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INTERVIEWEE SONNY SINGH

INTERVIEWER C DE VOS

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ADDRESS FLAT 130
 39 VICTORIA EMBANKMENT
 DURBAN

CDV Okay. Thank you very much for coming to speak with us today,
I am going to touch a little bit on your early life in South Africa
where exactly where you born?

SS Well it was about between 7 and 8km's West what South West
of Durban area called Cato Mana in a colony Cuma it was a sort
of a formal and semi-formal settlement which is especially
where Indians had settled without the permission of the city,
my parents came from the working class back round. My dad
came as a kind of indentured labourer to the province and he
was still very young. The beginning of the last century in other
words the previous century and it was a rather big family. I think
I was the third in all in the family with my parents I think we talk
about family as what about 9.

CDV You had 9 siblings or all together.

SS No with parents we were 9 and children I was about the

We had problems schooling, very few families could in the area
And so I ended up going to Primary School very late in my life
going to a higher primary described than today's higher primary
and was already about eighteen years old.

CDV Eighteen when you finished?

SS Ya, Eighteen when finished primary, late

CDV How old were you when you started?

SS Primary?

CDV Primary

SS I was about eleven or twelve years old and this was in the war period, war 1939 and and you know there was very few schools in the area then although it has a very large Indian population, thirty to forty thousand Indians residing there mostly private homes built by Indian themselves without city government or council finance leasing and the land did not belong to us and we had the Landlord who had not been Indian quite a ruthless guy and that's when my bitterness and my early stages of understanding of oppression started and my family was the harsh treatment meted out against the family. My first taste of oppression was not from the white but from the immediate enemy. I would have seen at that stage in my life was a Indian landlord so as I say, I say schooling was neglected because of poverty and so few schools, but when I was six I had to go um for the job I worked in a club 1957,58

CDV And, um, when you say you finished your schooling at 18 and began it

at 12, were you going to school straight through or was it interrupted by...

SS No there was no interruption at primary school, high school I couldn't go to high school because of cost factor and because we needed you know, my passed away and my eldest brother passed away as well, and there was very much family pressure to meet day to day needs. I went to a high school there uh, um already in '58 '59. I believe I was already getting involved in youth politics and how it came about, this fellows becoming formally involved and so um my understanding and awareness started on a larger scale, I think, two or three years, from 1956.

CDV Is this the time you joined the Natal Indian Congress?

SS Ah, around the period, not immediately 1956 because we had our own problems then because even though I was about seventeen or eighteen years ah we couldn't just leave and go into the cities outside, we were restricted by family pressure and so forth because security and I went to school already in '56 ah there was this big trial taking place in the country. The Treason Trial. And that was a kind of awareness beginning to develop and I began to, not realising then obviously, uh that I was beginning to understand the local dynamics. The level of awareness and standing in the those conditions then, and understanding, so I can talk about our exploitation and oppression today because one has come a long way since then but looking at it in a very rudimentary form I could see, and understand, develop a kind of consciousness and understand the real enemy at that stage for me from day to day was

landlordism and when I look at the and understand and contextualize people suffering and see it was more than just the landlord, landord representing the regime of the period and a kind of bigger picture I could see and the kind of consciousness to began to grow when a trial took place and the arrest of our leaders including Nelson Madela or Walter SiSulu they couldn't understand and see the situation and what was further sharpened consciousness, was when there was a notorious law passed. 1950 the Group Areas and so forth and the eviction of our people, I realised that the landlords were bigger so many whites and kind of an awareness and that is what drove me to the struggle and I joined formally an organisation, Then it was the Natal Indian Congress.

CDV

Just before we get into the NIC, I was wondering when you spoke earlier about your landlord, did you see that as a racial oppression or did you, feel are you speaking more in the racial dimension evolved as you said in a more contextual way?

SS

Well you see if you look at it today, at that time and, if how can I say, we were still in our napkins ah, belly crawling. We didn't understand and that kind of conciousness and the environmental factors and social issues, and the education more important, we only, you know, didn't have the kind of educational exposure as I said earlier were made to move out of the suburbs seven eight kilometres away you know so you can imagine we had a cloistered life.

CDV

When you say your education, was it an all Indian school or ?...

SS

All Indian school, schools were Indian schools, racial at all levels of education. Well if I may say so, I didn't think it

was or don't think it was racial, um , racial exploitation by Indian landlords against the Indians. It was only greed and which was exploitation, it was a class factor, it was a class factor I can say that today because I understand and put it back to that point in time in history.

CDV I see, um when you talk about the Natal Indian Congress in 1956, what lead you to NIC in particular?

SS Well, because, issues as an Indian, I saw myself as a stage because we were still young and understanding of the issues and the dynamics prevalent at that point in time and the Group Areas Act and a lot of other laws that were effecting Indians, right, and there was an organisation in a sense championing the rights of the minorities, in this case the Indian people, a whole lot of other laws were enacted against the Indian population close to other

racial groups in particular African people. Basic human rights were denied as a racial discriminatory law in acted by Parliament I can say that now, you know, in the more articulate and fuller form.

There was an organisation then that was formed by Mark, Mark Andy in 1893 and lead by progressive leadership in the period in the '50's you know the use of Dadoos and Dr Naickers of this world and this was the closest of the organisations one could reach out to and join the organisation for the championing of the rights of the down trodden people, you see, and the legally form of struggle. And that's what took me to the Natal Union Congress

and ofcourse the Youth Congress.

DVC Right, and after your joining, what kind of a role did you come to play in the Congress?

SS Now basically, I didn't play any leadership role, I was young and went searching for the organisation all through town. In fact, no one came to my door and said come recruit with me, I went and knocked on the doors of the office of the Congress and then weekly I used to attend meetings in the city, right at that stage I was already working 1957, 58. And well, the leadership organisation offices were in the city. You know . . .

CDV And, what kind of work were you doing at this time?

SS I was working in a club

CDV A club?

SS Ah, a club, an all white club; ya, a very elite, all white club.

CDV What was that experience like working in an all white club?

SS Well, all white club you know well we have sugar here now and Head of Tongaat Hullett would himself come to the club, Guy Hulletts the managing director, involved and renowned horse trainers and what have you judges would come, in a sense I don't know the obvious exploitation was in terms of the salary and so forth, but we used to make tips and so forth. It was about survival. I had a job, a stable job you know and ya that's it.

CDV Um was your family politically active?

SS No, my family were not politically active, I did not come from a home where they were politically active but raised simple folks

working class, my Dad came down as an indentured labourer.

My Mother was born in South Africa, Durban uh ya.

CDV And your siblings? Were you the most politically involved of your siblings or did other brothers or sister say join the NIC as well?

SS No. No. No. None of them. I was the only active member in politics and no one opposed or my involvement or activity because of course my arrest came later right, my arrest possibly because of my clandestine operations came as a shock to the family.

CDV Right. Where they supportive at that time of your activism, or did you find it difficult to talk about it?

SS No uh, it was legal and protest policies ..

CDV I see, ...

SS It proved its point those campaigns as well as boycotts, high, tense situations, and when I'm giving out leaflets, holding meetings, you know to youth meetings and so forth, conscientising. They did see any threat on me you know, any police or something but then I was involved in a subtle and clandestine way that perhaps will come later you'll ask me about why I joined ANC and MK.

CDV Lets turn to that now, well what did lead you to join the ANC, MK and at which point was there a shift, or was there a shift in your NIC involvement to the MK and ANC.

SS Ya, See I didn't see a contradiction coming from the Indian Congress, coming from the Gandhian Principles of Passive Resistance, defiance campaign and so forth and peaceful forms of struggle. I found my own understanding, at that stage perhaps, when I wasn't so

mature but the fact, if I reflect now, and contextualise it, I found that it were mutually inclusive, you follow my political struggle and my armed struggle, well the thing was it was a violent form of struggle and I explain why it was a violent form of struggle but violent can also be relative. We did not take human lives. We were not, we were particular not to injure. We could damage their property, but to make sure, absolute sure, nobody was injured or, you know, wounded or killed, if you wish.

CDV Just to jump back a second, you mentioned Gandhian in Principles, other than Ghandi were there other thinkers, writers that you had turned to during the conscientising period in your life?

SS Not immediately, not immediately uh I wasn't exposed to any literature situation you know I, it was more in the context of old situation I did not look at beyond our borders of other revolutions outside from the 60's because not much was taking place, I think ah, at that stage other than maybe Cuba, '59 60.

CDV Yeah

SS I thought of situations maybe Vietnam and all, but I mean I wasn't then having international understanding of the global politics but uh suffice to say that Nelson Madela, Nelson Mandela was the inspirational force. Madela's ah secret departure from South Africa and then he went to Algeria for his training and so forth, then he was on a political mission as well to lobby support for the isolation of South Africa and um for new merging African nations to give support and so forth to our cause for freedom in this country and when he came back I was privileged to meet

him in Durban, in one of the homes of a family in Reservoir Hills.

Obviously it was a very highly secretive meeting taken there, and the talk itself was quite inspiring. It was already 1960, 61, you know, and Mandela was arrested in 1962, you know.

CDV Um, this meeting that you're talking about where Mandela spoke, you had already joined the MK?

SS Ya, ya. Ya. Ya. Ya I had already joined MK, I joined MK two months after its formation in about February 1962.

CDV 1962, Lets talk about that, how exactly did that come to pass? Was that a place you went to sign up or did people that you spoke to that you spoke to where talking about it? What kind of ...

SS No it was, it was done in a very subtle, and clandestine manner. Very secretly. Obviously people weren't around, it was done with scouts, like talent scouts or whatever looking for people suitable for that type of work or something.

CDV Ya

SS And I was approached obviously and in the process as I was recruited and became a member of a cell in the Durban Central Area

CDV And how many other people were in the cell with you, roughly?

SS About one, Two, Three, Four. Four.

CDV And with other Indians or a mix?

SS All Indians, all Indians.

CDV Okay, what was your cell charged with, in particular?

SS Alright, I think the cell was a tasked to look for certain targets, targets, again, I must state not where peoples lives are involved, not

office blocks at the times when people are employed or a residence or something, but targets that are stationary, office, railway lines, railway signals, power transmission carriers and government buildings.

CDV And um, how many operations would you say you were involved in prior to your arrest?

SS I think I was involved in major operations, about four, four operations.

CDV Four operations. And what kind of communication did you have outside of the four people in your immediate cell? Did you know what kind of command structure was beyond your immediate unit?

SS Ya, naturally there was a command structure. There was obviously higher levels of command and leadership, what one could describe as regional command, and then you had the district command and then the cells.

Look, to cover their different respected areas, and our units.

CDV How many cells, would you say, were there approximately say, in the Durban area?

SS Durban area, including the townships, there must have been easily about five to seven cells.

CDV Five to seven cells?

SS Ya

CDV Did you know people in the other cells?

SS No, not a clue, at all. Not a clue.

CDV I see. And did you have secret meetings.

SS Secret meetings, we used to go out to practice, how to you know, lay charges, how to do experiments, how to use a timing device, to use watches for timing device, timing devices, um ya.

CDV Was it difficult to maintain that level of secrecy?

SS No, I absolutely no, it was kind of natural.

CDV Uh Huh.

SS Natural because we realised, yes it was a very dangerous mission, just working clandestinely coming home late and so forth, I think we had a sense of value and sense commitment and dedication, which demanded a high sense of discipline. Very high sense of discipline and morality. To execute whatever tasks and mission we had to perform.

CDV So you never had any doubts about what you were doing?

SS No. No . No I had a thing, whilst talking about commitment and a form of struggle, naturally, uh at that stage because of the action and we were the youth, I look at that point in time in history actually there was a bit of adventure in it, because it was action. You're hitting at the enemies. There is action, it is not just theory, leaflets and so forth, meetings. There was a turning point, a turning point, South African's turning point in history was 1960 when the African National Congress was banned.

CDV Right.

SS The premier liberation movement was banned. There was no other avenues of peaceful protest in the country, by the principle premier liberation movement. And, the ANC had senior and many members of Christian faith and other religions and denominations and immediately our first Noble Laureat in Africa, Chief Albert Luthuli, in the way he was giving his blessing, but with a proviso, that no lives were lost and that was a fundamental shift, turning point in our history, 1960, '61, I believe, you know.

CDV So, taking this as our starting point, 1960 / 61, how long was that before you were eventually arrested?

SS See, right, from a peaceful form of struggle, 60's right, the whole Political map of this country began to change, right?

CDV Okay,

SS 1961, December 16th, the armed struggle started throughout the major cities, bomb explosions, right. Mandela leaves the country right? And exiles, remember the senior members began to go into exile to open up Missions abroad. '62 right, Mandela returns from his tour, which I mentioned, the meeting '62. In 1963, there was a spate of bombings and actions. Obviously the government, the regime was very worried, very worried about it, and they had to do something. Then they had to pass vicious laws, had to amend certain laws that were already, security laws that were already in place, example there were amendments to the General Law, Amendment Act; to the Sabotage Act; and then it was further amended to the Ninety days clause, which was introduced to the Sabotage Act, General Law Amendment Act, where in May/ June 63 the first arrest of suspects takes place right, and some people broke down right, due to torture, then other errors began to take place. So I got arrested in August, 7th August 1963.

CDV And who else where you arrested with?

SS I was arrested in Durban, confined to a police station for about a week or so. Went for interrogation; not tortured; you could say torture is torture; it is serious; electric shock; and they make you stand in the one spot for forty eight hours.

CDV That did not happen?

SS I was assaulted. I don't regard assault as a torture. Beaten up, physically beaten up, you know, okay but I wouldn't regards that as a torture, but I have to be honest to myself, right, I didn't speak so they could not get anything from me. I didn't speak.

CDV When you say they couldn't get anything from you, is that because you didn't know the answers?

SS No, because they wanted to know whether I was involved, right, treason. All I said was try me on whatever evidence you got, but I am not going to agree with you that I did it. You say the other colleague from my cell broke down and said I was involved in the operation, well then try me. I am not going to confess to that. If I confess I am implicating myself.

CDV Did you fear that they might torture you?

SS Well I think there was a stage where they tried to scare, scare tactics, right, they realised they had enough evidence, what two months, two weeks later something like that we were all brought to trial, nineteen of us, in October 1963.

CDV Was it held in Pietermaritzburg?

SS Ya

CDV Okay, just quickly, when you said they were trying these scare tactics, what kind, what does that mean?

SS Ya, they lock me up and deny me food and that kind of thing. Just all shock tactics, you see.

CDV Um, now you said some other person in your cell had broken down. Did you know, were all the other people in your cell being

arrested when you were arrested, or had they been arrested as well?

SS Ya, ya. Ya, all of them were arrested, and the arrests took place because one of them was beaten up and spoke. This took place because one of them spoke but we did not speak

CDV When you were brought to trial? What kind of representation did you have? What kind of defence did you put on?

SS The trial was quite interesting because it was then described as one of the biggest trials then in the history of the province and this was Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court because of the Senior leadership of the African National Congress and some of them were prominent trade unionists and also members of the Natal Indian Congress. The accused in this trial of nineteen, so lot of coverage and local newspapers and I think uh fortunately we had a liberal judge sitting in on our trial, Justice Cyril Milne and I remember no his first name now and we had excellent lawyers.

CDV Who represented you?

SS Well, we were then the instructing attorney was Riley Arenstein, of the leading attorneys at that point in time in the South African legal fraternity, and our Senior Council Gerwoods and Wilson who is now a commissioner of the TRC and our advocate who subsequently became a judge, a supreme court judge, and then Theron, Theron Justice Theron who was acting or Attorney General of the province who resigned in protest something or other happened and joined the bar and our lawyers briefed him and he joined our defence team. An Afrikaaner at that stage and

he became one of the leading cross examiners in our trial and became highly respected in South Africa most Senior Council like Bram Fischer and you know no faxes, then telegraphs of congratulation to Theron in breaking a star witness in our trial.

CDV I see and how long did the trial last for?

SS Brought to trial in October I think sixty three and we were convicted end of February Sixty Four.

CDV Okay And your conviction what was your sentence

SS Ten years

CDV Ten years on Robben Island. How did you feel when you heard that?

SS You know ah, it didn't scare me but if you ask me why I can't tell you, I didn't feel cold or anything right because it was such a kind of a script with us, a kind and a unity, a unity of purpose right, and comradeship and that we were together despite of the sentence of ten years or twenty years we said no we won't spend to much time in prison because we are sure of what we are fighting for and it is a just cause. And I think that was what kept our spirit and quite inspired. This regime will not last out you know, ya, uh that was an immediate reaction, but when we went to prison of course I can talk for myself I cant talk for each one nor a collective opinion, I realised that the condition in prison was quite frightening.

CDV Right, just before we because I want to talk in more depth about Robben Island but I am just curious. You speak about that comradeship and purpose, when you did find out that a comrade

of yours that had been tortured, had informed which lead to yours and others arrests, did you feel bitter? Did you understand? Did you, where you angry, where you prepared for that possibility?

SS Ah, ya, when we were being, what do you call it, before when we were being recruited 61, 62 said there was possibilities that people could be strong as steel and possibilities that the human factor of people breaking down and so forth.

CDV Ya.

SS And uh we never had the kind of experience where certain laws could be laid down you know, what would happen if you speak, actions what will happen. What the law will do, what the organisation will do.

CDV Right

SS Speaks it becomes a collaborator, pimp, a witness we didn't at that stage visualise that because the point was we were still young then and learning for we had never experienced anything, so this was a first time for something like this so when it happened it came as a shock. We had to adjust and adapt very fast. Right, we had to close in you know, close in and give each other strength and that's what kept us going was unity as I said earlier you know and how you deal with this honestly you know there are people who chucked those people out either isolating them, or possibilities of getting rid of them or dealing with them thoroughly you see.

CDV So how old were you when you were off on Robben Island?

SS Twenty three

CDV twenty three, my age and uh lets talk about your first few months when you were there, what do you remember most?

SS The first moments on arrival on Robben Island I remember when we left Leeukop Prison from Jo'burg, Johannesburg the warder said, "No man you are going to like a picnic island compared to the main land prison." So we were a bit excited about it. We are going to Robben Island, wow, Robben Island you know Mandela was there, already convicted '62, been there five years. When our trial was in progress Mandela is tried and Rivonia people they were in a trial so the trial was going on so you know ...

CDV Simultaneously

SS Simultaneously, so okay we arrive in Robben Island and the days come, the second day the second week and so forth. The conditions and the treatment eat you out it was horrible. We were seeing in our youth first time this kind of exposure talking about general conditions, primitive, you know harsh ...

CDV A little back we were speaking of Robben Island and your feelings for the first few months there.

SS Ya, you see as I said we were young, some of us, two or three or us ...

CDV Yeah

SS One guy must have been about twenty two, twenty one, twenty two

CDV So you were on the younger side of your ...

SS Ya, and uh they were out to deal with us Physically, psychologically and otherwise

CDV Who is they?

SS The regime, in prison you know, the guards

CDV The guards

Ss They are part of the whole system hey

CDV Sure,

SS The food, the medical side, the bedding side, and the working conditions were terrible and on top of that torture, assault.

CDV Where you tortured?

SS I wasn't tortured but the working conditions and stuff I could describe was torture, a form of torture right, all this and then the climatic factors because in Winter it is very harsh the conditions there. The island is flat there is no protection there and the island is very cold, in 1964, I still remember, South Africa had experienced its worst winter in thirty six years, 1964, and we had very minimum clothing, no underwear, no underwear we had to just use a prison uniform and uh black prisoners were not given pants, right, they were given shorts in winter, shorts right in those conditions and its really ugly, ugly the treatment, the discrimination we were all non white, non white prisoners. African Indian and coloured prisoners and of course African was the most right. I am talking about political criminals, mixed up with criminals, hardened criminals. Somehow South Africa's most hardened criminals were there. So that was also another negative element against us. So what was a torture, where the prisoners were brutally assaulted? Brutally assaulted. Right form of torture. We were punished where we were denied food some

days for the whole day, ok and just general conditions were terrible. Remember I talk just for myself, the wheel barrows were loaded right up full and to push the wheel barrow, iron wheel barrow in the sea sand, it won't move and the man will beat you up on your back with batons this is 1964, this went on for three four years. Only due to pressure, hunger strike, protests and so forth, did situations begin to improve slightly you know but you know like a fundamental shift. It wasn't like a fundamental shift in terms of diet, bedding or any of the conditions I explained earlier.

CDV Did you maintain a sense of hope when you were going through all of this?

SS See I would be lying, I don't want to now be interviewed here to give the impression of a hero, we are human beings and we also have strengths and weaknesses. At the moment we are frightened, not the kind of feeling that ran at any stage in my ten years, that ay I must compromise and talk to the enemy and ask forgiveness, you know when you ask forgiveness and say please forgive me I won't do it again. That kind of thought never ever entered in my head, never in my ten years you know.

Why? Because again as I mentioned earlier during the course of the interview, we were still very young the level of the understanding and the politics and cautiousness was still very low but five, six, seven years apart then eight years you become more mature and you begin to close in but close in each others friends, solidarity you know and care for each other. Never mind, we will win in the end,

kind of thing right. So there was an inner strength the spiritual side of it as well that we should overcome kind of thing right, plus for in a romantic way. But then again, the conditions that meted out, one was the ideal the other being the conditions on top but having said that in no way was there a kind of shame, there was a kind of weakness, when we embarked on a hunger strike we went full cause Hunger strike. When we said we'll not go seven days without eating, we went without food for seven days, not one of us shirked and said no I can't manage, that kind of thing. So also a sense of unity and tremendous solidarity and then we were further encouraged after Madiba Mandela was sentenced with the kind of support we were getting you know. Sure it was the human factor the weaknesses amongst some of us, and then there was political divisions within the prison as well. Right, within the political groups if one political organisation, say the ANC go on a hunger strike the other one will drag its feet and say no we are not going to stop eating and we you know had these kind of problems. See when these guys are traitors and they are betraying you know, your principles and this kind of thing

- CDV What was the longest hunger strike you've been on?
- SS I think the longest was I think most most must have been about five or six days.
- CDV Five or six days, there are just a couple of passages I was reading in Mandela's book about his time on Robben Island that I wanted to read briefly hear your thoughts on the issue of hunger

strikes and also the communication of prisoners. He says “through a plastic wrapped note hid in a food drum we learnt in July 66 that the men in the general section had embarked on a hunger strike to protest of the poor conditions

SS Ya

CDV The note was imprecise and we did not know when the strike had started and what exactly it was about, but we would support any strike of prisoners for whatever reason they were striking. Word was passed among us and we resolved to negotiate a sympathetic strike beginning with our next meal.” Right, is that the particular strike you were speaking of?

SS Ya. Ya ya ya

CDV What strikes me is the way he describes the communication between prisoners.

SS Ya Ya I will come to that, I will come to that. As we had to devise means of keeping in touch with the leadership. One of them was in plastic packets smuggled notes and sink it into the hot porridge, one of the things. More other subtle forms I mean sophisticated were shoes.

In shoes. In shoes that are broken and stitched like messages, and newspapers. Like, I was responsible for the collection and collation and distribution of news for about eight years we were not allowed to read newspapers, you were punished severely. The whole idea in the exercise was to cut us out the rest of the world to dampen our spirit, our moral so you get used to. It gets our moral high and they didn't like that you know, even the Farmers Weekly, the English Economist was censored you know. We had ways and means of getting

newspapers at one stage we managed to even have a radio, and ofcourse we had to find a way to switch on for the news at the Cape of Good Hope news, or Springbok news which was the National Broadcaster but we managed to smuggle this news from warders' homes, the radio, and we had to get criminals whom we politicised, you know we won them over.

CDV So who was ...?

SS I mean criminals right, won them over and they managed to smuggle radios, and newspapers and old magazines that they had with political news as an example I used to subscribe to the one magazine. The Economist, the English Economist and then they realised we were getting the news. They stopped the subscription, they realised Farmers Weekly. I mean Farmers Weekly was stopped as well by security and how they got to know about it was through informers they had informers the old informers there.

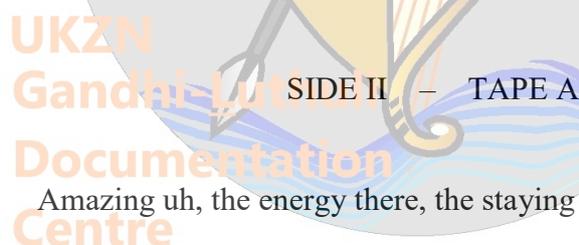
CDV There is another passage he reads, "as I have already mentioned I found solitary confinement the most forbidding aspect in line. There is no end and there is no beginning> There is only ones own mind which can begin to play tricks, was that a dream or did it really happen, one begins to question everything, did I make the right decision was my sacrifice worth it? In solitary there is no distraction from these haunting questions. But the human body has an enormous capacity for adjusting to trying circumstances. I have found that one can bear the unbearable if one can keep ones spirit strong even if ones body is being tested. Strong convictions are the secret of one

surviving deprivation, your spirit can be full even when your stomach is empty.' I was wondering if you were in solitary confinement?

SS No I wasn't in solitary confinement for long period of time, Just a short period three days, three days, ya. I don't think more than ya not more than three days. Ya, nothing, Ya nothing.

CDV Can you identify with what he says though about your mind

SS Ya, Ya, Ya. Amazing, amazing I think again I think the qualities which will depend on the individual again, depending on the individual the group he was in, seven or eight of them, these are the men, the leaders who would steal and tempered by struggle had a long history, they were already there, what, twenty twenty five years history of struggle when they were convicted in 1963, 1964. They became active in the early 40's so you looking at twenty, twenty five years.



SS Amazing uh, the energy there, the staying power and the kind of invincibility of the human spirit against the force of darkness, you know the human spirit, the triumph, you know, yes sometimes you went without food, or some, many of our own people from our own section, general section were punished and amazing they had to overcome that you know, a kind of torture in isolation, deprived of food. You know, I don't think and to come out of that because you know I mean their level of understanding of the issues

and um the politics and the morality, you know sure, uh some moments are frightening. You know, frightening, but again I think uh the realising there was a positive, uh what do you call, uh what do you call, what they were fighting for was positive and noble you know and finally in ten twenty years victory was in sight.

CDV Did you hate the guards on Robben Island?

SS In initial period I would say because they were vicious, sadistic and in a kind of thing they wanted provoke you for your blood to boil, yes some of us, many of us were very sort of provoked you know in terrible ways, in some moments when they were, violent responses put up a provocation and we always told our staff and the leadership won against falling prey for this kind of provocation. They were really thoroughly deal at you, humanity right. You moment one or two shouts you are only human, that helps for this provocation they wanted to react and they are severely punished, assaulted and put in straight jacket and isolated. Sent to the isolation zone. And I think by and large, an amazing level of patience and tolerance. The tolerance level was amazing where we didn't fought for them and it angered them and and and what do you call it we provoked them, they were taxing our patience and we didn't fall for that.

CDV Was there a leadership struck, excuse me, a leadership structure amongst the political prisoners on Robben Island, say you were speaking Mandela's group, did you have a group to speak of?

SS Ya. Ya there was a leadership, in the general section like big cells. Each cell had a leadership, right you know, then you had a section

leadership and then the over all the general section prison and leadership will call a DC. Disciplinary Committee. Right. The leadership were Mandela and them they obviously had the Comities themselves. Also in the book they talk about it.

CDV And was this formed by the prisoners themselves?

SS No. Political prisoners. Each organisation had there own leadership, not generally.

CDV I see

SS The ANC had there own leadership.

CDV Right, speaking of the ANC leadership was that like when you got there and you began to learn a bit that was something that had been developed already by the ANC prisoners on the island

SS Ya Ya

CDV And then you kind of fell in line with

SS Ya Ya

CDV Mandela also speaks of how Robben Island came to be known as like Robben Island University. Did you study there?

SS Ya Makana University, ya we uh, many prisoners studied there I told you earlier in the beginning that I had not completed my matric. I went to primary school and I did night studies. I didn't go far in the night studies but I enrolled for matric there and ofcourse I didn't complete my matric there because I was punished and my studies were taken away. I was punished and then we were caught with a newspaper, as I told you this was a serious offence if you've got a newspaper.

CDV Right

SS And so I was just reading uh, I was specialising in Russian and French literature, all the Russian and French classics I read in prison there.

CDV Who did you like the most when you were reading?

SS Well I mean I like Tolstoy and Gorgel Gorky Mapusant, and the one of the French writers, Hugo, Victor Hugo. Um, ya.

CDV Um, a lot of people talk about how ten years they look back and time flies, do you think that way about your time in Robben Island

SS Ya, Ya

CDV Or was it every day, ten years?

SS No, no the first few years was very very long years, the first three four years because of the conditions but I think after four / five years of incarceration, time was flying, talking for myself, talking for myself, I don't know the general rise, people have their own ideas, we became very active in sports, that was also quite a struggle in its own right.

We had to protest and we had to fight for sports. But as I said early I was in charge of news, so I always knew what was happening in the world situation. The problem in Africa, the Middle East conflict, the Six Day war in the Middle East then ' 73 _____ October '63, June '67 the Six Day War conflict al the history, I was very active mentally. Preparing notes, smuggling them to leadership reading my novel and so forth, time was flying for me and I used to go give news to the Group of the next days, number of group come back in the evening, give news to our people there the ANC group in cells, and then continuing with whatever newspaper we smuggled. Write them

in toilet papers until ten eleven at night, the whole night the cells lights were on. We don't switch off our light, so you know the days are flying . Weekend come, Friday, Saturday sport, Sunday sport. So you know even though I did not study my days were flying. My years were flying, my months were flying.

CDV Um, what kind of contact did you have with your family during this time?

SS My, my, my first visit was from my Mother, August '64. For my Mother we were graded in our groups, D group. D group we were allowed one visit in six months. So my Mother know enough contact visit, so my Mum came over for the most vicious and terrible month. Not prison, because of the weather conditions, rain and wind and cold weather. '64 turned into the coldest year in thirty six years in that part of South Africa experience

CDV Ya

SS Ya, so I had contact, my sister couldn't visit me because of the age, it was more once or twice some friends visited me but it was more my Mother what visited me.

CDV How did it feel to see your Mother only once.

SS Quite, well um difficult, it was very emotional ya, semi-sealed condition cut-off.

CDV Okay, you were released in 1974, correct? Your ten years

SS '74 Ya

CDV Okay, when you left the island, what were you feeling? You are 33 now

SS Not now,

CDV Ya, at '74 you were released

SS Ya, ya I am Sixty Three now, a good few years later good years later, fast, believe me, goes fast

CDV Goes fast

SS Very fast, I am seventeen years up in the world now. It was quite, quite touchy hey, we were called, we were playing sport, pack our bags, things belongs and get to the cells where Mandela and then were confined. We were kept there for a couple of hours and then taken to the reception, personal belongings and some money we had there you know and then to the boat ferry to the mainland prison. And then from there we were taken to island prison by vehicles, uh transport vehicles. It was very touchy leaving there, leaving your friends , colleges and comrades behind, and it was very touchy also, we were fortunate, Mandela and all were there saying goodbye and all. Very touchy and emotional.

CDV Were you scared when you left the island?

SS No, no

CDV No?

SS I wasn't scared, prison hardened one, hardened one in a positive way. Not that it turned us into beasts or animals or anything or things though. The conditions were barbaric, we turned the whole island around, they tried turn us to animals, but we turned it around to become better human beings. You know

CDV When you, when you left Robben Island did you return home?

SS Ya

CDV Did you work for that period afterwards?

SS When I returned home I was here in Durban Central Prison, I was confined for a few days and they told my family that they would take me home, the police, they lied of course so when they released me here, so when I got out the gates opened, the prison gates, there was nobody there and I had no belt, so I had to go to the shop and buy a belt and ofcourse with the new sizing and I bought a the newspapers. Sunday Times, Sunday Express all the newspapers, there was no hurry to go home, I went looking for a friend's office, Phyllis Naidoo. Found her office, uh quite an emotional reunion, uh meeting, and she sends a klerk or secretary to go buy me underwear. It was quite something very touching. I had my first taste of curry.

CDV Never tasted so good?

SS Yeah, wow divine.

CDV Did you feel free?

SS Ah, yeah there was a sense of freeness, it was a kind of, a kind of liberty out of prison, you and society are meeting people, where you are cut off from the world. Free to talk to who you have to meet, your stories and they're meeting you. It was quite emotional and a lot of excitement, quite traumatic, quite traumatic. Ya then, I found a way, I got a lift home the back way house arrested, you know the old tin town?

CDV Yes

SS A home of mine made of wood and iron, there an ah quite, quite a

return you know reunion of the family and the landlord. Landlord still there, he had a factory making upholstery chairs, I remember my first experiment of sabotage was to burn his factory. With a stick of match.

CDV It felt good?

SS Yeah, burn his factory before we attack the enemy. Evil, he was the enemy.

CDV Now, you were only, before you went in to Exile in Mozambique, you were only home for a short period of time, is that right ? A few months?

SS I got home 28th February or 29th, leap year I think '74, and I was Placed under house arrest, I had to report twice a week to the police station and couldn't work here, couldn't work there, couldn't enter any academic premises, printing phase or factory. So many people to communicate, I had a temporary job at the medical centre in town.

The first black, all black medical centre in South Africa, I repeat 1974, the first black medical centre that was opened in South Africa,

April '74. Black in the sense, not black black because all the doctors were Indians there. Right. Not black in the general sense. All Indian doctors because there weren't hardly any black doctors, black, just to reach there you were lucky, and in Durban area, there were mostly Indian doctors there, I worked there I was doing bookkeeping and so forth, at that point still a political activist trying to organise the nurses and secretary's to the unions.

CDV Did you resume contact with the MK at this time?

SS No, there was no, uh good question, there was no sort of structure I don't believe, if there was any structure, I could've known or be made to me, I had to look around, there was plenty of lull, active political vacuum and because in the '60's the Black Consciousness movement sprung in South Africa. In '73 '74 the errors took place. The prime of the leadership was arrested for they also suffered a crippling blow. '74 it is a pre- '76 soldiers uprising. '74 Quite traumatic, historical development starting to take place in Southern Africa with the liberation of Mozambique and Angola.

CDV Right.

SS Where it had a dramatic effect on our people right, inspiration, and things started uprising as not to be seen in isolation in the context of the changes and how it inspired our people. Other than the problem with Afrikaans. Afrikaans was maybe a spark I would think, you know, although you know forced down the throats of the children - protest with the students. I think people were sort of you know, inspired, agitated and the conditions and then you know they feel the country liberated we can do it. You know then they had stones, and stones and so forth and petrol bombs and so forth and use the enemies canons, that's why they were mowed down you know. The thing is that I begin to look at I realise that I needed to do political work, and get involved with community projects. The first levels of organising people for power to do community work and a period level of concioustising people on issues that were effecting them immediately. I mean in the Indian township alright I could work

in the African township but mind you I said I was placed under house arrest, so I begin to do this kind of work, what a re the issues, the bread and butter politics . What the issues, the rent issues and so forth. And I created a self help of health project, to get funding from business, professional people to create a kind of self help project, create a free clinic aided, and I planned a kind of clinic where Doctors could come and give free medical attention, a child doctor, a gynaecologist and a GP, so I had to recruit them and go talk to doctors, and pharmacists, The pharmacists and the pharmacy will give full support on was none other than the Receiver of Revenue Commissioner, Praveen Gordham. He was the one to contact because he was a pharmacist at King Edward Hospital. He gave full support in that situation. And some progressive lawyer so that kind of structure created in Chatsworth.

CDV In Chatsworth

SS Ya. The same time whilst I was doing that I began to look around how they were looking around MK form. I began to do the same thing, who I could recruit for the underground. There was work, legal work community work, legal clinic and so forth and we sent out the underground structure for armed struggle. You know I was also busy doing that. So the second man in the tax office there, I recruited, ya. The chap that was involved there, national head of investigations was a guy I recruited from the township, an Indian guy. I recruited, so ...

CDV So from this, your community organising, how did it come to pass

that you went into exile on Mozambique?

SS Okay, as I was under the house arrest there was section 10, clause, General Amendment Act, uh, where they put you out of circulation for one year detain you. Most of them they detain you in Modder B. If you have interviewed others they have may already told you that they were detained at Modder B. Prison in Jo'burg, Section 10. Out of Circulation. So I realised that, I just had the sense that the dragon was closing in on me. The enemy was active and I think they had informants behind me.

CDV You do?

SS I think I was also travelling every morning, I was living with my sister in Chatsworth and travelling by bus from Chatsworth to town. And I was travelling the bus with a friend and this friend happened to be an informer I did not know he was recruited and working for the Special Branch and they couldn't pin me obviously, right you know, so but you know, I didn't try to indulge him or recruit him. Just talking in general there, I should talk loudly, I had no hesitation we were in a bus so people could hear we were talking politics, issues, loudly although I was placed under house arrest, I am travelling the bus you can't accuse me of an interesting meeting. I wasn't addressing them in a cautious organised way, I used to talk loudly for some of the passengers. You know Political Education.

CDV They knew what they were in for ...

SS We had to find forms of teaching, issues, tackled issues that are

Concrete, not abstract issues you know. Trifle issues

CDV So fearing that you were going...

SS Right, my informer and my colleague ...

CDV So um did you, you came to the decision that you needed to leave the country?

SS Ya, ya, I left Christmas morning,

CDV Christmas morning

SS 1976

CDV And uh, were you receiving the assistance of ANC underground?

SS No, No, Ya Ya , I got assistance of ANC underground, comrade who assisted me is no more, late, he was kidnapped in '86. '86 from Swaziland and killed. The comrade who took me and another colleague of mine from Natal border to Swaziland Christmas evening

CDV Christmas evening.

SS We left Durban, they picked me up 2 in the morning, I remember Telling my sister we are having the last supper.

CDV You did tell her, I read in the ..

SS She didn't understand.

CDV She didn't understand.

SS She didn't understand what last supper mean't.

CDV It was an illusion, I am reading some articles here about your family after you went into exile, your Mother talking seemed very upset because you missing at the time, so obviously you , other telling your sister that one comment, was it hard to not tell your

family that you were leaving, did you feel relieved?

SS

You see, you have to understand, I was detached from my family for ten years, in a sense that prison made us very hard, hard even to human beings, loving and being treated to your immediate family, I loved my Mother very much. My Mother was supportive of me all the way, even when I got out of prison, she was aware that I was involved in something but she did not know what I was involved in, all she said, 'Take care, I don't want you to go back to Robben Island, whatever you doing, take care.' I always went back and used Ghandi as a guiding star to inculcate that kind of spirit to my Mother you know, in a way of, in a way of conscientising as well, issues and so forth. She understood in her own way, she understood, uh and gave me that kind of support, that spiritual support and that, naturally any other Mother would feel scared and a lot of things she changed here, from other Mothers whose loved ones were away in prison either the children or the husbands were in prison and hear how they went through life and torture and so forth. You know its that kind of fear in that uh uh, suspicion remains. But she was always supportive, she knew people used to come meet me at home and in our house and she knew very well the laws that I wasn't allowed visitors after six, and people used to come meet me and my contact and so forth. She would look from the upper window and so forth and look and say "Be careful".

CDV

Did you have contact with your Mother and family when you were

in exile?

SS No, no, in years no, I obviously couldn't come home to the funeral of my Mother when I was in Maputo, when I got the news that she had passed away, they knew I couldn't come even if uh I had known when she passed away, I couldn't come then and there, but I only knew months later after she passed away, but at one stage my brother and sister visited me with uh, my nephew and nieces. They visited me in Maputo.

CDV How did it feel to be out of South Africa when you were living in Mozambique?

SS See, I as I said there was quite an inspiration the liberation of between Mozambique and Angola, I remained for a short period of time in Maputo, and then I was sent to Angola, and from there I went to Germany, East Germany on training, three month course, you know and then I came a member of the commands.

CDV The Commands.

SS The Commands structure, Natal Command based in Maputo _____ with the Deputy President of the country.

CDV That was uh, Zuma

SS Zuma

CDV Zuma with the chair person of that structure,

SS Ya, ya

CDV How did you find the leadership?

SS Zuma's leadership was, Zuma's was I must say Robben Island.

CDV Right

SS Different cells, also part of the leadership in Robben Island, a man with not much academic back round. Amazing qualities of understanding, issues, logic you know, what he says, remarkable and so fast its phenomenon without not even a decent education. A standard eight education _____ he couldn't really read or write when he was arrested, he learn't to read and write in prison, literally read and write in prison you know in that short space of time, political and _____ even science literature, human sciences, uh historical or development of man, from man to the present day authorities, there was very experiences colleges amongst us who understood history, and able to understand history in a very remarkable way. We had many people like Harry Gwala who was a very prominent person. You must come to the leadership in exile, I worked under him, who was a chair person and I was one of the commanders in political command. We were part of the collective and chain of command,

CDV Did you enjoy the work you were doing in the capacity in Mozambique?

SS I don't know about enjoying, it was very challenging, after all our training and so forth it was quite challenging in how we put the training we received, how we applied to our conditions. Very challenging and quite exciting as well.

CDV Other have spoken about the recruits in Mozambique and Angola about the violence perpetrated on a lot of border countries by the SADF as a way of stabilizing the ANC's leadership outside of

South Africa, was that a reality for you in the work you were doing? Any experiences of bombing by the SADF?

SS Serious bombs of Mozambique were '80, '81. Matola bombs
Where a number of our colleague's and comrades were killed.
Senior commanders were killed, and one or two of them were
already very close colleagues of mine, were killed. One of
them I was very close to, killed in a raid '81 I think, January '81.

CDV Was this the raid that Krish Raviel was killed in?

SS I am talking about him,

CDV Could you just, we spoke to his brother and I am interested.

SS You spoke to his

CDV Nandilal. Do you recall working with Krish?

SS Krish did not work directly uh, during the period with my command
because we came out a couple of years later, tuition, but we had
recruited him already, before he left country. Krish was recruited
by one of the commanders left by the name of, Ivan Pillay right.

He was a very soft spoken, hardly used speak and he was a excellent
mathematician. Excellent maths, right, uh, was highly disciplined,

and I think any amount of torture I take I would have given my life,

Krish in a sense, you know, he would be absolutely trust and he just
wouldn't speak. He just had that kind of character you know. I think,
subsequently in the second or third command of Natal, Krish when
he was killed.

CDV What kind of, how did the loss of using comrades that way?

SS See, it was, just this attack and killing of senior and high quality

leadership, chaps with a lot of abilities and creative skills and beside also academic skills, you would ask what they are all about and his leadership came out post the Soweto generation. Right, and Zuma and I were of the older generation, right the '60 generation. I mean ah, ya a kind of fusion, respect for one another.

CDV Ya

SS And there was a very strong sense of leadership and collective spirit

But this incident of the first incursions and raids that took place was raged with all this ferocity, viciousness you know, just catching anyone and bombarding them. Just to kill and maim kind of thing right. And deeds were quite like a body blow, quite an assault to the leadership and morale. I think it would be correct to state to be more honest and open about it, it took us some time to recover from that blow, you know, you can't just create a leadership overnight. It takes time to create good leadership, command, commanders. Leaders, it is not just simply about taking a chance, you have a few hours in training on how to use a AK47, anybody can do that, but a commander to give leadership, the skills of leadership, coming with values and morality takes a long time.

Discipline, that takes a long time, and in that sense, you know one must contextualise it. Say that it was a big blow to our leadership, the raid.

CDV Now those attacks stepped up even into the later 80's.

SS Ya, ya , ya, there were a few more attacks that took place and I can't remember when the next attacks, lost o e i think was '80,

'81. January '81. That was after Sasol attack, refinery attack designed the attack in December 1980, January the raid took place, you know, December '82 with a raid on Botswana, then the subsequent attacked with airforce, jets attacked the logistics and so forth and the process they were told to attack the base, they attacked the kindergarden and a jam factory in Maputo.

CDV With this step up of violence what lead to you having to leave Mozambique?

SS Very interesting uh, you say stepping of violence from South Africa, forces, security forces. On the contrary, on the contrary, it is just the other way round. The raids that took place the enemy tried to kill our spirit and, destroy our networks, and infiltration route, destroy our logistics, to attack our all levels, leadership and I mentioned our logistic routes and kill our morale. Spirit, didn't work, didn't work. On the contrary the activities and actions of the army doubled, tripled in South Africa. Lets talk about Durban, Durban was described as a bomb city by the Minister Of Justice, the provisional law and order. Bomb city.

So it multiplied, bomb attacks and so forth because now the enemy, you know, you know when you attack, you try to attack an animal how it reacts. I am not saying you are an animal I am saying that the level of actions and also the level of professionalism right, increase and improved right and security. And also the high levels of infiltration forced into our

ranks and command levels and so forth. Right and that was also a big set back for us okay, now when we were expelled because of the attacks the pressure did amount on front line states and in particular Mozambique. And that's why during the height of the total strategy with PW Botha, they mounted silly attack blockades and so forth, mounted operations other than using surrogate forces like MNR, or direct South Africa security forces, Maputo and so forth, Mozambique being poor with weak infrastructure and so forth they had to , they had no choice! They had to talk to the leadership, saying this is the situation there was a common understanding reached between both leadership. We had to retreat. And I believe the retreat was a temporary retreat, and also there was a surge, a forward surge in to the forward lying areas, Swaziland and also into the country by this situation, okay? Heads began to roll in Swaziland, because Swaziland is a small country one route. One main road, so there too was a problem, security, how much can you hide, so we also suffered there, but uh, he, the retreat was short lived because after I wasn't expelled from Maputo first retreat with expulsion took place so while, interestingly we had to be creative and I became chairman of the Military Committee. I was placed as the Chairman of Military Committee in Maputo. But the more weapons infiltrated South Africa after the accord, right. They put so many check points and so forth. Mozambican soldiers were starving and so forth and there you

had the spirit of comradeship with South Africans and they would see us there crossing with our vehicles and so forth, you follow, you see now I've got a whole, you know case of weapons, AK47's and so forth to get passed, I will just give them a packet of cigarettes cause the guy got no smoke and pass through borders. I go to the airport, and a whole lot of consignment of weapons coming through from Angola, give the guy a bottle of scotch, there and he pass through the whole bag there, not checked at customs. You see there are many ways.

CDV Yeah, right, um just to switch gears for a moment, um and look at the other side, you said that the priority of MK was to attack state structures not the loss of human lives and not attacking civilians. Obviously, as a part of that civilian life was lost, I am just right now thinking of the Esplanade Bombing

SS Right, okay I knew you were going to come to that.

CDV I just wonder what you would say to those who lost family members, um in violence that was related to the ANC inspired,

SS Okay, okay, see there whole, 80 period after the liberation of Mozambique and so forth, thousands of students began to leave and joined the ranks of the MK situation right and came the total strategy of the regime and the brutality of killing people in detentions in South Africa. Massacring of students in Soweto and so on and so forth, with such ferocity and so forth right, no care with. We had to also plan things in our own structure and so forth, you confront the regime now. We didn't put, want to put

bombs in the white suburbs, to put bombs in the white suburbs or supermarkets and so forth. We didn't send suicide bombers like you're seeing today right, that kind of action. Where we now realised we had an open warfare with the regime. There is a war going on, I think there is no apologies about it, right, because the enemy pushed us to a level, to that situation. So we are preparing at a higher level

of warfare now, open engagement and where bombs going to go off like in

the built up area, built up areas where enemies structure were. Lets say, lets

give you a concrete example , South African Military Head Quarters, or

Airforce Head Quarters in Jo'burg, Pretoria. A bomb was there, a car bomb

there, when staff where coming out airforce personal, we had war on them.

Four half past four, five o' clock the bomb goes off, a number of airforce personnel gets killed. But in between our splinters and so forth, injured civilians is the cost of the warfare. You get caught in the crossfire.

The Esplanade bomb here, right here, that bomb was not mean't for civilians. An army bus was going to pass by, army bus to pass by, so prematurely the bomb went off, prematurely and ordinary people got caught in the cross fire, it happened to be a radio journalist's, brother and his wife, and his wife happened to be killed. A tragedy,

we make our humble apologies and we did apologies before the

TRC to the families right, ofcourse, it was intercepted, and I

don't blame him for not accepting it, right, you look at it in

the broader context to, if you compare our situation with a lot

of other areas, other countries and situations, we had minimal

deaths in this country. That is for celebration. Again it gives, it

tells you the moral security of the leadership of the liberation movement under the command of Mandela's Oliver Tambo's and so forth, we could resolve these conflicts to bloodshed being spilled least, right, indeed some of the bombing which took place were highly emotionally-charged, you see now we were taking these bombs to the white areas with too many Blacks are dying,. It was, I don't know if the interest was, you have to look at it at that point in time when the situation demanded it, the pressure mounted, the black, the whole lot of security forces were sent to the black townships. Shooting at random, killing children, students, right, detention kind of thing. So they said we will take this thing to the white areas. But you could give me one house of attack, I don't know. The Amanzimtoti bombing of Zondi, Zondo, Andrew Zondo there was this response, emotional, it wasn't a command to the best of my knowledge. A command came from Lusaka or Maputo screaming, this cap who handled Zondo, who laid down, executed, he responded to the spirit of the moment, desperate to look for a target right, there following Maseru attack were our people were killed, he respond and goes to put a bomb in the ice-cream place where ice-creams are sold situation, in a dirt bin or something. I think people were injured and killed, one or two. I don't know exactly, I can't remember. Right, situation. Very isolated incident. No where in our minutes of the Military Committee, Head Office of PMC was there anywhere seen an agenda where this should have been targeted,

exactly even like the bar, the Magoo's bar. Magoo's Bar bombing, Robert McBride, come on, Magoo's Bar was frequently used by Army Offices. Army offices used to frequent the bar. In that situation, okay, situation. Like how, how the IRA was targeting British officers and so forth. I just give you an example, they're looking, they're always on intelligence reconnaissance, checking, so I think right, in the middle of McBride bombing was checked, obviously counted the area, how many officers, hey, visited. And that bomb went off in that situation, unfortunately again there were some innocent lives lost. If you put it there, the balance, how many whites die, how many blacks died. Its like, I think zero, zero in the figures of that situation. Interesting, my opening the marks spot when I joined MK we were, one time and again, never to take human life. Always check your point and double check it, take an example, we were going to blow up an office of an Indian puppet agent, was a stooge of the apartheid regime.

CDV

Was a business man' ?

SS

A business man in Gale, an office right

CDV

Okay

SS

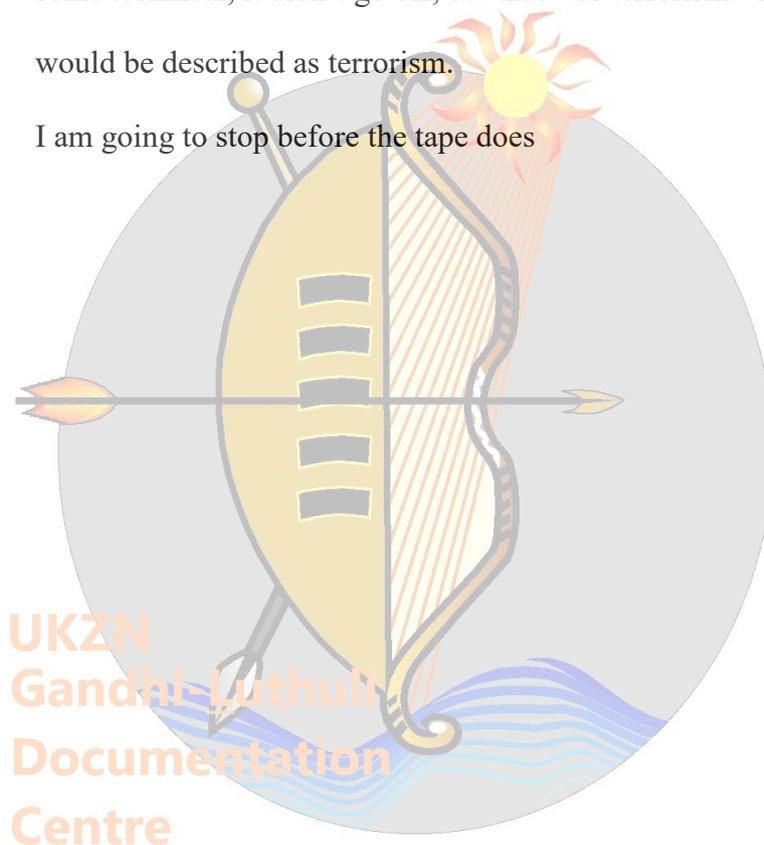
It was a grotti place, not a built up modern building or office

space, it was symbolic, symbolic right to attack his office. But we were disturbed by the security guard there, suddenly everybody, so what do we do now, we are a youth adventure. Not by chore, I am just telling you of the implications, the wider implications.

Where we on the rebound to the leadership of the ANC and so forth, we decided we must carry out an attack. What we did, we went and booked tickets on the train, the same bomb, petrol bomb, we put in a passenger train but that wasn't our mission, we weren't told to do that. It wasn't supposed to be our target. And we were serious, fortunately the bomb did not go off, fortunately there was some technical, it didn't go off, but that was terrorism. Today it would be described as terrorism.

CDV

I am going to stop before the tape does



SIDE 3

CDV

Were you prepared to die for the cause you were fighting for?

SS

Yah earlier on we were told when the recruiting in MK came, implications and repercussions. One was not so mature then,

'61 '62. You don't understand the full implications, and like the situation when you ask me that question at that stage we were so emotionally charged in the situation you can even be dead whilst placing the bomb in a technical problem – we almost died once toward experimenting with the bomb in some valley on the outskirts of Durban. We were prepared to take that kind of a risk situation right, but prepared to die or be sentenced to death - executed by the police or shot and so forth and that kind of thing doesn't come to mind to you. It came in all periods of development, memory and conscious. When I got out of prison and got to exile one became a bit more mellowed. Understand. And understand the full implications really – then I could answer you, yes we were ready to go all the way, fight all the way, inspite instances, even the death, crossing the frontier or somewhere and going to Swaziland or somewhere. I never arrived in anti South Africa when I was in exile I only went on mission, you crossing a visiting because often Swaziland. Or a number of missions, two, three times a month into Swaziland, I've been to Lesotho, passport, a false passport, flew over South Africa to Lesotho, anything could have happened, so we were prepared to go the full course.

CDV Um, lets speed up a bit just so that we can cover the last eight years of your exile. After Mozambique you were shortly thereafter sent to Holland. Is that correct?

SS Ya

CDV Okay, and what were you doing when you were in Holland?

SS I was the ANC Representative in Holland for about plus minus four years.

CDV Four years?

SS Yah, four years from '88

CDV How was that different from the work you were doing in Holland, What were the differences from your experience in Mozambique and was that a difficult transition in the differences?

SS Ah, The African National Congress or any political movement, a Liberation movement is prepared its cadres, it's members, its frontline politically. If you are not prepared politically and mature and then it is difficult to handle other situations, right, it is not simply technical or a beaurocrat or in the situation, fortunately for us, myself I had the kind of exposure going through a political resistance phase which was kind of law of development of me as an individual right. I told you I was a varied level of political development, treason, trial and trial, Youth Congress member and so forth right and then joined the Senior body and then joined the ANC. I couldn't, as I said, become a African National Congress member, the African Congress was banned. But the Indian Congress was not banned; it was still a legal body but the MK or the military wing of the ANC was banned as well. Through joined, so that was another area terrain of struggle situation. Then the prison, one mellowed in prison, the politics, the lecturers, the reading and the engaged workshop situations, then come out of prison, the situation here. The dynamics are totally different then

again in the form of political struggle, but a different form of political struggle in conscientising people, finding creative ways in forms of struggle. Then underground. Both at overt level, legal form and also underground they recruited exiles, training and then MK joined the political wing. I left the military for a while which I didn't mention, I joined the political wing, but political wing was not simply as propaganda but organizing political structures, propaganda are units, so when in the rural area or in the urban areas there are Trade Union students who are by, so when you have your army elements coming in MK guys so your conditions are prepared by the political forces. So that it is another high form struggle for the political wing of ANC. Which is clandestine, to our situation, that was another level of development, so when I was expelled and the leadership said I must go and take the post or run the information department or ANC mission in Holland, so I was already understanding the dynamics and politics of the ANC and the programs and so forth. It wasn't very difficult, and now I was an avid reader just thank God for that, which I developed from prison of reading and researching and so forth. So when the radio guys came and TV guys came to interview me, it wasn't a torture, I read because I was prepared and I had that kind of up bringing and development in all I had to go and read certain things on issues that they may ask me so I was ready for that kind of thing, but not because of the ego or anything because that was a year of development prepared by the organization. And my own individuality,

and in that sense so it was another kind of challenge going and addressing solidarity meetings, publicly now. As a public speaker, appearing on TV and debates, issues and radio programs and organizing anti-apartheid groups in the Dutch villages. Dutch villagers, quite remarkable for a new kind of terrain or career also learning process for me.

CDV How did you find the support of the international community when you were living there?

SS I think it became a very important arm of struggle for the ANC in terms of isolating the regime in South Africa and Holland was one of the very strong anti apartheid movements developed and because I think fortunately of the Dutch experience, of their country being occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, although the differences are not the same but they realized that the tyranny and atrocities committed by the regime, apartheid regime against the people and that is why the Dutch feel guilty and they lend their support and their kind Christian community, Dutch Christian community why their own country can protest a name like the Dutch Reform Church and so forth, you know, and they had tremendous support and the trade unions from the big bridge that was names after Mandela, Resitence Bridge a number of towns, Biko named after and Biko, and Mandela and so forth hundreds even a Dutch Flower Tulip, a new breed of tulip quite amazing, amazing.

CDV It is amazing, did you miss South Africa still at all when you were abroad, at all

SS Ya, that is why we were fighting all the way to get back soon.

CDV So you came back in 1991 right?

SS 1991? Yeah

CDV Okay, how did you feel

SS 1991 I declared

CDV How did you feel when you watched that speech that de Klerk gave when he finally unbanned the ANC

SS Well I felt that it was quite historic in its own setting, and of course we can give a reason why this thing had to take place, there was no choice left in that sense, the unbanning and the release of Mandela on, the 11th of February or something like that, 1990 you, know. There was tremendous joy and celebration in Holland and TV and the office, ANC office. It was crazy there, the excitement and so forth you know lots of champagne and roses, and flowers and the most moving experience for me was Mandela's visit to Holland.

CDV Ah ha

SS He met the Dutch Government and the next morning the Queen, and then his address at The Square, 16th June. and

CDV You were there?

SS Yes, 20 thousand Dutch people gathered, 20 thousand quite a quite a moving experience, quite traumatic and plus Mandela being there present and the Wembly Concert that took place and all there super stars performing I didn't go to the concert but did we have tickets, I said no I will have my own little Wembly

with the big screen we had about, I don't know, about 10 thousand people in the Square watched the whole thing coming live from Wembly to Amsterdam.

CDV Uh huh, what was the return like, to come back to South Africa in 1991?

SS It was quite moving I would say, quite moving quite you know that after all these years of suffering in exile prison paid off finally.

CDV You felt vindication?

SS Yeah you know

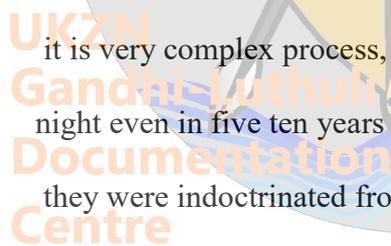
CSV Yeah, did you play role in the Codesa talks.

SS Uh, in a very small way, you see the Codesa talks were composed of a number of parties, each one had its alliances; the ANC had its alliances, I was part of a team of the Natal Indian Congress which is a part of the alliance of the ANC one of the groups, ya.

CDV Just another question on your employment you say you had now been working for the police and I find that interesting particularly having been on the wrong side of the law, Quote un Quote, for so long what it feels like now to be a part of it.

SS See I think, it is not a shock in a sense because we took political power for certain organs, repressive organs, of the old were still in place. We needed to democratize institutions and the only way we could democratize institutions of repressive power of the state, old state apartheid versus state you needed to go in ready, send in old members, right, to put them in strategic positions you know in the judiciary, intelligence services, armed

forces and the police to turn them, the organisations or institutions, around not necessarily to become agents of the African Nation Congress to become democratic institutions without any political bias, become proper servants of the state, the new found democratic state, and I think, if that context or sense we all and myself included we have an important role to play to to in that transition to democracy and to to to sort of liberalise and democratise institutions by not to go and say you must go put on a ANC badge or put on a badge of Mandela but change their racial ideology of the very person to work like any other police officer in other parts of the world in the western democracy or any democracy they work for the state right not work for a system any political system they work for the law and order to be a law abiding officer. You are earning, paid by the government to do your job without any prejudices or any feelings exclusions and the thing is that it is very complex process, very complicated and you can't in one night even in five ten years you can change peoples mind around if they were indoctrinated from childhood with apartheid ideology and the things is there is such resistance by at this situation and the changes we are taking place now towards transforming the whole state, the army, the police services the whole security, of the intelligence because you see the crime in this country situation and you watch the command police command in the high case and what the officers all embodied service men do their work. There is a kind of resistance, why is there resistance, why is there resistance,



you know because you are getting your housing subsidy, you getting your medical aid, your salary and all those kind of things so why there's no work going on, you know, too easy but at the same time we are not stopping saying when election come there is his or her right which party they serve, their democratic right but when you are in the service you don't come with any political agenda to you know.

CDV Right

SS Right, you know its quite the quite the transition, any transition, and South Africa especially very, delicate you know.

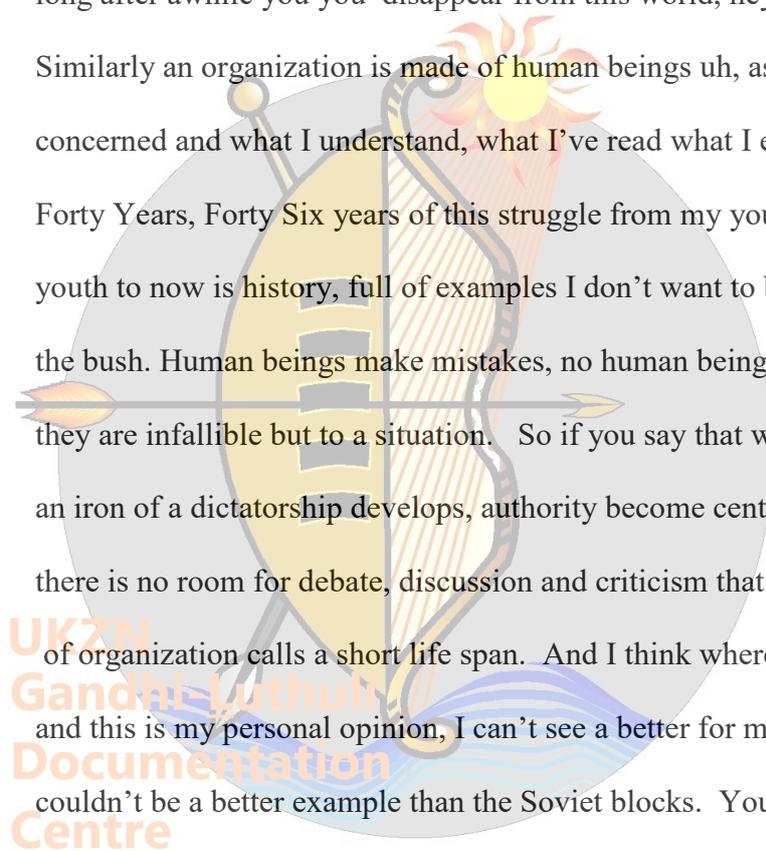
CDV Do you find as one who is so personally involved giving, sharing your life with the struggle and identifying with the ANC, do you find it hard now as a ruling party to be critical?

SS Just explain Maybe you can explain, explain a little bit more what you mean?

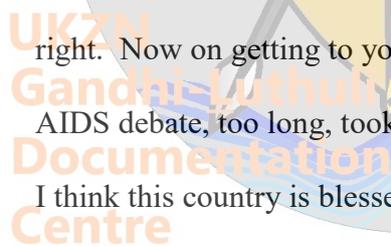
CDV I am interested before we turn to some questions I have particularly relating to South Africa post 1994, um, if you find and I am thinking of a lot of International Press for example, that talks about ANC stands on AIDS and a variety of other issues. Do you find it difficult to be critical of the party of the movement that you were a part of for so long or do you feel that the ANC is stronger for being part of an entrenched democracy and having the ability to disagree without repercussion.

SS I understand your question and where you are getting to, uh, see, we were trained and tempered and came to a sense of value and it would be wrong and hypocritical to say that a leader or a person developed

in a vacuum. You cannot just develop in a vacuum. You tell them as a result of a sense of purpose where there is something there. And something there what is there is a organization. Organization of people, organization of the history and tried and tested history situation. Having said that any organization is made of human beings, leaders right a like a human being, it is you can live for so long after awhile you you disappear from this world, hey, right. Similarly an organization is made of human beings uh, as far as I am concerned and what I understand, what I've read what I exposure last Forty Years, Forty Six years of this struggle from my youth, tender youth to now is history, full of examples I don't want to beat around the bush. Human beings make mistakes, no human being can say that they are infallible but to a situation. So if you say that when there is an iron of a dictatorship develops, authority become centralized there is no room for debate, discussion and criticism that that kind of organization calls a short life span. And I think where I can't see, and this is my personal opinion, I can't see a better for me there couldn't be a better example than the Soviet blocks. You know we never see the birth of the those republics of the social system against the capital system another system, alternate system came to play first time in history of humanity a new system developed against another social force, capitalist force, but because of dynamics the way human beings the kind of tools they use to be power and the process get corrupted right didn't allow schools other schools of thought to double up where democracy was stunted and double up



right and power became to centralized and we saw that the power did not last so long . Seventy to eighty years and it collapsed and the reasons are there. Right, they get to a point, yeah, that I think firstly on a positive note I come from an organization that has such rich history of traditions and resistance, organization that is unmatched and unparelled in Africa. I don't want to say anywhere else in the history, in the world but first in Africa. A person like Mandela, who at the age of eighty three, who still has such sanity and to come from that school, but having said that just saying that our leaders can make mistakes in that situation that I can absolute say absolute power for an absolute rule for ANC depending on whole lot of factors and forces at play if you make blunders to lose support that's the law anywhere else you see that anywhere in the world. If you make mistakes, if you don't deliver your goods and so forth you loose support on bread and butter you are on national issue situation right. Now on getting to your point, very controversial issue the AIDS debate, too long, took to much resources, time and energy and I think this country is blessed you know we've got the infrastructure, highly level of infrastructure with able-bodied, highly respected scientists which are internationally respected and so forth . My own view is that I think that I have the deepest respect for our President of this country which is also the President for the Africa National Congress he is a genius in his own right you know. I think intellectually, you know. The NEPAD thing on the African renaissance I think a lot of people don't even understand the African



renaissance and contextualise properly, maybe we are ourselves in the movement have got a problem of simply finding taking it to the ordinary people and also to the other racial groups of understanding cause there is a perception African Renaissance is only for the African people and I do agree with that but it needs to be properly explained in simple terms through your electronic media and TV media press and workshop, I think personally on the AIDS issue we have able bodies people like Professor Mokaba and so forth, the President, said you've got a team there let them decide take advice from those people. This is my opinion. I think

CDV Lets talk about other political issue, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I'm curious if you made a statement to the TRC.

SS I didn't make a statement

CDV You didn't, Did you ever think about it?

SS Ah, no there was no need for me to go to make a statement. Because

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I spent my time in prison, I'd served my time as I was punishing in the eyes of the old system, the situation, and there was no need there, I went to the TRC in the sense that were another guy was testifying from the military battalions to that we were targets then after Nkomati Accord March '84, we were targets to be killed in Maputo including the Deputy President Zuma so forth and that's only time George Bizos was appearing for us there and then but I was not called to make a statement or anything else. Ya

CDV Did you ever consider making a statement, others had spoken

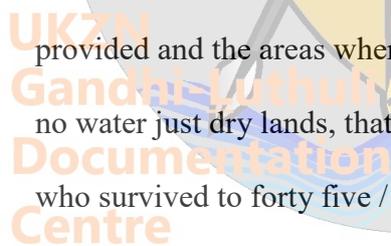
about their assault, torture um under apartheid to the Human Rights Committee, did you ever consider?

SS I ah did not indicate to I uh because I thought there were more deserving cases that much more and many many more who deserve going there for their for their reparation or there and especially from the regime side and carried out such atrocities and so forth militarily, and many did not go forward and and in that sense I think the TRC had sole limitations it um had its positive features, indeed where people who came out wouldn't have known the public they can't do it on the will of the known or people like Eugene De Kock or many others who carried out these atrocities and the next of kin who don't know who killed there loved ones and those are the positive sides of it and it also had its short comings.

CDV The TRC essentially held both the anti apartheid fighters and apartheid government to the same moral standard when they assessed Human Rights Violations, so essentially they found culpability on both sides. Do you have any objection to that, when you speak on that you were on the side of the just cause to then have the misdeeds or violations that occurred via the ANC or any other liberation movement on par with the National Party.

SS You see, you see it is a sad in many ways it is very sad and tragic and we cannot linger on , we can not just go on grousing but of course yes there is a thing like forgiveness. Forgiveness also has its own problems because the Mother there, the Father there the husband there, the wife there, they lost the dearest one. You

can't take that away from them, and still I am not too sure if they'll forgive whoever carried it out. The other side will say the same thing as well other side say but there is no way to make this judgement, moral judgement is easy, I don't think coming from a highly emotionally charged history here you institutionalize oppression. It was unparalleled, unparalleled South Africa just out of the oppression and the humiliation and social degeneration and death, death, denying people basic human rights, denying people land and the things that come out of land. That was itself a torture and a death People died all the years, forced resettlement, without physical brutality just institutional from 1948 the very harsh apartheid laws. You know I am not even going to talk about detentions and so forth, the harsh conditions in the farms our slave labour and just general conditions against the black people on how the basic things like water, not given provided and the areas where they could not even plough the fields no water just dry lands, that was a form of death. The people who survived to forty five / fifty are lucky to be here and that kind of thing. That brutal physical oppression with the security forces. Highly backed up, very sophisticated with naked repression and aggression in front line states, now all these people are going to be forgiven, forgiven, in this situation, now I think those people and that is why you see it is difficult even some form of leadership and the democratic formation for them to grapple with that. To reconcile that. You know Tutus of the world can \get out there so



we can understand okay but please I am talking lets look at the real life the human misery and torment took the apartheid took in terms of the other side, the suffering is miniscule is nothing to compare now the other areas where there was death and destruction and so forth right, I'm talking more in the South African sense but then fortunately we had leaders in this country with wisdom right. Agrees enough is enough if you wait another two or three years there will be a blood bath in this country a blood bath with untold and I am sure in the process a lot of blacks would have died but

CDV

Ya

SS

but it would also have saved them to take a relatively numerical strand of the whites you know as comparative with the black, more whites could have died as well. More whites could have died. Tragic, thousands of whites could have packed their bags and left the country (bad tape section) What is the future of this country? I think all the factors and leadership took into account and that is why there are talks about talks to issue and the thing about reconciliation, right, and unity and the government of reconciliation and the Government of National Unity okay kind of thing. I think one has to see it in that kind of spirit situation right. That's how I see it

CDV

When you speak of forgiveness, do you know of any person who, people assaulted when you were in detention, Robben Island that applied for amnesty or

SS

No, no, no warders, no warders, no warders

CDV

No warders, umhmm.

SS No warders, no warders, No very interesting question, interesting that surely even the other side those were incarcerated didn't go out in search and bring the name to the TRC with this question what treatment was meted out on many fellow prisoners. Again it shows you that even that the other side of the bridge to forgive, no way that it occurred to me that one day I must hunt down a particular warder that they locate for me because I look at the bigger picture. I looked at the picture of the children's future in this country for this country must move forward, to this country must become an example to the rest of humanity – I think.

CDV Why do you think that the people of South Africa were able to recognise that too?

SS Sorry

CDV That which you were saying, the ability to recognize the ability to realize the bigger picture and not feel the a vengeance against whoever attacked you, um, that seems to be what people throughout the country say and looking at post apartheid, what do you attribute that ability, willingness to see the bigger picture to?

SS I think by and large, by and large, where it come from the whole process of development because of those forces leading its people and this country through change because they are beginning to see the bigger picture. To see the bigger picture and that is why they forgive to move forward , to move forward, unfortunately talking about that it is sad, its sad that the whites in this country till now I am not talking about only those from the

apartheid regime, generally they don't seem to see the bigger picture its all about selfishness. You want to have the cake and you want to eat it. Would you agree with me in today this country with the gates open the more white millionaires here than before, I would say so because there are more the market forces because of the sanctions and so forth every loan shark we find with a developing country because there is a scope situations. I don't have a problem with that, I don't have a problem with a guy driving a Mercedes, a BMW, but that is not the end of it, think of the other one as well, think about children's future. They don't think about the children's future. So you have to see what also what is going on with students marching the streets of Jo'burg I don't agree with that march, the ways it's done and the University that gives you the signal what's tomorrow to come? So those are signals I am not agreeing with that I think those in leadership and their respective level of command and the ministry and government has to find a proper way of dealing with this situation you see cause that is another way of ungovernable situation but also examine whilst you are dealing with it simultaneously in due process. You are dealing with the cure, causes of that and try to cure that. Cause of that why such destruction Is it just simply what we have accepted or there are serious problems and and there are places of learning, tertiary education and so forth, serious as well, people writing a whole lot of other things in store for us.

CDV Do you think that the the ANC perceived retreat on this is my last question on the TRC, um on the issue of reparations believing that was paid out was much less than what was recommended it was unclear as when more money would be coming. What kind of effect do you think that has? Do you think it is minimal, do you think it impacts on the TRC's creditability? Or any

SS The reparations?

CDV Yeah the reparations

SS I don't know you see I have not been following that very closely Right don't think that I am being insensitive to it, I think there are a lot of other things like welfare this side, general welfare like anywhere else in the world first, like social benefits, people are getting there every year increase, this year there been an increase for child support and there is also special pensions given out to right special pension for those who have been involved in the struggle for change in this country liberation's movement from liberation to a changed environment. Now getting to your question on reparations now the TRC says it is too little, too little that is what you are saying, too little?

CDV Yeah

SS I don't know because the thing is that its responsible to the government, the thing is that its capacity where you have to find the money from somewhere to it I don't think to a sense that the government is is shrinking its sensitivity or trying to rebuff the TRC or something, I don't think so. It won't make sense to me. It won't

make sense to me because the ruling party in the government , there are members from the ruling parties in these reparations as well.

CDV Ya

SS Ya you follow, me neither hundreds and thousands also involved in this reparations at least in the Eastern Cape in particular, it make sense to me and I don't believe the government is insensitive to that situation, possibly other problems, I don't know what other problems and fortunately one might be the capacity and then your question might be through the question back the government was for 40 billion for arms for 60 billion. For arms.

CDV You took the words out of my mouth.

SS The next question you were right is when we going to come I don't know.

CDV Just a few more questions, I am thinking you had ten years in prison and then you were fifteen years in exile away from your country, I wonder if you think of them

SS Tom, just get some water for me please

Lady Just coming to ask you

SS You want some tea or something, tea?

CDV Water, would be great thank you. Um you were ten years in prison and then you were fifteen years in exile away from your country, I wonder was one harder to bear than the other.

Do you see them that way?

SS No No

- CDV Do you see them that way?
- SS No, I think without a chip on my shoulder I would be without any ego in sitting here I don't know your background, you know my background and furthermore you have got it taped.
- CDV Yours is much more interesting than mine.
- SS No No. Never say that, you got it taped and I look at your eyes now, I have a look at your eyes, through your eyes, you can see I don't have an ego but I think I have come out a better human being. I would never have been if not for the process I am more loving to people, I don't have any element of discrimination of any colour in this country. I think the hope process and my own individuality my own personality, other than the ANC I got my own character and I am very proud of that, you know I got my own mind and I am disciplined and I through a _____ problem tape _____
- I have seen a full life, a full life.
- CDV There are things you would have to sacrifice for this cause and what do you think was the hardest thing you had to had to sacrifice the most.
- SS Yeah, you see I did not have much to offer education, right formal education, I am not bitter about that, not bitter about that because I am not one to hang a certificate on a wall I am not that type of character. The literature I read in Robben Island I think very few have read the kind of literature I read there because I had ways of

smuggling literature to universities and I told you I was in charge of newspapers and so forth and also same thing in Exile with the reporting I am not bitter that I lost part of that formal education and so forth. Okay yes my youth group, my frame that frame yes my 23 that time of my youth right you know yeah my youth but then I made up for other things there whilst I was there I definitely did . I was operating in a vacuum and not many youth had that kind of exposure at that point of time, exposure and it was a privilege, a privilege. You know and ofcourse not saying that there was no suffering in that period. It was a whole process of development of the individual and others that were there.

CDV Did you think you would see the end of apartheid? In your lifetime?

SS Ya, Ya

CDV You did?

SS Ya, Ya, in the begin sentence I told you we were not shocked or depressed we told you we would be out before ten years I thought we would be out before five years.

CDV There was

SS Ya, Ya, Ya because we were sure we'd fight a just cause, a noble cause, ah ah , we had the world community behind us you know the situation.

CDV Did the fact that it took longer than you thought it would because

SS Ya it took longer ya but in the process we understood while we developed our consciousness development we realized it was not so easy as we had predicted.

CDV Ya.

SS to

CDV What did the end of apartheid mean for you?

SS I think it was ah quite traumatic and was only fair to say it was very emotional and exciting in terms of the change. It's wrong to say there wasn't a change quite a big change in unbanning the movements and then the democracy in this country now in that sense it was quite traumatic and historic. You know it gives one a sense of full pride but I think at the same time one mustn't get carried away there hasn't been a full change a full transformation. If you were listening earlier I was talking about the state, transformation of the state,

CDV Yes

SS If you haven't transformed the state you cannot protect democracy.

Democracy will be still in danger liberty will be still in danger. If

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You have a state in its present forms situation form uh, you need to turn the State around, totally democratise the state, in a sense oh yeah you know elements there that's going to take a long time

but also coupled with that another process we set. You know our

opening preamble of the Freedom Charter the land shall belong

to those people tilling it and in South Africa belongs to all those

who live in it, black and white shall share in the countries wealth

situation, I don't think we have shared in the countries wealth

cause only a few are changing in the world of globalization for

the country even worse you know what I am talking about?

CDV Yeah

SS It's a very complex process we are at the moment situation that is why you see such poverty in this country hey, naked poverty people homeless in the winter, winter now some places in the country got minus temperature, can you imagine? I'm talking for the people who don't have any warm clothing thousand squatters, those in the street, the children for one you know so it is a long road still ahead of us? For me uh yes liberation is important big change yes at the same time yes we are in a democracy with a black President, a national anthem. We have other things we recall a constitution parliament process there and so forth, is social change?

CDV Still waiting

SS The health sector, because look at the number of people dying of AIDS in this country, I don't know and homes and jobs and unemployment. This is to address still

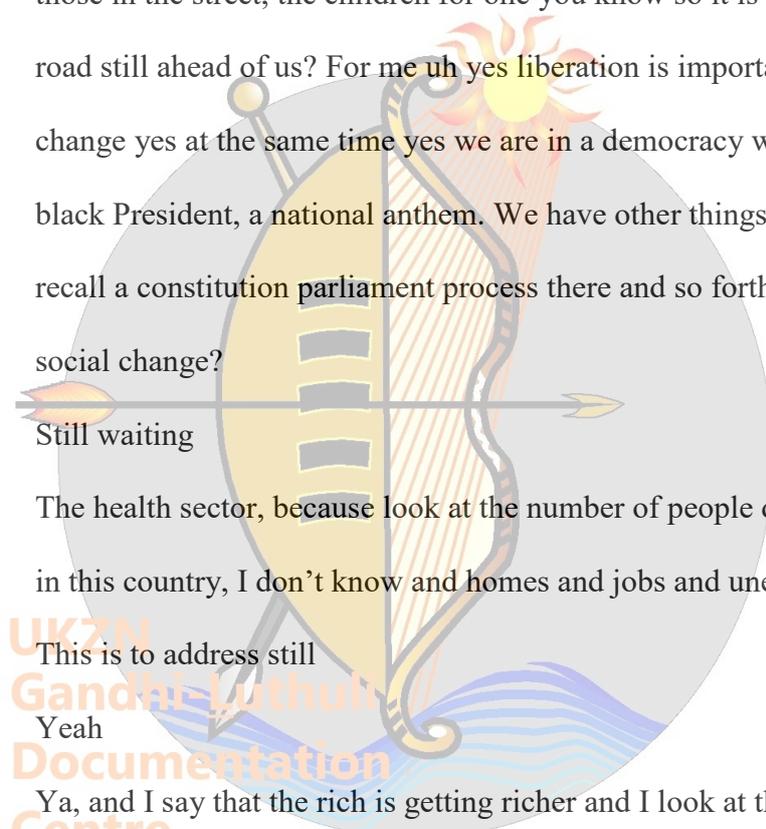
CDV Yeah

SS Ya, and I say that the rich is getting richer and I look at the ferries bringing in cars every week, cars and I think where's these cars goes? And at the same time there's more houses being built and more cars coming in then there is more security coming in .

CDV Hmm, Do you feel hopeful about the future?

SS Aah, Hopeful? I think it is only fair to say we are going to have our problems but we are on the right course, the right course.

CDV Ah Sonny thank you so much is there anything you'd like to say



that I didn't ask?

SS Aah, you came well prepared and I can see you were full of
ammunition there.

CDV All right I'll stop

SS You got tired there yourself,

CDV Yeah

