressed out to its limit? How quick was this unit's ability to move and so on?

So he was putting us through our paces and I thought we were doing alright. At the time, after his assessment and so on, he switched the command structure of our unit. I was then the Commander of the unit. He says, 'Listen, Moe, Moe will now be appointed the Commander of the unit. You support Moe and your focus is the Labour Movement'. His own reading of me was that I'm a person not best suited for the clandestine life of ANC. He felt I was too open, too people orientated and I wasn't an appropriate person to command a unit that was of a military nature, which is fine, you know, because in a sense to me it was a huge relief. You're just 24-years-old yourself, you've got all these people

you're worried about and you know their mothers and their fathers and their brothers and their sisters and you could see the war was coming and you know one of them is going to die, and the burden of leadership was like starting to wear me down.

At the same time I was the General Secretary of the Trade Union. I was constantly finding myself in a tension between what comes first, do I have to manage this strike or do I manage the needs of this unit? So it was a battle, so I felt relief, Mo assumed command of the unit. And the unit was known as the MJK unit, Mandla Judson Khuzwayo Unit, in honour of Mandla.

It's funny how we even got our name, that's another story. Anyway, so it's 1984, we're already 6-months into building the unit and bad luck hits us. Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim is spotted in Johannesburg. He had a rendezvous with a woman called Helena Passtoors, I think, she's a Dutch woman. And this woman was part of bringing arms into the country and funding and so on, and the Security Branch were watching her and when he connected with her they just put a trace on him. And when he came to Durban they didn't even know who he was, until he came to Durban and they took out his disguises and they come to discover, 'My God, this is Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim', and they knew that he was on the ANC's Political Military Council. Now to get a Commander of the Political Military Council is to like get a General and capture a General. So, all hell broke loose on Security Branch side. I didn't know that at the time.

But they didn't attack, they first watched who was he involved with. And we had a standing rule that only the Unit Commander will liase with Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim. So when I switched the unit command it only became Moe who liased with Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, and nobody else. So they would see this movement taking place between Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim and Moe, and then they struck in round about April of 1984 and they tried to capture Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim.

I tell you, it was the most frightening time of my life, you know. Moe told me, he phones me, it's 10 o'clock in the night, he says, 'Yunis, we are about to be hit. I can see the security guards, the security all around the building, I can't move, we've got to get to Ebrahim Ismail and take him out'.

So there are two buildings, they're quite close to each other, he's watching these security guards all come, cars moving in, he can see the people starting to come up the building, and he phones me to tell me and he uses the code. As youngsters, growing up together, we had developed a code amongst us, and in code form he told me that 'Go and rescue Ebrahim Ismail'.

So I'm half asleep, I'm throwing on my clothes, I rush to get hold of Ebrahim Ismail. And we had to move him from the flat he was in, into another flat. You know you can't believe it, but how do you say to somebody, 'Listen, I'm sorry, please, could you look after a guest of mine?' We had a sub-safe house as a retreat house in case we were hit and he was to live in that basement, but suddenly 10 o'clock in the night you knock on these

people's door, 'Sorry, we need the house now', without them thinking, 'What for? What's going on here?' So we had to rush him into a safe house, take him out of harms way. I mean, there must have been about 100-odd security cops around. We had to get in, break that sort of dragnet, get to him, pull him out, go and put him somewhere else and then go back to Moe.

So amazingly we did this, we triggered him, he came down, I took him out, put him back in a safe house, went back to Mo to try and help Mo. By that time the cops were all over Mo and they didn't know where Ebrahim Ismail was staying and also because of his disguise, they had a rough idea where he was staying, he was able to slip the net. Then they took Mo, but having lost Ebrahim Ismail and having got Mo they were just furious.

So now they get Mo, they want to take him to police. Now I'm like a young law student, young lawyer, 'Under what Section are you taking him? Hold on, I want a medical examination before you take him'. 'Listen, just shut up', so they grabbed me and they said, 'Listen, you, take him to this other cell'. So they sent me into another jail just for interfering, being lawyer-lawyer, and they took Mo to another prison.

Anyway, lawyers intervened quickly on my behalf and I got released the next day. Mo went in. Now the thing in capture of ANC underground operatives was you had only 24-hours, literally, to crack him. If you cracked him in 24-hours you could find everybody else because if he held out for 24-hours, or however long, then every day he held

out his unit had more days to retreat, do you know what I mean?

Now I had like a hell of a problem on my hands. I had a senior-ranking Commander in the country, I had Mo in detention, and the question is what do I do? Do I save my unit or do I save the Commander? So it was quite a trying time. In the event, I decided to pass him off, Ebrahim Ismail, and I passed him off in turn to another unit and I then went to Pravin Gordhan and said, 'I can't, I can't sustain the Commander any more, I've got to defend my unit'.

It was a very trying thing, I mean, here's a man who's been in jail for 20-years, you're his Lieutenant, you're his soldier. He was on a mission from Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo, Modise who at the time was Commander, you can't like stand up and say to these guys, 'Look, sorry, I sacrificed your General here because my brother, my unit is more important', so it was very hard. Now I knew also if they caught him it will kill the mission entirely, you will not be able to bring back the ANC's leadership, you would suffer further defeats. So it was really frightening, the consequence of the capture was frightening and I didn't want the mission to abort.

So I had to surrender him, but even by surrender now it's only one line between me and Pravin Gordhan to say 'Our unit has suffered this hit, I need to surrender this man'. He instantly stopped me in my tracks. He at the time was convening a meeting around some Housing Action Committee, 'Don't say any more. You ought not to even assume I'm in the ANC. At any rate, just leave

this man at this and this spot, let him go and find himself'. He was an absolute master because he knew that if I got captured and I was told under torture who did I give up the Commander to, I would have to say 'I gave him to Pravin Gordhan'. Now that would have meant I had to damage Pravin Gordhan's unit. So Pravin Gordhan by saying to me, 'Don't assume I'm in the ANC, just go leave this man at that spot' created in my mind doubt as to whether he was going to take over or he wasn't going to take over.

At any rate there was a rational tactic. At the time I thought he was being an absolute shit because here is me suffering a whack and he's not coming to my defence. Later on, and you cannot believe the extent to which I came to understand the brilliance of that move.

Anyway, I had to surrender Ebrahim Ismail and the appointed spot was in Umgeni Road.

DS: Surrender him to?

YS: Just leave him on the street.

DS: Oh, okay.

YS: You know, you're going to leave a gentleman on the street when there's a massive search for him. It's frightening. You know the Queensborough Mosque? In Durban North there's Umgeni Road, when you're going towards Umgeni Road, there's an old hotel there, I forget the name of the hotel, we had to leave him there. At Road House, I had to leave him there at Road House.

And this was after like 6-months of being with me, maybe a bit more, I received him, I've got to surrender him, and I just burst out crying. He

said, 'Don't worry, my boy, why are you worried? We live, we die, this is the struggle'. 'Worry about me, I'm worried about you. I'm only 20, if I go for another 20-years if I come out I'm 40. If you go for another 20-years you are dead, they're not going to even take you for another trial. Now they will assassinate you'. So I was so scared for him, but he was, 'Take it easy, don't worry. I will survive'.

So I left him and in the ANC at the time we were hardening ourselves. The policy had developed by '84 that there's no retreat. No ANC cadre in the underground when you suffered a hit could like stand up and say, 'Cheers, I'm off to Swaziland'. They were not taking people back to Swaziland. They had started to close the border so to speak, to say, 'You must now move into the underground'. You couldn't go into exile, so when I put to him, 'Do we return, go into exile?', he made it clear, 'No, there's no retreat any more'. I mean, the command leadership is coming back into the country, no junior is going to be allowed to walk out. So everyone had to stay, there was going to be no retreat, notwithstanding you suffer any kind of attack. You had to go build and underground, that's your challenge, that's what you've been doing for the last 6-months, or 4-years. That underground is going to now be tested in its capability to sustain you, and me for that matter.

So there was a defining moment being developed, no retreat, underground had to be created and underground had to sustain all the soldiers.

Fine. Continued to support Moe for 2-weeks in his detention, then they came for me. And then I

joined Moe in detention, and then they came for my brother, my father, anyone. He used this car, this number plate, 'Where you bought that car?' they go and get that guy, who's my brother, so he gets into jail. This flat, it's under that one's name so that one's in jail. So literally at that stage I had my father in jail, I was in jail, Moe was in jail, my cousin was in jail. Ja, four or five of us at one time.

Now me and Moe were presented with a choice, we either keep quiet or all these people stay with us in jail. So we said, 'Look, sorry, we are ANC okes and we were supporting this guy, let all these others go'. So they let everyone else go, and then they would start with me and Moe.

Now Moe was already in. I spent one night with him, I came out and then he had 2-weeks on his own. But he was suffering continuous torture for 3-days, and 4-days, and it was just going on, and Moe was not cracking. And they were getting more frustrated and were getting more abusive towards him, so by the time I got there it just diverted attention. So they sort of stopped working with Moe and they started working with me.

They said, 'Right, you, we took Moe away so you know where Ebrahim Ismail is'. And they would torture me like for days on end. It was quite an horrific time, the torture, and I couldn't surrender him, I couldn't say, 'I gave him to Pravin Gordhan or this and that unit', so it was very trying, and so many times I contemplated suicide in ...
[interruption]

DS: Can I just pause?

END OF TAPE 1B

START OF TAPE 2A

DS: We are back.

YS: So Moe and I were then in detention. The programme of torture had begun. Moe was already subjected to quite intensive torture for about probably 10-days, and I decided then to go in as well. My dad was also worried that if Moe was left alone anything could happen. And if he was the single contact point there would be no limitation.

So after discussion with him I had agreed to surrender myself, to create diversion but also look after my brother. So then I went to hand myself over and I was taken into custody. Although I must say I felt our unit at the time could have kept me in the underground for a long time, but by the Security cops then wanting me I would have exposed my unit to more danger and other facets of the unit. So to take the heat off the unit the commander's had to surrender themselves.

So I joined Moe in detention, and again now they had become aware that I was the person who had last contact with Ebrahim Ismail. They knew that Ebrahim Ismail was setting up certain military attacks and at that time the military campaign in the country had started to intensify. There were wonderful attacks on Sasol, on a whole lot of installations, and in Durban as well. And they could see that the Southern Command of the ANC was like moving quite extensively. So they had to also prevent.

There was the Amanzimtoti bomb that involved Zondo, there were a whole lot of other bombings taking place, so they knew there was going to be more military attacks and Ebrahim Ismail was connected to it. So they wanted him and they were desperate for him, so they subjected me to quite intensive torture. Subsequently that torture featured where those who tortured me applied for amnesty. There was a guy called Braam Visagie, there was another attorney called Nel - well, he's an attorney now - but a guy called Christo Nel, he applied for amnesty. There was another Security Branch - well, there were many of them, names you don't now recollect - and the torture was quite humiliating, it was intensive. Well, you did your best to endure.

Anyway, I survived a 3-day period and then Ebrahim Ismail came to be taken to another unit, but he couldn't leave the country still. And they wanted us because if they ever captured him then they were going to put us all on trial. So they kept us in solitary confinement in the cells of CR Swart. But we had developed a code amongst us, Moe and I can talk to each other almost telepathically, we will have moments when he's been taken into torture and I'm coming out of it, so you'll meet on the stairways, or you'll meet as your door is being opened and you've got to tell each other what you said, whether you revealed anything. Or you had to go for an inspection by a doctor and you will have these momentary encounters, or there'll be common law prisoners that would be in the cells and we would ask them to carry one message for us to each

other. We'll write to one another on toilet paper, using matchsticks. We'll speak to each other in the night, roundabout 2, 3 in the morning, shout from one end to the other, or get someone to relay a message.

I think they sort of figured out that we were communicating so they separated us and I was taken to another prison and Moe was left in CR Swart. I think we're the longest serving solitary prisoners in the country, I think in all we did about a year, pretty close to a year, in solitary. It was a very difficult time, I think 9-months into solitary Moe had a relapse and he went for psychiatric care. A month later I began to suffer a sort of psychological breakdown. I went into hospital and the following year, I think in March, we were released because they didn't capture Ebrahim Ismail, so we got released.

But the most important thing about that detention period to us was 'Because you kept us in CR Swart for 1-year', well certainly in Mo's case they kept him for a year, and you have a relationship with your police, with your captors, this concept is like known in prison of war, it's been known in the 1940's where a certain relationship develops between a captive and his prison guard. After a while a certain humanity prevails. You may even after a while start liking those who torture you, as we did. They will torture us but then they will also bring us a sweet, or a cigarette, so you had this sort of love/hate relationship with them. But it became a dance of life between us that existed.

We would understand their rhythms, we would understand their comings and goings. There were weak ones amongst them, compassionate, I won't use the word weak, compassionate perhaps is a better word. We were Indian boys but there were also Indian security guards and there were African security guards and there were white Afrikaner security guards and there were sort of English-speaking Security Branch members. What started to develop was a certain feeling of compassion amongst the black section of the Security Branch, the African, the Indian, because whilst we were in detention a significant event happened and this changed the dynamic.

10-months into solitary the defining event that occurred was my mother suffered a heart attack because I had written a note out trying to tell my dad about the detention and indicating to him I couldn't hold out much longer, and I was contemplating suicide. I wanted to get - in our religion, in our culture the notions of suicide is not an acceptable thing, I didn't want to go down that path without some sense of understanding. My mom got to hear of this. It upset her. She had a heart attack and died. [crying]

It upset me a lot. In fact, my mummy was as old as I am now. I'm 45, she was 48 and I was quite close to her. So my dad came to my cell and told me that mum had died, sort of quite shocked me. But he also gave me 5-minutes to pull myself together and said, 'Listen, we're alone now, you'll be taken to the funeral. There will be a lot of people there, there'll be a lot of activists there and

in Islamic tradition men don't cry in front of women, and you are to honour that tradition of battle that we don't cry and you, in particular, cannot be seen to take this in any sort of emotional way because it would just present an opportunity to the Security Branch'.

So in a sort of daze and shock, Security Branch comes and shackles me and takes me to her grave side. In Muslim tradition we don't put a coffin, we just wrap a body in two pieces of cloth and the kin and the family would take the body into the grave site and bury her. So I sort of went into the grave, I was standing outside, I couldn't do that even because I was shackled to another policeman and so on, and Mo was also shackled to another policeman. So we buried my mum and then we were both taken back to our separate prisons. I got to speak to Mo for like 5-minutes, see how he's doing because the police wouldn't allow us to talk, to each other, to other people.

It was really a difficult time and you don't want to show emotion and we were just tense. But it was a relief, already 10-months into solitary imprisonment so just coming out was a relief. And in a sense your mother's death gave you a chance to come out. First time you're seeing cars and people and your senses were being assaulted, you were getting so much of stimuli coming in, smells of the old neighbourhood, people - I hope I'm not being disrespectful to my mum, but she gave me life. It was a hard time, I was psychiatrically quite depressed and her death sort of gave me a chance to come out.

Anyway, after her funeral we were sent back to our prisons and we're back to solitary. So it was very hard because you can't talk to anyone, now the security guards - we were on 24-hour watch with security guards, we were never left alone. There was always a guard placed at our quarters because they suspected escape, they suspected suicide. Now you can't talk to this guard, can't cry to yourself, so it was a wretched time.

But it was a turning moment because all human events impact on people. Now here's these security guards who were otherwise sort of quite demonic, and here's two young guys looking out for each other, defending one another all the time and their mother died and they're dealing with that, and there's an uncanny relationship between me and my brother, we just communicate with each other almost telepathically. And they marvelled at this, that these guys are joined at the hip and the way that they will defend one another and endure pain for each other and so on.

So they started to see us in a different light. They began to be quite respectful, our ability to endure pain, our ability to endure suffering, our refusal to speak out and give any more information, or any information that would compromise any unit member, the willingness to die, just the fierceness with which we conducted ourselves. But in the clever way as well, we were neither aggressive nor humble, we'll still speak up for what we believed in.

So the ones who responded to that was the black section. They just - I think we did them proud. They were like probably the subservient

members of the corps, and these white guys would torture us and so on, and somehow they felt, 'God, these guys, they do us proud'. And then they will start to talk to us, they will take us out. It became a prison term that we must be taken out once a week because there was a whole campaign by the doctors to say that if you continue with the solitary these guys would suffer permanent damage. So the doctors were campaigning to take us out, they would try and petition the court to release us because the doctors themselves were getting scared that the torture, the long-term solitary confinement, it probably came to be about a year now in solitary confinement and it was becoming quite shocking, so these doctors began to order that, 'You've got to take them out, at least like half-an-hour, just take them out of their cell and let them see the sky and sort of feel the sun on them', because these cells were dark and you couldn't see the sky and you get no sunlight.

So as he will take us out, these cops, it's not the senior policemen who will be asked to take you out, it's junior policemen because it's a rather mundane job. So the junior policemen will take us out and they will see us coming out dazed and dishevelled, your facial hair is completely - your eyes can't embrace the sun any more, it's too hot, so they would like sort of quickly put you in the car and rush you to the beach, just like to go and do something. It will give us a time to talk.

You're standing at the beach front, there's a vendor selling a toffee apple. Suddenly a toffee apple is like the most sought after thing in your

whole life, I mean you will fantasise about eating that toffee apple, you would look at it like with all your heart and wish you could tell this guy, 'Please, a toffee apple, my life for a toffee apple'. And he'll buy you a toffee apple, so you'll eat it and you'll just love him for that. We were quite grateful and all that.

So we began to affirm his compassion, it's like a child eating a toffee apple would relish. Somehow having bought the toffee apple for him you feel good. That gave a chemistry, it started like that. For a moment they could no longer see us as terrorists, they could see us as human beings, locked in a struggle. And so we started this chat, it's a low-level chat, but, 'How you're doing? How's my brothers? Anything happening there? Anyone else been hit?', so they will tell you who else got hit or what's happening.

And they would also tell us about - we would see how shit they were treated, how the white guys would treat the black guys or the Indian guys and we'd pick on that. We'd say, 'This is what we're fighting. You will never be a Lieutenant, you will always be a Sergeant. You're 50-years-old now, right? This white guy, he's 24, he's a Lieutenant', and we'd leave it at that. And it would eat them that this little kid would boss him around.

I would tell him, 'We will live, you, you've got kids, what would your kids say? What if we attacked your house, who would protect you? Do you think these white's will protect you?' and they began to get slightly worried because they could see now a new breed of cadre coming out, cadre that

was going to die and was going to counter-attack as we die.

And just our luck, the ANC counter-attacked one of them, one of these Indian guys, I think it was Raju, or someone, bombed him. And it shocked them that we would attack whilst we were ourselves under attack, that we were going to surrender a life for a life, we were going to surrender a soldier for a soldier, we were no more going to run, there was no more retreat. And I think that shocked them.

And at the same time we started to engage them. So this sort of parleying began, and when they released us, it started the basis of a counter-intelligence system that came to be developed. So immediately we got released, after our release the one security guard, Security Branch officer, met with us and we tried to turn him, to say, 'Listen, give us files, tell us who's going to be hit next', and he started to cooperate. But we had to pay him, oh, we paid him a fortune, 2 000, next his demand went to 5 000, next to 10 000, I mean we would sell everything we could. Sell our car, ask the ANC for more money just to pay this guy, and we got the most fantastic counter-intelligence.

Now here we came out of detention, it's a year later, but we had a prized asset, and that was counter-intelligence. And on the backs of that counter-intelligence we were able to re-launch our work, and until the end of the struggle, until the unbanning of the ANC that counter-intelligence unit gave cover for the entire Southern Natal region. Thereafter we never suffered a single loss, not a

single cadre got capture, nothing, because the counter-intelligence became so good.

And that, in turn, provided the basis for the next assault that took place. So this is '84, '85 we come out or '86. I think I went in, in '85, I came out in '86. In '86 we started building the counter-intelligence. In our debriefing we could talk about their rhythms, their shifts, who was the make up of the Security Branch, we could make an assessment of the information they had, we could make an assessment of their torture techniques, we made an assessment of their capability, their strength, the kind of informers they had, the character of their informers, and what our conclusion was that they essentially survived in informing, they had limited capability and capacity and they were not as omnipotent and powerful as we thought they were. We thought everything we did they knew, they didn't.

So that gave us the confidence, now for the first time you were able to assess the elite fighting arm of the State apparatus, and you made an assessment that they are wanting, that they're lacking information, capacity and credibility. In a whole assessment of their technique we were able to assess each of their operatives, from Sergeant to Lieutenant to Captain to Colonel. You could assess this guys entire intellectual range, his choice of tactics, you could make an assessment of how big their network was and so on.

So all this was happening whilst we were in detention. That was getting gold, we had hit jackpot.

DS: So that is why then in the country there was instability because - it's somewhere in '95? '85?

YS: No, it's now '86. When we got out and we submitted our reports we just became enormously confident that we could survive, that we could build. They had no knowledge of the fact that we had shifted our tactic to creating an underground. They had no knowledge of the fact that we were returning the leadership, they had no knowledge of the fact that the critical cadres we were using were in the Labour Movement, in the mass movement and so on, nothing.

And they were desperate, their desperation indicated to us their own tension. And we also saw what was the impact of international demands. When I was in detention there was a huge - because I was also a Union General Secretary - the World Trade Union Movement began to petition the government to surrender this trade union official from detention. So it would be said, 'Listen, I see there's a campaign for you, to release you, your name was mentioned there at the International Labour Organisation and your name was mentioned in Parliament', so we could now assess that external pressure produced this result.

This result meant that if they captured an ANC man, if the capture was declared publicly, if that capture was made known to Amnesty International and certain organisations, they won't kill him in detention. So we began to understand the impact of the Press, the impact of public opinion, the impact of other social opinion on them.

And that became valuable information to us at the time.

So on the back of this, then, the unit went back into action. I remember coming out of detention, it's 1985, I came out on a Friday, I was back at work on Monday, to get back to work. So you had no time for retreat and recover. You had to visibly show that you can suffer an attack, you can rebound, instantly you must be able to get back into action because the enemy is also assessing you as to your capability to get back into battle.

We were flown right back into the battle, on our side. But the battle dynamic had changed, we were known to be as part of the ANC's underground, so a whole lot of other people began to oscillate around you. So we continued building the Movement, assessing all the mistakes we'd made, where we had opportunities to build and then we began to return the Security Branch. And we got our first set of files, you can't believe the nightmare I had.

I get this file from a Security Branch officer. It's in Afrikaans. I can't read Afrikaans. I'm sitting with this file, I don't even remember whether it was of the UDF, or whether it was on the NIC, or whether it was on an individual, but it was all in Afrikaans. I'm so terrified now, I go and photocopy the file. Where do I photocopy it? In the office of an attorney by the name of Pat Poovalingam. He was serving in Parliament at the time as part of the House of Delegates. I can't read this file, the only one I can trust to go and talk to is a guy who called

Naim Jappie, he's at the moment a Judge in the court.

I go to Naim, 'Please, read this file'. Naim looks at this file, he's an advocate, he goes into a spasm because if he's caught with that file, I'm caught with that file, we are just dead. Anyway, he tries as best as he can to help me and abandons the task. And I go to another lawyer, his name was Rashid Vayed. Rashid helps me a lot. Now I did my Articles with Rashid, he's also a Senior Counsel at the moment at the Durban Bar. Now he helps me, he understands, he looks at this, he assess it, he points out the danger we're in. But anyway, he becomes part of us.

So we have to store these documents. Now these documents, if you are found with them the Security Branch can't say, 'Look, you're on trial for counter-intelligence or because you were able to penetrate us', they will assassinate you because you had breached such a central nervous system. You can't go for trial for this because if you don't tell them who was the guy giving you the file, that secret is just too valuable. If you don't know how much you've got, the whole battle has shifted in its quality.

And then started a whole new era for us. The unit was ready, the unit suffered an attack, its key commanders endured, not a single name was given up, the whole unit remained intact and the ANC took the view we passed the test, so to speak, having endured this. But not only that, we came out stronger because now we had developed counter-

intelligence capability, which the ANC never had at that moment.

DS: So it was the first time that it has been developed?

YS: It was the first time that counter-intelligence of that scale, of that depth, of that magnitude was ever discovered in the country.

Joe Slovo took personal command of the unit. Oliver Tambo wanted the whole thing realigned. He brought us under the immediate command of Jacob Zuma. Ebrahim in turn had escaped back to Swaziland and he was gone. But then the unit had to continue its work.

By a year later, '87/'88, somewhere there, it was judged time was right to return the leadership. The unit was ready, it was capable and so on. But also with that the first signs of talk was happening between ANC and Afrikanerdom. Anglo American, Slabbert and them were sort of starting to meeting in the late '80's across the borders. But the idea of a military command was important.

So the first guy who came back to the country was Mac Maharaj. Mac Maharaj then was a member of the ANC's MEC, it was the highest level of command that was returning to the country. Second was Ronnie Kasril, he was on the Political Military Council. Then came Simphiwe Nyanda, and then a host of other people, and they in turn as we created the forward base, they came with the second base, they in turn created basis such as our elsewhere in the country.

So in late '80's the ANC's military wing and military command had returned to the country, and were housed within the country and were supporting

a whole range of movements. There was - of course before that there was the UDF, UDF got banned, then came the MDM, then came the union movement in COSATU, and all of us were just going, blazing six guns on all terrains, so to speak. And it was just intensifying. By late '80's it was just absolutely intensive, the battlefield.

Then the VULA Operation came to be established, and preparations for VULA took place in - I think it was early '90's. The VULA Operation, although it did not ever become used, the ANC in this region, in this command, had established a rich cache of arms, it had a body of cadre in the country who were ready to intensify the military effort if the need arose. Fortunately the need did not arise because Mandela was able to charter the path into negotiations, and the negotiations had its own momentum.

During the negotiations though the Security Branch became aware of Operation VULA and the unit suffered its worst setback. There was an operative, her name was Phila, she's an African woman whom we knew from Durban-Westville, she was phenomenal. They tortured her to such a degree, eventually they killed her, and in years later we discovered the circumstances of her killing. But, she, to me epitomised what the ANC's underground had become. She was tortured for such a while, she was made to live naked, and when they found her they found her naked, she was physically abused and executed in military style and buried. But she never revealed a single name. And had she spoken, oh, Mac Maharaj, Kasrils, Simphiwe

Nyanda, the ANC's elite military corps would have gone down.

It was a trying thing for us because also at the time they desecrated her memory, they sought to create the idea that she spoke and ratted on everyone and betrayed, and people, the ordinary person was having their doubts. 'Who was Phila? Was Phila a spy?', yet you can't validate her, you can't say, 'This woman endured, she was in the forefront of your country's struggle, don't rubbish her name', because you can't say, 'Listen, shut the fuck up, you don't know what you're talking about, you are dishonouring a loyal cadre'. So we were angry, we were bitter, we didn't even know where she was. When she was captured we didn't know she was gone for a while, it took us so long to make that assessment that she was captured.

And to show you that the military, the battle at the time had changed in dynamic, when we went in, in the mid-80's, it was known, it featured in the Press, do you know by the late '80's they would assassinate an ANC person. If you were captured, you were dead. If you were captured of a particular kind, a particular type, they will kill you. They were not going to put you on trial and send you to prison, like they did in the '60's or the '70's. If you were an ANC member then and you were caught you were put before the courts and then sent to prison. They had abandoned the notion of a trial and blah, blah, blah, by the late '80's particularly because we're all of a particular type at that time and it was a real battle of the nerves, and they were suffering enormous setbacks.

We were able to hit and they would not know where. They will go and get somebody and we would pull that person out because the counter-intelligence had become so good. You know, we could tell you within a week who they're thinking of hitting. Within 24-hours, when they got into their car to go and get somebody we already knew they were going to get that person, we took that person out. It was like literally cleaned the place up before they got there. So they couldn't find us any more, they couldn't - before it was every easy to go and pick up somebody - they couldn't pick up anybody. We knew who their spies were because we were in counter-intelligence, we saw all their notes, we decoded. We had set up an elaborate system of detecting. Mo had gone for training in Eastern Germany, training in London in counter-intelligence, we had developed, - computers were then coming on board, and Mo was a Computer Science student so he was able to understand the art of computer science and how to hide information and how to make it work for us.

We had Engineering students, you remember, in the early years who were part of the unit who had the most fantastic ability to microfilm and these were things we didn't know about. Maybe in documentation centre you were microfilming, but we the movement didn't have those resources. We could take photographs of a document, in a tiny camera, photograph, take the spool get it microfilmed, or take the spool, stick it in a tube, send it to Swaziland, information collated, cross-checked, re-checked, cross-checked, and we

uncovered a body of spies all across. So we knew who their informers were, where, what kind of information they were getting, we knew how many Security Branch, who they were, what they knew, everything. So the cover we were able to provide in the late '80's was just magnificent.

So it became a defining moment of change and our logistics, because also we were able to show that we could survive in the underground, we created an underground structure that we could move in and out of the underground. The moment the State was attacking us we all retreated to the underground. The moment the State eased up we all surfaced again. So it was not uncommon for probably 5-years Pravin Gordhan, me, Moe, a whole range of us were invisible but yet visible to the country. The moment they eased up, we surfaced, the moment they attacked, we retreated, and they couldn't find our base, they couldn't find our networks, they couldn't find anything. This had also a psychological impact on them as to whether they were going to win this.

Well, in the event the negotiations had commenced with Comrade Mandela giving us a new orientation, and we had brought back the entire leadership into the country. The leadership was able to give direction. You know what happened in the past was if you whacked the Mandela generation ... [interruption]

DS: Can I pause?

END OF TAPE 2A

START OF TAPE 2B

YS: So to finish this thought, what became different in the '80's and the early '90's, was that you were able to benefit from inter-generational leadership. In Mandela's generation, when they were imprisoned we were denuded of leadership. The next generation that came up in the '70's literally was with Strini Moodley going to prison, I mean I'm looking from an Indian perspective, that's like literally 20-years. Then the Mac Maharaj's generation, he was like after he served his 20-years, he got released in the late '70's, then there was the Pravin Gordhan's generation and then there's my generation. But these generations now collesced in the '80's. We were able to get the line, the thinking the magnificent leadership of years gone by in Mac Maharaj, in Ebrahim Ismail because they all spent 20-years on the island. They worked with Mandela, they had become part of the larger movement. There was Billy Nair who had spent 20-years on the island. Now to have that 20-year leadership work with Pravin Gordhan and work with my generation, now we all came together, they could tell us about the mistakes of the '60's and how we should redo it. We could give the new perspective. We gave energy, we gave our youthful energy to the disposal of Billy Nair, of Mac Maharaj, of Ebrahim Ismail, and they in turn gave us their wisdom. So when we set up units in the '80's they didn't have the same weaknesses of the '60's. Our fighting techniques, our preparation of units, preparation of cadre, cadre deployment, you know we had really matured in our thinking patterns.

So in many ways, their struggles gave the lessons that 20-years later when they were released, they applied. Those lessons held us in good and allowed us to become a fighting machine which by that time was inviolate. They simply could not defeat this fighting machine any longer.

I'll go back to this idea of inter-generational support. It just took that long to learn those lessons and for a new kind of person to be bred, a new kind of cadre to be built. This was no longer a romantic cadre, this was no longer a maverick, this was no longer someone who had an obscure connection to fighting for human rights. These cadres were ideologically grounded, they were disciplined to the finest art of discipline. In unflinching style they could be thrown at an enemy and if they had to - if that was the price, then that was the price. We had all become like - when I think back about it now - we were enured, we were anaesthetised, you were just completed anaesthetised, I didn't have, like, a girlfriend. I had a girlfriend and by '84 I had terminated that relationship. This woman could not understand this, why can't I have a relationship? 'I don't want a relationship, I don't want this problem of you getting caught and me figuring out what to do with you. Just stay away from my life'.

So we had become that kind of cadre. We were skilled, we had certain networks and we were just ruthless fighting machines. If we worked anything under a 15-hour day, that was an easy day. You'll do a day job, you'll finished with your job at 5, 6, you'll start with your intelligence work, studying reports, this, that, you'll work till 2 in the

morning, you go back to sleep next day. It was an endless series of working like that.

And even till today the cadres of that era have become the finest servants in our government, in civil service. They are workaholics, they are just astoundingly brilliant at doing so many things. So a new cadre had developed out of the ANC's Movement.

So for me it was a wonderful era to be in and to have enjoyed the patronage and the protection of Zuma and Ebrahim Ismail and Billy Nair and Pravin Gordhan. When I think about how enriching my life was to have served with Billy Nair. He will tell you about Mandela and Mandela's style and he'll tell you about Govan Mbeki and the fights they were having on this and that. Somehow the ANC came close. When the ANC was just an abstract Movement, that you didn't even see it's emblem, it was close. It's like you had Mandela whispering in your voice, in your ear, saying, 'Go on, my boy, I'm with you, endure'.

It was for us, all who lived that era, it was a wonderful challenging time. I think struggle built us, it really did and I wish for my son that he will be part of some social movement that advances the cause of human rights, or whatever the issues may be in his day, but it was a deeply enriching period of our lives.

DS: Earlier on you said there were informers, are informers the same as Askaris?

YS: No, informers were people who will like sort of tell on. And you cannot believe how hard it is to uncover an informer. Our first taste of informing

was when we were forming our unit. I was very close to a guy called Sam Marais. Sam Marais was involved in SASO. Sam Marais was a gay. They came to him, say to him, 'Look, I'm going to tell your father you're a gay, I'm going to tell your mother, I'm going to expose you, tell us what's happening'. A young man at the height of homophobia, a loving, adorable human being in every other respect, who cares for his country and his people, now that weakness. Well, it's not a weakness, let's say then perceived weakness.

So he started to spy on me and Moe. But then he comes to us and he says to us, 'Listen, this is what's happening, this is what I have done, forgive me'. It's a very compassionate thing, you must understand that, you must feel for him, but you must be alive to the danger he has caused. So you also had a tremendous bond amongst community, cadres. You know even till today that bond endures.

For example, if I have to say to Jacob Zuma, 'Comrade, Zuma this is Kuzwayo, he was my brother then', it would be enough for Zuma to know he struggled with us, he is our friend, he is no secret in our life, we will embrace him in totality. So such became the bond amongst us.

Now when that bond is breached by informing, 'We love you, we hate you, we love you, we hate you', we don't know what to do, but our job was to discover who breaches the bond. And no bond hurt me as much as the bond with a guy called Maxwell Nkulu. Maxwell was then the President of NUMSA, this is in the mid-'80's, you are struggling to build the Labour Movement, you are struggling to bring

Coloureds, Indians, everyone, into this movement. Maxwell, for whatever reason, was informing.

I was in the Labour Movement, the burden fell on me to pass on to Alec Erwin that Maxwell is a spy. Now nobody will believe you. Firstly, you can't tell him, 'Listen, my job is counter-intelligence, I'm in the ANC, but your man, Maxwell, is trouble'. So uncovering a spy meant breaking a bond with a brother a sister, someone whom you dearly, with all your heart, will die for. You know how painful it is to do that? And you never get intelligence that's perfect, it never comes to you where everything is absolutely perfect, beyond reasonable doubt as in a court, 'He's the man'. No, there's always just the possibilities, the circumstance, the preponderance is likely to be this.

Now a man's entire integrity, or a woman's entire life hinged on your exercise of your judgement as to whether that person is with us or against us. The daze, the shock to your system when you get a file, you buy this file, it's R10 000, you open this file, you're starting to read, the shock that so, so and so, this person, this person whose house you ate in, this person who you so worry about, that person. That person has been collaborating.

Now you've got to get that information, your system goes through an internal collapse. You've got to assess it, you had to develop techniques in assessment, so those who gather information are not those who analyse it. Those who analyse information are not those who have to corroborate the information. So we had to develop techniques.

What are we? We're 23-years-old, 24, 25, do you know what I mean? We're judging our society, our people. A fatal error, I mean, that person will get hurt. We will kill him. We will cut him off, we will move away. He will feel ostracised. We're barely our of our goddam teens, not yet skilled in this business.

It was such a traumatic thing. But anyway, Mo - it's obvious to you, I love him - had a gifted ability in intelligence. Him, Jacob Zuma had developed an entire network to assess, corroborate, assess. We could tell you in Swaziland who were the spies, who were the spies here and there. That in time gave rise to the ANC's own internal witch hunt, which in time gave rise to its own human rights abuses that it had to account for. But it was a time of war, you had some information, you didn't have other information, you had to protect your soldiers, you were not too sure, mistakes were being made, but on the other hand, on the majority we were right.

So giving up your people was a very hard thing to do. But that's an informer, an informer is that mother-fucker who will sleep with you in the night, who will have your baby, but spy on you.

That is the worst species that we had in the Movement, but yet I could understand. It could be because on the one hand they were gay, it could be on the other hand the money they were given, I mean fantastic riches, you will get easy money. It could be because you're an alcoholic, it could be because you just feared assault.

You know it was a scary thing to be pulled into a cell, be set upon by 5 or 6 men. I mean in my case they put a sack on your head, they'll put you on the table, you'll be naked, they'll be beating you, they'll stick a rod right up your anus, flex it around, hit you on your kidneys, you can't breathe, your bum is sore, you're getting these blows raining on you and you come out, you're sucking air and bang again, you know what I mean? It's a terrifying, terrifying, humiliating, you're naked, you're walking around naked. I'm like a skinny chap, I've never thought of myself as being well endowed in anything, they'll look at your private parts and stick their finger up and say, 'God, you're such a skinny thing, what do you do with that tool?', trying to humiliate you. It's a terrible thing and those who couldn't endure that, I don't judge them. I just understand, it's a compassionate thing.

But for me, it made me a bad person in Intelligence. Moe will say, 'This guy's a spy', I would say, 'Moe, don't say that, be understanding, be compassionate', so we'll always struggle around these things.

An Askari is the - oh, god, Askari started as an operation in KOEVOET. These were people whose job it was in the army to kill. Just kill the civilians, or whatever. They had become that kind of soldiers, they were killing machine soldiers. It's not an easy thing to kill somebody, it's a very hard thing, you've got to be very cold, you've got to learn how to kill on command.

An Askari was a division made up of - an elite division that was made of the most ruthless

elements of the State. In the late '80's they began to deploy Askaris in order to assassinate us rather than imprison us. In the old era they will catch you, you go for trial. In the late era they sent the Askari to do the elimination. So these guys, such-and-such person would be nominated for execution, the Askaris would be told him name, blah, blah, blah, they will go and they will kill him. They were that kind. There's no reason, no compassion, no ability to influence them.

We feared the Askaris because the other Security Branch guys stayed in the community. I mean, I hated Raju, but I knew where he stayed and I knew he was in that community. I may have hated this white guy, but I knew where he stayed, I knew he had a wife, a son, a daughter. In other respects he's a policeman, he's been assigned a job, the job is in the police force to protect his, as he saw it, his country and his State. That's a rational human being, that's a human being who feels. Who laughs, who cries, who has personal tragedy, has expectation in his life, he's going to be a Captain, he's going to get a better house, you know? An Askari has none of that. An Askari is a killer, he will be sent to this area, he's not from this area, he's sent to this area as a killing machine. He doesn't know you. He will never know you. He doesn't feel for you, he just comes here, 'Go kill that guy', shot dead, finish. Clean up their dirty tracks, gone.

So we feared them because if you fell in their sight, you were dead.

DS: Have you ever captured some?

YS: An Askari?

DS: Yes.

YS: We turned an Askari rather than capture an Askari. He still lives here in Durban now and he's a man who struggles for his redemption. You could see he's a man in pain, trying to ... [interruption]

DS: To reconcile.

YS: ...reconcile and rehabilitate and so on. For them it was the worst, I think. Okay?

DS: So I just want to know, now we're coming to you spoke about obviously the negotiation settlement, I just want to find out from you, the unbanning of the political organisation, what it meant to you.

YS: Ouch, you know I was making up - I remember this moment so perfectly. I was saying to myself, Pres, 'Please, save us, we can't endure any more'. I was making my own prayer in my mind because Vula was going down, we were gone back into the underground, my personal life was in utter chaos and I remember driving down Sydney Road and saying, 'Oh, please, Comrade Pres, save us, we can't endure'.

And the next minute I hear on the radio De Klerk agrees to release the Mandela generation. I tell you, my heart, I was singing. When I went to Parliament that day when they were going to announce the release, I was standing outside Parliament and we were waiting for Comrade Mandela to come out, but of course before him came out Comrade Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki and we began to get them, it was like - I don't mean to be blasphemous - but it was as if to a 'Born Again Christian' you said, 'Jesus, Jesus is coming'. It was a defining moment in your life to hear that the

unbanning had occurred, or was going to occur, the leadership was going to be returned. We were in such celebratory mode. It meant the world to us.

But it goes to show also how the Movement had become so almost telepathic in its operating. Mandela began to know there's only so far we could go, with military work, with protest work and so on.

That we would never make a decisive military victory, no matter all my bragging, no matter how much I feel good about our structures we would never have made a military victory. And if the war continued we would have been no different to what happened in Angola, in Mozambique, it would just have been an absolute war of attrition on both sides.

DS: Why was it not possible?

YS: We didn't have that capability. We didn't have the military resources, we didn't have the capability to launch this battle at that intensive level. If the Askaris to assassinate, if they entire switched and they succeeded in that switch of going the route of assassination and just starting to kill people it would have happened like El Salvador. It would have become like Allende in South America, it would have been like the South American struggles, how they began to kill the left in South America, it will become like that for us. We would not have succeeded if that became.

So Comrade Mandela, and the benefit of inter-generational wisdom, is just phenomenal. He did open the talks with de Klerk, he did take the route that says, 'We will suspend the military struggle'. And to a foot soldier on the ground, you cannot believe what that meant to us. When the

Commander-in-Chief said, 'I will not continue this war, I will pursue a negotiated settlement, we will surrender the military struggle', you gave me back my life, you gave Mo back his life, you gave all of us who were locked in the struggle back our lives. From then only was I able to embrace the notion I could get married, I could have children, this thing will come to an end and one day we will return to a normal life. And I was ready at that time, I don't know, 15-years in the struggle, and you're starting to mature now as a young man, debating whether you're going to get married or you're not going to get married.

My commander, Ebrahim Ismail, was not married. 'Is this going to be my life? He's 60-years-old, is that what's going to happen to me?' The romantic areas of teen and 20's had come to pass, you had endured the struggles, you saw the casualties, you saw who was dying and who had survived, who had abandoned the struggle because they couldn't pay the price. The people around you were getting married and going on with their lives and yours was just like crashing and crashing, and you were locked in the struggle and you never know whether you're going to make it or you were not, and Mandela tells you, 'Peace is on its way'. God, we redoubled efforts to bring that peace and make it happen.

My generation with MK and the love we feel for Comrade Mandela, it's just indescribable to tell you what we feel for him and his wisdom that made the difference. Not his wisdom, the collective wisdom of him, Sisulu, Mbeki, they chose a path so

novel, so new at that time. In South America and everywhere else where a war was going on it was a war to the death. To embrace an idea of a negotiated settlement where you got to surrender arms first, you know what courage it took to do that? It was so brilliant, it was so brave, there was no precedent like it anywhere in the world.

DS: Who can do that?

YS: And amongst your own comrades everyone is disagreeing with you. It's not as if everyone said, 'That's right, Comrade Mandela, that's a very wise step to take'. Everybody was screaming at him about it. 'This is an un-mandated step, NEC has not approved of it', blah, blah. Thank God for Mandela.

It was a difficult time because if it continued into the '90's, our battle, in my view the Askari tendency would have grown to become the dominant tendency. Assassination or political assassination or State sponsored assassination would have become the order of the day. Trials and all of that would have been out. And in that game we were going to loose, and it would have become a complete war of attrition. They will knock Phila we will knock Raju, they will knock this one, we will knock that one. So the bombing would have becoming indiscriminate, we would have had to have put a bomb in a MaGoo, kill the civilian population, and that we were starting to do. Mistakenly so, but we were starting to do that.

Do you know another commander from another unit, Robert McBride, had bombed MaGoo, but we would have gone down that road as the

attrition got more bitter. If my brother, Mo, was killed I would have bombed, I would have bombed a hotel, I would have bombed the neighbourhood school at which Colonel Robert Shaw's son was. On sports day I would have put the bomb there. We had become so inured as human beings, we had become so cold and blind, do you know what I mean? Because the rest of the population couldn't see the shifting terrain of the battle, but those who were in the ANC's MK, having to endure it, the soldiers were all becoming emotionally dull. We were just like - we were moments away from ripping up each other and the civilian population.

Look at Robert McBride, look at Zondo that had gone in the years before. We all would have become like that. We would have just gone into a killing frenzy, on both sides. So Mandela's direction, to switch the struggle, from arms to negotiations, to switch the tactics of battle, to switch who was in control, because if you continued armed struggle, Magnus Malan was in control. If you continued with arms struggle Askaris were the dominant people. You agree? So by switching the emphasis of the struggle from arms to negotiations, it meant, the dominant personnel is De Klerk and other liberal National Party guys. You agree?

The terrain of battle now is intellectual rather than military. The nature of the fight is how to stabilise your society, how to stop hurting each other. So the whole quality, the whole texture, the whole nature of the debate, the whole manner of war changed fundamentally. We were no more killing each other, we were writing a sharp Constitution.

So, that shift was decisive. The military wing got sidelined, Thabo Mbeki, who represented the Foreign Affairs wing, came to the centre. Good for Thabo Mbeki because he was so eloquent, he was so articulate. It was so much easier to say, 'Comrade Thabo Mbeki, speak to Capital'. He was so gracious and urbane and he was so schooled that Gavin Reilly and Oppenheimer just thought, 'My God, what are we fighting Thabo Mbeki for?'

On the other hand, the military wing had been so demonised, we were like communist dogs who's going to take over the world and enslave the entire nation, we are killers, we will bomb children and so the visual images of Thabo versus the military men, and when you switched the debate the image that was presented to the wide community, and all other communities, were the images of Thabo Mbeki and not the MK soldiers and Communist Party and so on.

So it allowed, then, for the idea of the ANC to be embraced, the idea of trade talks, I mean, negotiations, to begin. We presented ourselves in a very sensible way. It made just such a fantastic difference and to understand the brilliance of what Mandela and his generation's thinking, oh, it was so brave. Comrade Walter Sisulu and Mandela, oh, my God, I hope in the years to come the younger generation will understand what decisive leadership they bequeathed to our country at its most stressful moments.

DS: I hope they will understand, I really do. So I just want to find out, what made you think the National Party would agree to the negotiated settlement?

YS: Well, they had their own framework, that they were going to talk. But we had become masters in negotiation. Remember at the time the Labour Movement was starting and we were negotiating across the economy on wages and so on. We had developed a certain body of experience in the art of negotiation. And that art came to be embodied in Cyril Ramaphosa because he at the time was General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers. I was his counterpart because I was General Secretary of the South African Clothing Textile Worker's Union, or it's Deputy-General Secretary.

Now when they went to the negotiating table at Kempton Park, National Party had a whole lot of ideas, but they were outgunned, they were outmanoeuvred, our counter-negotiating strategy was much better. But on the other hand, we also had to make compromises on our side. You don't think much of the compromise now, we all take it for granted that we've got 9 provinces. Do you know there was a day when we never embraced that idea? There was a day when thousands of people fought and died over that very idea here in KwaZulu-Natal.

You know, now we embrace the idea that we've got a forum, a legislative forum for all the chiefs. In the '80's, thousands of people died because we will not acknowledge the role of chiefs. Now these things we had to compromise on. On property, we thought we were going to nationalise the banks and take all the property back that the white people took from us, all the expropriations we suffered as Indian people, or everyone else suffered,

all the land the white settler's came and took from us, we were going to get it back.

Do you know how hard it was to see the idea of socialism go down the drain, that property was going to be protected, that the civil service, these guys, these Askaris and these torturers in the Security Branch, their jobs was assured. They'd be given pensions. That Judges, the useless Judges who will not defend their people against the tyranny of Parliament, they will get the security of tenure. These were hard compromises that had to be made, that the Executive and everybody will be retained and here you've got your property, you can keep it, languages, hard compromises.

DS: If I may ask, these compromises, after maybe 20-years, do you think we won't see any chaos in the country?

YS: I think we will. I came out of the ANC/MK structure, I came out of the union movement. In the union movement today, we suffer the bitter consequence of a compromise. GEAR is not working for us, thousands of our people are unemployed. Unemployment in our country is at an all time high.

How long will the unemployed be silent? Already there are signs of occupations, occupations in Lenasia, occupations in Cape Town and so on. That's a problem, that. There are signs that unemployed people cannot endure the pain any more. That's a sign.

So you can almost see the tension in COSATU, the South African Communist Party on the one hand and the ANC on the other hand. There's an enormous tension developing. These

things will continue in our society and will have to be addressed.

DS: Before we see something like Zimbabwe happening in this country because I also foresee that too, with one day our kids, or even myself, I'll get tired.

YS: No country in the world can support an unequal society, such as we have. I don't know how long it is now, it's - whatever it is - 10-years. The material conditions of the masses of the country have not got much better.

DS: Okay, I just want to ask you questions on the TRC. Have you ever given a statement there?

YS: Ja, one of the guys who tortured me by the name of Christo Nel, he's an attorney. Well, he qualified as an attorney later and he was applying for admission to the Law Society and then he got admitted as an attorney and then he wanted to come clean and disclose. I suppose he may have feared that he didn't want to be, later exposed in life, or struck off the role or anything.

Well, I shouldn't be unkind, let's say for whatever reason, even if it is reasons of compassion, he applied for amnesty. And as one of his crimes he sighted the fact that he tortured me, so I had to appear before the Commission and recount the events that occurred and so on.

It was quite a cathartic experience. From that moment onwards, I began to rehabilitate myself and get a better handle on detention. Because what had happened to us, we were living in an the underground so long and so on, if I was sleeping and if - my wife once came to wake me up, so she came and like laid her hand on me, it was late in the

night and I instantly got up and grabbed at her neck and I was about to strangle her. I used to display this, so it used to be such a fear of my wife that my son, if he touched me when I was sleeping I would hurt him, or anything. You had just become such an uptight person, you would sleep lightly, you would just - and you would respond in a violent way.

So all these things sort of allowed me to start going for some sort of treatment and do all that. So the TRC was good because we were not going to appear before the TRC and we had no intention of appearing. And called as I was to appear, it helped me, it was cathartic, you know. But we uncovered some most horrific things that happened to our comrades, so - .

DS: Most of the people we have interviewed, some, let me not say most, but some, like they say TRC was a waste of time, look now the people who went forward they haven't yet been repaired, and all that stuff. What's your argument on that?

YS: It may be so that there was no reparation. It may be so that not as many people came forward and applied for amnesty. But in my view it was a compromise. The compromise allowed for some telling of what occurred in our country, some recording of what occurred. A hundred years from now it will be a window to the time we lived in. We may not have a panoramic view of what occurred but we've got this window. Without that window we would have not known a lot. I would not have known how my comrade died, how she was assassinated, how she was tortured. I would not have know that, so I would not have know a lot,

which we do know now. So all of this is a compromise.

I think in later years, I hope the kids, the generation that judges us then, should know that at the time these compromises were made we were militarily weak. We could not win the war. Whoever will tell you in all their bravado, 'We could have won liberation with a matchbox and a tyre', laugh at them. They were not at the forefront of that military war. We could not win. We could not win by staging the strikes as we did because the economy was tired, our own soldiers were tired in the shop stewards.

END OF TAPE 2B

START OF TAPE 3A

YS: There was military fatigue. No war, no struggle can endure for so long that its soldiers become completely weary. You know we didn't have an inexhaustible supply of soldiers.

We were already engaged 15-years, when the time Mandela began to take the line of the negotiated settlement. I was tired, I was bone-weary tired, year in year out, day in day out, we were in the underground. We were already in the underground itself 5-years. The troops all around us were tired.

So if it went on for another 10-years, do you think the same people would have endured?

DS: I don't think so.

YS: No, you were losing your soldiers, some were getting caught, some were getting sent to prison, some were getting assassinated, some were just

giving up, they could not longer, they were too tired. So we were tired. There was a huge amount of battle fatigue. And on both sides, I may say. So I think, and I hope that in years to come when people think about the time and judge it, judge it in the context of the time and the battle that was taking place and be generous in their judgement, rather than harsh. We could have all insisted on no property protection, nationalise the banks, do all of that, but you wouldn't have brought an end of the war. You wouldn't. And we would have suffered as a nation, unbelievably suffered.

I think a negotiated compromise, the negotiated compromise, was good and we got more out of the bargain than the other side. And it created a good basis for a new society to be created.

DS: In retrospect is there anything you would have done differently?

YS: You know, you make many mistakes along the way. I hope those who sort of watch this and if they have to judge the mistakes I made forgive me and accept that I was a younger man then, I was learning about the art of leadership, I was learning about how to wage war and struggle, and forgive me for the errors I have made. And in humility I accept responsibility for the mistakes and the pain I have caused as well.

DS: Okay, Mr Shaik, just the last question, would you like to dedicate this interview to someone?

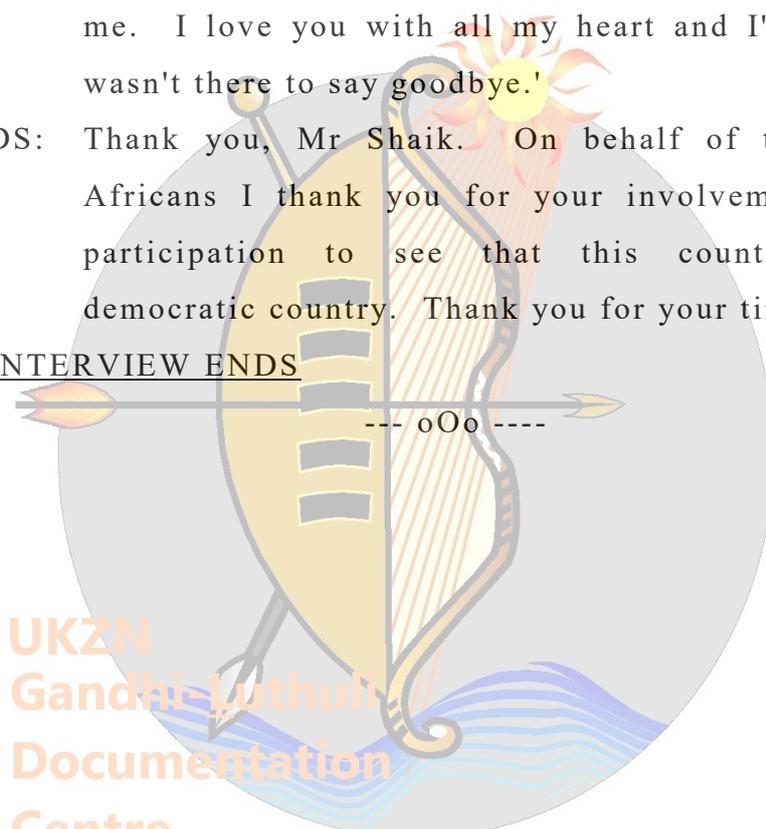
YS: My mum. -

'Mum, I want you to know, I want you to know, Mum, that I really tried to honour your memory, that your death was not in vain, and I'm

very grateful for the fact you awoke my consciousness to serve our community and serve humanity, and if you ever get to see me again I want you to know, Mum, that your death saved me because you took me out at a time when I was going to commit suicide. So by letting me come out you gave me a chance at a second life and I'm very grateful. For all the pain I have caused, forgive me, but thank you for the two lives that you have given me. I love you with all my heart and I'm sorry I wasn't there to say goodbye.'

DS: Thank you, Mr Shaik. On behalf of the South Africans I thank you for your involvement, your participation to see that this country be a democratic country. Thank you for your time.

INTERVIEW ENDS



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