

Q: So, what kind of a background do you have?

R: Do you mean politically or in general?

My parents were, I suppose one would call them petty bourgeoisie, and my father was at first a sort of manufacturer's representative, a sort of sales person, and my mother stayed at home at first, but then at the age of forty, she went and did a social science degree and from then onwards was a professional - well had various professional jobs.

It was a fairly liberal background in the sense that they were founder members of the Progressive Party.

I was myself a member of the Progressives, the Young Progressives until about 1964, and at that time I started to believe in universal suffrage and it was convenient that I got elected to the Nusas executive and they said you shouldn't belong to any political party and on that pretext I resigned from the Progs.

I can't remember if there was actually a liberal party then. It had been banned, well not banned, but the legislation prohibition of improper interference legislation made it difficult for them to continue to operate.

And so I was drifting away from Prog type liberalism - I remained a Prog for a long time. And my family was beginning to think what else?

Although my family were liberals they were always positively disposed towards people in the Congress Movement, like although my father died, I'm sure that if he had been alive when I was arrested he would have been very proud of what I'd done.

He admired Braam Fischer very much, although he was very anti-communist I think. And my mother also admired people like that, Nelson Mandela, similar people in the Congress Movement.

So I came from a home which although it was liberal - it wasn't anti-liberation movement - and my conceptualism of liberalism had nothing to do with capitalism and socialism, the mistake that people make when they identify capitalism with liberalism. My idea of liberalism when I was little, was that it was a useful vehicle for anti-apartheid activities. It's the only form of anti-apartheid activities which I knew. And in fact when I was a student, and all these people joined African Resistance Movement, the white Sabotage group, I could quite easily have been drawn into something like that or into ANC activities - that's in 1964 - just because I didn't see a substantial difference in my orientation and what these people had undertaken.

Rcont: I very much admired Nelson Mandela's speech from the dock and Brahm's speech in the dock. But I was still liberal. But I didn't understand all the implications of the policy behind the organization.

Do you want to know anything more about my family?

Q: What generation of South African are you?

R: I'm not sure - I think my grandparents emigrated to South Africa, from Lithuania on my father's side and from London my mother's side. I think the grandfather on my mother's side might have been even further back. But I'm not sure. I'm not very into family trees. I'm related to Bertha^m von Suttner, the Nobel Prize winner, but I use that merely when I claim sometimes that I'm actually a baron you know, and I don't use the title. So I actually use it for that sort of purpose not to investigate.

Q: And, you kind of made that jump where you supported universal suffrage. I'm interested you know, ...

R: It was an intellectual jump in a sense. I was always morally opposed to apartheid. My parents inculcated in me a belief in unselfishness and a concern with other people and that you shouldn't actually participate in activities which could be hurtful to others, and so there was a very strong emphasis on honesty.

And on the one hand I couldn't stick by the belief...interruption.

Q: You ...is there any kind of incident that you remember in terms of that moved you politically or that you remember when you first heard of the implications of racism that you were involved with?

R: I hadn't really heard of Mandela, but in 1961 or '62, I used to catch the bus at the Parade, and I used to see these notices up there from the Minister of Justice saying any meeting in respect of Nelson Mandel blah blah, I don't remember the rest of the story, but I'd see these notices, so it was a name that figured in my consciousness.

But I don't think I was actually very well aware of it until the Rivonai trial to be frank. I knew of Luthuli, but I didn't read any ANC literature or communist party literature until much later.

The first thing I ever read was Nelson Mandela's first speech in the dock in '62, the first trial and then later the same year, which is about '63 or '64, I read his second speech from the dock.

It was a very emotional response that I had.

Recont: It wasn't part of a considered understanding. It receded into the background and I didn't see any contradictions between that and activities in Nusas, well I don't think there is any contradiction, but for years I was very active in liberal activities in Nusas and so forth and I didn't take a step away from that. I didn't actually have the opportunity.

The opportunity might have been before these guys got arrested in '64, sometime later someone told me that they had actually wanted to recruit me for something or other and then they got hauled in. I'm glad I wasn't, but I wouldn't have been equipped to handle it at that stage. I was young and inexperienced and undeveloped politically.

So, the break from being a liberal came very much later and I'm very, I tend to do things in an intellectual way, and what happened - do you want me to go onto that? - Hmmm-

I had to give a talk once on the future of liberalism at a symposium and I remember Ryfie Kaplinsky(?) I don't know if you know him? He's now a Sussex lecturer...he once led a sit in at UCT in '58, quite a lot younger than me. Anyway, when I was going to give this lecture, he gave me something to read by C Wright Mills, an American sociologist, and basically the consequence of reading this, I came to the conclusion that liberalism was irrelevant, but I didn't actually take the next step.

So I gave a very pessimistic input at this thing which I think was correct and incorrect also because it doesn't take things further. In '68 or so, and I didn't do very much else until the end of '69. I was a very ambitious academic at this stage - I was quite an ambitious bloke. And when I left SRCs and all that, I then went into academic life and started to produce a few articles and what have you and at a certain point, I was given a sort of breathing space which made me think on the life I was leading and which also made me return to political things and what happened was I was doing a masters of Law thesis, and when I was about to hand it in they said to me You're quoting Jack Simons and Jack Simons is listed therefore it's illegal and therefore you must cut him out...I was a liberal still you see. A liberal who felt that you can't quote someone else's work as your own - a sense of property you know, someone else's, I can't pass it off as my own commodity.

So, I said well, I'll withdraw the thesis. I was still in a liberal frame of mind. I was actually quite a sort of liberal in those days.

Jack Simons said he thought I was mad and I just should have lifted his stuff. And, after doing that, I actually started to think about a variety things

Recent: a variety of things in my life. Why was I just responding to things in this way...Oh, as it happened someone gave me a book to read, an introduction to Marxism and it made me think about myself, as a person who was responding to the ethos of capitalist society in this way, becoming such an extreme form of it, the way I was so competitive - driving myself to produce and all this sort of thing, as if I was such a hot shot, and why did I all the time have to keep on proving it and this also made me think politically again.

And this work on Marxism really opened my eyes and I was very shocked. I actually had read the book not because I wanted to read the book not for political reasons but because I was a bit intellectually arrogant, and for someone as intellectually arrogant as myself, I thought I should read Marx, just as I should read Fabe(?) or anyone else, and all that sort of thing.

So, I read this thing and it stunned me. All this business about what I had understood as a constitutional battle in the seventeenth century, they explained completely differently, and here I was taking all these years.

And then I started to think - this whole thing rocked my life in general. I was about to go and study over in Oxford, but I made up my mind how to act politically. And I was thinking about isolated political acts like the ARM had done in the sixties. And I wasn't quite sure what to do, but when I went overseas, although I was supposed to go and do a doctorate, already before I left I was orientating myself back to a political frame of mind and also definitely towards illegal activities.

I didn't think directly of ANC or Communist Party, but I wasn't unfavourably disposed towards them.

And something I must mention about that. Nowadays you see an ANC newspaper every day, but in those days, I'm not sure to what extent it existed, cos they'd very successfully wiped it out of the newspapers, and if they mentioned either, they'd mention the Communist Party, because they tried to imply that the ANC was just a front for the CP and stuff like this.

So, I wasn't actually sure how much the ANC and the CP existed. And so I went overseas, and I contacted some people and I don't know how seriously they took me, because I suppose a lot of people come over here and say Look I want to get involved and all that, and they say well there's time, I'm going to Oxford and all that. And I kept on nagging and nagging and I went to Oxford and I was

RecontI was getting so fed up.

First was supposed to do a doctorate, and man they are such pains in the arses - sorry this is unbecoming language - they are, really impossible people.

I was going to do a thesis on civil disobedience, and the guy they give me as a supervisor, a chap called Dorking(?), very famous, and all that. But he, regarded civil disobedience as a question of Do you have to prosecute draft resisters? That's just one minor aspect of the problem and I had this guy as a supervisor and it was just messed up from the beginning.

So I changed to something else, and such a waste of time. Next I have these books I want to read, and I had to read this crap you see. So, I went to London and saw one of these blokes, and he said to me, because I wanted to leave, I wanted to get out there, so he said to me that if you want advice, you go to the person that gives you the advice you want to hear. And he agreed with me that I should leave.

So I then went and transferred my scholarship to SOAS, the School of Oriental and African Studies, I'd previously done work on African and Customary law, that was what my thesis was on that I'd withdrawn you see.

But I didn't really last very long there, I basically started to use the library and nothing else. And, nagged them even more to recruit me for something or other.

Eventually, I don't know how long it took, I was introduced to people who were quite seriously considering involving me, and then I was taken through various political tracts and so forth and I was very critical, well not critical, but I argued like mad, particularly about things like the alliance of the Soviet Union, and the cause, and action of the Warsaw Pact countries in Czechoslovakia, and all these sorts of things.

Because, I still believed you must go into something if you're not completely sure that it's correct. Obviously I'd read a lot, because I knew that if I were detained, I'd be drawing it up(?) so I read a lot on those things and became sure that I could handle it.

Anyway, after a long time, and a lot of these people are an older generation, who don't know the sort of debates that people like myself have been going through, like I came to Marxism through New Left Review, Monthly Review, these sorts of things which are mainly anti-Soviet things and they regard the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress, with something like contempt, as lesser organisations who don't quite understand the nature of class struggle and all that.

When I put these sorts of arguments to these blokes, they didn't know what I was talking about, and there was a big sort of generation gap - I mean some of these people like Joe Slovic are really brilliant, but they haven't really encountered some of these

Rcont: some of these arguments. I think they do deal with these arguments, but they're - it's not an argument they're dealing with in their daily theoretical work.

One or two of the guys I was in contact with, had studied at LSE and so forth, so they knew the Robing Blaackburns and intellectual left types.

Anyway, I was eventually recruited to doing various things and they set about a process of training me, mainly in production of propaganda; How to send off pamphlet bombs - I never actually did it in South Africa, they wouldn't let me do it for various reasons, my being the one person who had been recruited, and they didn't want to risk me.

But you know, it's send this up in the air, and this is the ANC speaking and it's quite spectacular. We used to do this in Hampstead, in this flat I was in that I nearly set alight, and they used to sometimes do it on Hampstead Heath, and nearly get arrested.

Anyway, I went through that. And they taught me various things regarding surveillance and counter-surveillance and in court cases you try and downgrade the nature of the training you receive, but it was actually quite useful and effective, but what happens when you're doing it, for so long they don't watch you, that when they do start watching you, you have forgotten to practice the things that you have to write it into your daily living.

But I was still a very boring intellectual type, and I gave these guys such a hard time. I don't know how long this course was supposed to last, but it lasted about four times as long, because any theoretical problem I had, we had to go through, and I wasn't so keen to learn how to set up these pamphlet bombs and - I can't remember, they taught me a lot of other things which I was really useless at doing - ways of setting down banners and then you melt wax and they gave me numerous refresher courses and I wasn't very good at that, but I would still go through the numerous theoretical problems.

Ranging from the war to communist attitudes to sex you know. Every aspect of the problems - we would walk around Hampstead Heath, and these guys would be given a really hard time, because I wanted to be absolutely sure of everything.

Then that's the period in London. Do you want it more on the personal side, or do you want me to go politically? Back to South Africa?

Q: No, tell me about this part - it's interesting.

R: Well, you see, I don't know if you read the book called the Gadfly and there's a Soviet novel called How the Steel was Tempered.

Recont: Now in this book, How the Steel was Tempered, this bloke models himself on the guy from this book the Gadfly who leads a really puritanical life and he thinks this is what a revolutionary is.

I was a bit like that, you see: I thought I had to prove to myself that I could practice self-denial. The consequence was Oh, what I lost out on! Socially and culturally in London - every play I must have missed, well for about a year;

In a sense it was useful for me, part of getting rid of these bourgeois traits, was to actually a) break a pattern of trying all the time to achieve, achieve, but also to check that I could actually handle privation. It was a very good training for prison actually, because prison was fine, I was used to prison by then. And certain things of denial.

It's a bit artificial I think, but for my particular case it was necessary.

Anyway, they wanted me to go to South Africa. Luckily, I was offered a job in Durban in African Government and Law, and they wanted me to go there and produce literature that they sent me: ANC and Communist Party stuff. Later I was doing something else myself. But anyway, from 1971 to 1974, that's what they wanted me to do.

Now they wanted me to go there first. And it was nice going to Durban, because no-one knew me there, there wasn't a problem about my persona. If I'd gone back to CTown: I'd be regarded as a political person and all that sort of stuff, because it would have been hard to hide the fact that I was now - to suddenly descend into anonymity because in Durban hardly anyone knew me.

I just played the game of the academic who was very interested in music and stuff like that - in June '71 I went back for 18 months - anyway, I went there and I used to try and talk to people but not politically directly because I didn't want to have a high profile - I steered clear of wages commissions and Nussca. It was very difficult at times because on the one hand the potential recruits would be people who were involved in these sorts of things. On the other hand, once you get that sort of profile, the police started paying attention to you.

I only once spoke on a political platform. I'd asked Tony Mathews to give a talk on the Terrorism Act; and he just couldn't do it. It was very technical, but I never ever did anything political.

Anyway, I was a lecturer in comparative African Government, because I wasn't prepared to, even in academic life, even though I was a liberal, I do believe I played a progressive role and like I

Recent: and like I put across a position. But I had to try and do it in a very seemingly cynical way you know I would tear various reactionary writers to pieces. I would pose questions, but I never came out in a Marxist position or anything like that. I'd pave the way for others, which I hoped the students would do.

Especially for Africa, I wasn't prepared to spend my time saying that Africa's a whole mess and all that. So, I thought there was space in actually teaching African Government to give a progressive position, but not hair raisingly so. And the students were so ignorant in Durban, that they wouldn't pick up what was a progressive position - they just didn't know much about the stuff.

In that period, I was told that I mustn't produce stuff until I'm sure that I was clear, but before I had a chance to do anything, they killed Timol, and when I saw the inquest, ...you know the police threw him out of - well he allegedly jumped out of the window - so when Timol's inquest was on I saw that he had been doing what I had been doing. So it was quite brutally and starkly the kind of thing I would have to face in the future. I remember I got a circular, we used to communicate with these underground invisible ink type letters, - I got a circular which must have gone to quite a few people in this activity saying hide all your machines blah, blah, blah.

The thing is I wasn't actually using them, at that stage. And I thought to myself, has my stuff been intercepted and are the police now going to trap me?

Now we had some other form of code to check that out, but it took quite along time to find the answer to it.

Also because at a certain point around that time if I recall correctly, I had some romantic relationship on the go and it was very hard to go and develop these letters you see. This person seemed always to be around in my flat.

So there was a break down in communications before I even got going. Anyway it was the letter, but they'd made the error of not individualising it and so I got scared for nothing.

Anyway, I first got something out in July '73, two things during the vacation. Copies of Inkululetho, and the next thing I was doing was a speech at Dr. Dadoo's and I remember I was busy doing it and my father died. While I'm busy doing this and it was very difficult to attach adequate significance to that while I'm busy producing communist party leaflet.

I did attach significance but I first had to go through all the motions of putting all my stuff away securely and all this sort of thing. But,

Rcont: But, you know, people don't realise that when you're with the underground, you've got two lives operating simultaneously all the time and it's very difficult to not act insensitively to the other aspect.

I remember people saying that only when I was arrested did they understand things about the way I behaved which is very difficult. In personal relationships I felt I couldn't form a very close relationship with someone, because I wouldn't be able to talk about the most intimate parts of my life or what was most serious to me. And how would someone like that if the first they heard about that, when you're in love is that you're involved in this kind of thing. And I felt this would be very unfair. And there was quite a barrier in relationships.

And it meant that you had to appear that you were quite a sell-out and it's quite difficult to do that. Unpleasant.

Anyway, I didn't produce very much before December 1974, when I was invited to a conference in Holland. And the Government paid for me to go to this conference, the HSRC, and I met with various people like Joe Slover over there and we evaluated what I had been doing. And quite a lot of criticism of what I had been doing. Not heavy criticism, but just basically suggesting to me that I was a bit of a fool you know. The way I used to go and do some of these things was really crazy.

Posting, I used to take a whole suitcase and then dump the whole lot into one post box if I couldn't find one big enough. And they said to me you are silly, they're going to intercept these things in one go that way. You must do fifty here and fifty there.

And this stupidity was partly as a result of working on my own. I didn't really have someone to advise me on certain things. And anyway they also criticised my attitude to recruiting. Previously, they said I musn't recruit anyone. And which was correct.

But after the Portuguese revolution, we all felt this was going to see a spurt forward in the struggle to free Southern Africa in general, which proved to be correct. And their attitudes towards recruitment became correspondingly more generous in the sense that it was felt that we must now think of drawing in those people.

And when I was talking about people I knew, I mentioned this guy Canny(?), who ultimately became a state witness. And I just mentioned what I thought of the guy and I was given criticism from the level of his ideological understanding, and the criticised me saying that I mustn't look at myself as a sort of typical recruit. If someone like myself, if they only recruited people like myself, they would have had no-one in the liberation movement, because most people weren't intellectuals. And they took that criticism and went overboard to the opposite extremes. And I came to the conclusion I should recruit this guy

Rcont: recruit this guy when I came back.

Anyway, it proved ultimately to be an error. But in the meantime, I recruited a Zulu lecturer called Jenny Roxborough, who was very dedicated in a personal sense, in that she was friendly with me and all that.

I didn't really have a lot of time to politicise them properly in the way I had been, very long period of training, so that only eight months or so before I was arrested, from September to June, '75.

And, one of the effects of recruiting them, was we produced much more. Because for three people to produce something it is much quicker. I also wrote something myself called Vukani and I intended this to be comment on the spot on various things, events we were able to intervene.

What was quite useful is that we intervened in regard the talk of dialogue between African States in South Africa, and we brought out something - No Dialogue with Apartheid, Tales Abroad, Fascism at Home, all sorts of stuff, but they used it at the OAU, so it was quite useful that they could say people inside were making all these kinds of interventions.

We used to send stuff to the movement overseas. Anyway, we produced a lot of stuff in the months before I was arrested.

Q: Just tell me, how did you go about recruiting them? How did you speak to them?

R: Well, I just sort of put abstract questions to them like 'What happens, these days we've got a situation where you might find someone knocks on your door, and he's being hunted by the police, an MK guerilla or something. What would you do?'

Abstractly, and then, I can't remember the rest. You see, the thing is someone like this Jenny Roxburg is a very honest person. This other bloke appears to be honest and quite committed without saying anything. Didn't seem a big step for him to take, but I think he took it romantically.

In her case, I don't think she realised the full consequences of, well both of them didn't realise the full consequences of it. In his case it was a bit romantic for him. He didn't understand that it was a lasting permanent thing. IN her case it would have taken time to deepen that. involvement.

So, I can't remember the details of how I raised it. I think in his case he was asking what he should do. I was fairly friendly with him. I was friendly with her as well, but it hadn't been a

Rcont: hadn't been a political one. But it was a very sort of close relationship in the sense that she used to talk to me a lot about problems and stuff like this.

So, there was a degree of trust in our relationship already. Building on a personal relationship rather than a political intervention, a political state of recruiting.

I used to test out other people, one or to other people, who I had political discussions with but I felt would be unsuitable.

Q: So, what would have been unsuitable?

R: Well, you have to be sure people are going to be keep quiet about this. Because, it's like Kun - he did once want to walk out on this business which is really risking me completely. And you can't have that sort of thing.

If someone is going to be flighty about it, and not realise what is entailed, that's quite a problem. A lot of people are intellectually involved and they know a lot more than I do about theoretical things, but they actually haven't got a moral commitment. And I think it's a combination of the moral and theoretical that one looks for. And it's very difficult to assess. I still don't know what makes someone morally committed. Cos a lot of people, especially now, are very involved and they get positive reinforcement all the time for it.

And when you're working underground you don't get positive reinforcement for it, so you've got to be really committed to start off with. It's very hard to tell this before the person actually got involved, how they would react to the stresses.

Something I found, I wasn't actually that scared when I was on my own. But this guy Kun was very scared and I got scared and he used to make me very nervous.

You know, they once had a report, Police Hunt City Printer, now I was - sorry at the same time I should mention - at the same time our rhoneo machine had broken down and I had taken it in to be fixed. So, what I do in these instances, is I put on sunglasses, put on a suit and all this sort of stuff and I proceed to take the rhoneo machine down. But I have to use his car, because it was a fancier car than mine. And he was absolutely petrified by this.

Now the result of this was that I started to think of my activities. This guy had actually written a book on this affair. But I've got some here. It's not published.

He remarks how he once went posting somewhere and stopped at a post box, there's a policeman there - I still get out and post.

Rcont: if there's a policeman there, I still get out and post. Now the thing about it was, I was totally immersed in doing it; I was aware this was a policeman but to not post would have been even worse in the situation, whereas he was very much more aware of the consequences of being caught doing this.

Now, I got all jumpy in consequence. You can't tell how people are going to react in those situations, until you do recruit them. Now I was scared, but I was acclimatised to it.

Break...

Now let me think what else there was in that period.

Q: What about, you weren't nervous and then you got them involved and started putting stuff out and just the kind of getting more nervous. Did you know they were onto you?

R: No, I sort of sensed something, and was just intuitively - you know when you doing illegal activities you become quite suspicious, I mean superstitious.

I remember in prison, Dave Rabkin once said we walk round a little yard and there's a ladder, and I walked round the ladder and he says why does Jakob the boer walk under the ladder, but Suttner the Marxist walk round it agin?!

You sort of hedge your bets a little bit with these sorts of things and I didn't feel, just in case there were some areas of human existence that dialectic materialism doesn't account for, I will not tempt them by letting black cats cross my path or what have you.

So, I did intuitively feel something was happening. I was under a lot of pressure. You know it's like the South African Defence Force, when they have a huge intake they don't actually have the structure to handle it properly, hence, all sorts of things were going wrong a few years back. In the army. And I think it was because of something like that.

It's the same with the democratic movement. We have mobilised thousands of millions of people, but we haven't actually organisationally developed to that level.

Now, in my own case - suddenly I was producing thousands of pamphlets and what have you and I wasn't actually thinking it out clearly. I was making errors and I didn't have senior people around me to advise me as to how to handle things and we were going to meet around July, but I was nabbed in June.

Q: Where were you going to meet?

R: Swaziland or somewhere like that you know.

It was quite difficult keeping two personae. Being legal and illegal. Just how to keep an academic job, do fairly progressive things and also do this at the same time.

Anyway, I was bringing out a special issue on the Freedom Charter, in 1975 - twentieth anniversary. They wanted to get out ten thousand copies and we were doing that when I was caught.

Q: Before June 25th?

R: June 26th. And, ..do you want to know the details of why I was caught and all that? I mean it's not madly interesting.

Having made that prelude of how I didn't have the assistance of other people in getting advice and that it was the prelude to these errors which got me caught.

You see, it was problematic to get money in. So, I was paying for quite a lot of things out of my own money and the consequence was that when I went to get these thousands of envelopes, It was very difficult to buy them. I mean ideally you should get fifty here and fifty there. And it's incredibly expensive.

And I found doing it through the university was anonymous. I could do it through the officials there and just get blank envelopes at the university store.

Anyway, I wanted ten thousand of a particular size. It was quite a big issue of our thing and it was okay except that they only had three thousand. They ordered another seven thousand. And these envelopes had quite a distinctive mark at the back.

So the security police just went off to the factory and asked who'd ordered these. And they said the university. And they then called the assistant at the place and they then got me.

When they caught me, they just had the proof there right away. So I knew it was over then for me. So it was just a question of....

Q: You mean they held the assistant and then they got you?

R: Yeah, they held him for twenty four hours. Until they caught me. You see, I'd been posting in Maritzburg and when I got back someone shouts 'Mr. Suttner?' And I came out, with a sort of kosh - I don't know what I wanted to do with it! Defend myself or what...it was something I had bought - I just thought maybe I could defend myself should the occasion arise.

Rcont: But they didn't know who they were getting. They had eight cars with five people in each - twelve cars with a huge number of police. And they all surrounded me and I put my thing down very quickly.

And within a short while, they informed me that they knew all this information. The thing is they just didn't know who else was involved in it, so this was the problem.

And, do you want to know about the interrogation? Well, they sort of searched my house for about an hour or so. I was staying in those days in Queensborough just outside Durban. They took me to police headquarters, special branch, in Fisher Street it's called and they asked questions and questions and they wanted to know who these other people were.

I came out with all sorts of things like I really didn't know who they were. I used to go and meet someone in the middle of some park or something. I didn't know who he or she was. And they kept on and on.

My feeling was I was going to be beaten up or tortured so I wanted to be tortured when I was strong rather than when I was weak. Cos I'd heard stories of how people hadn't said a word for days and then they collapsed and told everything. I didn't want to be tortured when I was weak. I wanted to actually if they were going to do, do it and get it over with.

So I said look here I'm not saying anything. I don't mean to be rude, but that's all I'm going to say. 'But you are being rude.' And they kept on at me for a while and then at a certain point, Colonel Steenkamp, who's now head of the Special Branch, or Commissioner of Police, I can't remember which, about a year ago, came in and twisted my nose you see.

Q: Was that the first time they'd been physical?

R: Hmm. A few days later I looked in the mirror and there was blood on my nose. That was like a signal for the violence. He said 'This is a very serious.' I didn't know who he was. And ...(?591)

A short while later, Warrant Officer Taylor, who I believe is a Captain now, came in wearing a butcher's uniform. And he blindfolded me and took my glasses off. I had like sunglasses and said now we are going to teach you something. Took me away and handcuffed me, stripped me and then put electrodes on my genitals and on my fingers and my hands were swollen and my elbows were swollen for quite a long time after that. He kept on putting it on off, on off, on off, on off, wanted to know who I was working with.

Rcont: And you gagged you see. So you indicate through the gags that you want to tell them something.

So I was telling them stuff about overseas and all that sort of thing. And it's quite interesting. In spite of getting electric shocks you can actually think. There were some things I actually wanted to inform people of.

For example, I wanted the people to know I had been held. No one knew I was held, so I needed others to escape. The rule is you escape when someone else is held.

They didn't happen to escape, but they were informed of it and the one, the woman Roxborough drew out money, but she didn't push off. Anyway..

Q: They were informed by other people?

R: They were informed because they raided the university. I had stuff hidden at the university and I told the police this.

Now, once you raid the university, everyone knows that you've been arrested. Now these people could have gone. But, there was also a danger. The longer, the more stuff they went through at the university, the more it might lead them to who the other people were.

Side ends.....633

SIDE B: 000

R: They were already questioning people about who I knew and all that, so that together with certain other things might very well have led them to who I was working with.

And I came to realise that they must have arrested these other two guys, after about two days when the questioning seemed to change.

In the meantime, they did torture me some more. Like - during these electric shocks I informed them of the university, so the whole of the next day, they were coming in to ask me new things after this raid.

And I didn't sleep at all. They just carried on interrogating me the next day. They didn't torture me during the day. Then, what happened was, at about five or seven o'clock, one of these guys, a chap called Coetzee, who's had half his ear bitten off by some wrestler or some criminal, I don't know what, takes me off to Durban Police Station and says look, you just go and have a good nights sleep and tomorrow you can make a clean breast of it and you'll feel fine you know. He really felt good about that.

So, I knew I wouldn't be left alone. About five

Recont: About five minutes of them going, you hear this guy shouting, 'Ous garrn jou vokking communist, jou vokking dood mask.' We're going to kill that fucking communist and I'm going to kefik him and this that and the other.

And you know cells make a helluva noise, so even the cell door is enough to make you pretty scared without the shouting.

And they come banging crashing in there and it's these young thugs, sort of warrant officers level.

And what they want to pretend is that they're doing things off their own. The officers know nothing about it. You see, when I was tortured the first time, I'm blindfolded so theoretically I can't identify anyone.

Then the second time, it's now the youngsters doing it without the knowledge of the others. Anyway, it wasn't so heavy. Well it was quite heavy, standing, and in a crouched position balancing what they called my bibles Marx and Engels and Lenin on my arm outstretched and exercises and lying on the table in uncomfortable positions, and various sorts of demeaning sorts of activities. This again went right through the night if I remember correctly.

And the next morning the officers arrive, Did you have a nice sleep? and all this like sort of perfectly happy and what have you. And then they call me into Steenkamps office and he says to me, Look here, you are completely uncooperative. I've got your diary here and I'm going to arrest the whole lot of them.

Now, obviously, I'm not such a moron that I'm going to keep in my diary people who I'm working with. So I said just do that, it's on your conscience and you can carry on this torture it's still going to make no difference. And he liked looked shocked as if What am I talking about? and all that sort of stuff.

So, anyway, as I say, around the Wednesday, after about two days, obviously they'd got these other people because the tone of the questioning changed. And it was a question of mopping up operations from then on.

All along they had enough to convict me. So they wanted to finish the case and I assumed we'd all be charged, but these others were obviously marked out as being victims of this, my nefarious activities, and they ended up using them as state witnesses, and me charged.

There were a few sort of amusing instances in this situation. Like, they still think there's more that I know, that I know about Jeremy and David,

Rcont: And David, who I'd never met before. So they are still trying to find out about that. And they call me into this guy Steenkamp's office, and he says 'You sit on the floor because you are twenty years younger than me or something.' And he says stuff to me and gives me a long lecture.

'Jan Smuts died before his time. Brahm Fischer was born before his time.' And all this sort of long harangue, and then 'How would you like it if the Arabs raided Israel?' Implying that I must necessarily be a Zionist or something.

And then he says, 'If you don't talk, we will have to resort to KGB methods.' And I argued, saying that you have already used, if you mean by the torture - I didn't want to argue with him and say it had already been used.

My attitude was I'm not going to ask for a hiding. And then he says, 'Vat hom weg', Take him away. And they just took me away and I think that was the end of the violence, and the next few weeks of my detention, I was just, they were just mopping up on the case. And then I was in court.

Q: Just before you go on to that stage, how did you feel? Were you pretty pissed off that those two had not gone as they were supposed to?

R: You know, as I say, I felt - I mean I think it's completely wrong to be a State Witness, but in their case, you know they hadn't had a long time of involvement like myself. So I do feel that no-one should be a state witness, but I think I didn't feel very angry. I feel it's wrong for anyone to do it, not the particular individual.

In the particular individual's case, it was perhaps more mitigating, if there is mitigation, than if there's someone who is seasoned activist, like Say Bayner(?) felt and gave evidence against Brahm Fischer. So, I didn't feel particularly upset.

I mean, at the same time if people said it was O.K. I said no it's not o.k. Not because it was me, So, it didn't worry me particularly.

Q: It didn't make you feel bitter?

R: No, you know, basically it didn't make much difference to my - I don't think I would have got less or more and I would have felt differently if it was someone like Jeremy who is a close friend of mine were to do something like this. I would be stunned. I just don't believe it is possible for Jeremy to do something like that. But I don't regard those people in the same light.

Rcont: They were not real comrades you know. I had to do the writing on my own. I couldn't really gain much from them. Whereas when Jeremy worked he worked with David Rabkin and Susan Rabkin and they very quickly were very sort of reliable people in themselves. And now I didn't have that. I didn't feel the same way.

Q: How long were you held before the trial?

R: Five months, but not all of it was detention. Some of it was a waiting trial.

Q: So when did you have the trial finally?

R: It was November 13, 1975

Q: Let me just go back before you get into that, because I didn't ask you one thing about your recruitment stage. You actually met Slover. Was that - by 1985, he's been in the papers so much and the Sunday Times has pieces about it. At that stage, was he some kind of big figure to you?

R: No, well I had read the stuff he'd written and I admired that very much and in so far as I had dealt with him I had a lot of admiration for - well let's put it this way, I don't want to comment about what he is doing at the moment, because that is something for him to decide on at the moment, because there are certain legal constraints, if I were to approve it I would lay myself - let me say that in my dealings with him, I have a lot of admiration for what he does, what he has done, and I admired his understanding of various things. But I was a very minor aspect of what he was doing presumably, dealing with me. What didn't come through in the way he appears in the press, is that he's got a very good sense of humour. He's very funny.

I remember, he used to come and see me and I stayed with some old woman who was one of these Christian Science people, Ron Hubbard's group and I was busy explaining she goes out, and she's here during the day, and goes out to work, so he says 'Yes, she works for him' trying to imply that this woman is keeping me. He's a very funny guy and he was always messing around with jokes and so forth. I saw a side to him, which doesn't emerge in the picture of him as some sort of gorgon monster in the press.

Q: Does that also say something about the actual numbers of white activists in South Africa then? That someone as senior as him would be working with someone as unseasoned as you?

R: I don't know, I wouldn't like to say. I don't know what his status is, or cos I really don't know.

Q: Is that a commentary on the numbers of is that a commentary on the ...

R: There were very few people working, whatever his seniority or otherwise might have been, which I don't know. But, I think that there were very few people, I mean ANC and the Communist Party was not very active, cos Umkonto we Sizwe didn't have the military presence. In the country at the time, our presence in these sort of propaganda things was virtually the only presence that there was in the country at the time when this business set in.

So, that is true in a sense.

Q: Because the other thing, I'm getting too involved in your story, that I want to bring out is the role of whites. Did you have any sense of the thing that there were blacks doing the same thing in the townships? Who couldn't just walk into the university store and get envelopes?

R: No, I think it was a job that was certainly much easier for a white to do - well certainly not for an African. Timoll was a teacher so he had access to certain things.

I mean it required skills. I knew how to type, so that was one less person I needed to recruit if I needed to get someone else to type. I think Timoll had to get someone to type if I remember correctly.

So I could type. I had access to various other things, like I had a car. So there were a variety of reasons which made it much easier for whites to do that sort of work.

Either alone or potentially in collaboration with blacks, but I didn't meet blacks who I could potentially recruit.

Q: Did the people outside try to encourage you to recruit blacks? or did they feel it was better to work with whites?

R: They didn't try and encourage me to recruit anyone until that very late stage in my case.

Q: And this identification with the Timoll case was because it happened right when you were sort of ...

R: But he was doing the same sort of things as me.

Q: I never knew that.

R: It's quite stark. If you doing that kind of work the coding methods are very similar and all that, so you sort of get a foretaste of what's going to happen to you.

Q: So, how do you sort of learn that? Cos I never knew anything about this case?

R: Well, it's in the press and that. It was a very big case. He's one of the people who's one of the heroes of the struggle and he's one of the people who people feel very upset about. He died in a period when there were very few things happening and people feel very affected by it. Still. He's still mentioned as one of the heroes. In songs and poems.

Q: I know he was a hero from being held in detention, but I never knew his case was that he was doing propaganda.

R: He did this stuff when he was with Amina Desai, and Mohammed Esop.

Q: Because often it doesn't come out, because with other detainees who've died in detention you never know.

R: No, this is what he was doing.

Q: So, can I just ask you a bit about that? So you remember opening the paper and thinking this really hits home or how did it happen?

R: No, I looked at the pictures and when I read it I could see he was doing the same things as me. Just in case I had any doubts as to the treatment I would get in detention, it was brought home fairly forcefully.

Q: And you didn't say to yourself but 42 at that stage or whatever blacks have died, but no white has ever died?

R: No, I thought I might well die in detention.

Q: Once you were detained? But when you read that in the paper when he died and there had never been a white until Agget died in detention. Did you think to yourself, that's what happens to a black, but it would never happen to a white?

R: No, I didn't think so. I thought it was a possibility. I didn't actually think at the time, I was the first white to get electric shocks as far as I understand it. But not surprisingly, because I'd heard about it and I was psychologically prepared for it. I don't know how I feel now, but then I was - I remember one person talking to me and saying,

Rcont: and saying you've got to get it into your head that you may die, but there's something bigger that continues and get yourself into that frame of mind.

And it's an everdya matter for Africans to be tortured, to get electric shocks and all that. And in some situations I think it's better to die than to do some things so I hope I will continue to believe that. But I was fairly reconciled to that possibility. I thought it was quite possible that they would kill me. But I mean that's a bit unrealistic and I wasn't such a big shot that they would have killed me. They make mistakes - you know they keep the shocks on too long and all that.

Q: But I think there is a feeling among whites now, I mean especially before Agget, that what they did to blacks they wouldn't do to whites. Did you feel that?

R: No not really. No not really. They broke both Allen Brooks' legs - Allen Brooks is a friend of mine. So I knew that, and they beat up Stephanie Kemp, so I knew they would beat me up.

Also because of my CP links - it's different with liberals. I mean Agget wasn't - I didn't know him well, but certainly in my view he wasn't a member of any particular organisation. So that in itself is unusual.

They tend to kill people who are actually linked to these organisations.

Q: Let me just be a bit clinical so I can understand it - how your case was different. You would say that whites have been tortured before and beaten up before, but ...

R: Mainly Communist Party and ANC people.

Q: Because people have said to me you were treated worse than any white before you.

R: That might be true. I'm trying to think - you know Allen Brooks had both his legs broken, so I can't really say that to be electric shocked is worse.

Q: But that was a fact - do you think it was because they didn't give electric shocks before or just because they didn't do it to whites?

R: No, they'd done electric shocks before, but they hadn't caught a CP person for year.s. They didn't believe when I admitted that was the case. I mean they did believe it, but they were a bit staggered. Then they would go to the opposite extreme and say I was Brahm Fischer's successor. And I said well I

Rcont: And I said 'Well, I wish that were so, but it's not the case.' And they accused me of writing some things which I hadn't written, and which were the official organs of the CP and the ANC.

And I said, Look Here, I would be glad if that were me and I'm not at all ashamed of that material, but I don't write as well as that.' So they couldn't understand that I would admit that proudly. And I think that - but they wanted urgently to find these people before they skipped the country. That's why they tortured me.

Q: And a^l, it was the first case - I don't know about Allen Brooks ...

R: He was in ARM, but he's actually also in other things.

Q: And that was way back in the sixties.

R: In '64.

Q: That was ten years. Was there anyone else in those ten years?

R: ~~Hosey~~ ^{Moumbani} and ~~Mabros~~ (?) were tortured a bit. I can't remember the details, but they are quite funny, these security police.

They like, he was sunburnt and they'd take sandpaper you know and go and rub the sunburn off and this sort of thing with Hosey.

Q: How is his name spelt?

R: Hosey - he's a British citizen. He came out here to do this stuff here and then he was nabbed;

I don't know what else they did to him, They didn't torture him much you see.

And there are no other whites that I can remember, since the '64 period who's been tortured.

Q: There weren't really people picked up. There wasn't much going on.

R: There were people picked up. Well, the Dean of Johannesburg was treated pretty badly. That was in '71. He wasn't tortured, but they degraded him. He was French Beytach(?) They treated him badly.

Q: Is he around?

R: I think he's overseas. And then there was this

Recont: And then there was this guy Quinton Jacobson, who they actually acquitted. It was around the time of ~~Montoni~~. He had something like the Anarchist's Cookbook or something. And they tried to show that this was...

Q: What about if you were to talk about the trial itself?

R: My trial?

Q: Yeah. So what exactly...it was five months afterwards?

R: Yes, I was detained for something like 49 days. Then I was in Durban central prison while I was awaiting trial.

I think it's quite interesting to know a little bit about the prison. Because, I don't know, I had an idea of what detention would be like. However, terrible it was, it was more or less what I expected.

Whereas I somehow felt awaiting trial would be great. And going into a prison is dreadful. Just the whole - like the doors everything, everything makes such a noise. This sort of shattering sound. Every time they opened the key - these guys pride themselves, the youngsters in putting the keys in.

I think it may be that there's like an equivalent of a sexual connotation. Shove the key in and sort of pull it hard - sort of like rape almost. Bang, crash, you know it sounded like shattering glass every time they opened. Your nerves are really on edge in those places.

And they would make a noise right through the night. The first night I was there someone tried to slit his wrists and I thought O my God, is this what happens every night in prison? And I just felt terribly shaken.

But I did get used to it. It was much better when we were convicted. I was for five months there and basically it was quite interesting.

The white prisoners generally had a very good attitude towards us political ones. Except one or two who shout abuse at things. On the whole there was quite a lot of respect. Particularly amongst violent ones. They were very impressed when we first arrived in prison and get seven and a half years.

They can't understand this and also that you're not at all ashamed. They found it very odd. They would keep on saying 'Hy is a vare gentleman.'

Rcont: He is a gent. that guy. Cos I'm all respectable and all that. They can't understand why I rocked up there.

Q: But this was the political... (?261)

R: After I was convicted I was also with these guys a bit—they kept me in solitary after I was convicted a bit. But I'll tell you about that just now.

Q: I guess I want to make sure that I get what the whites have to do. What did you expect to see in the courtroom? It must have been really important to see the supporters. Had you had any visitors during the five months?

R: Yeah, while I was awaiting trial I always had lots of visits. I had used up all my visits and letters every day. I had quite a lot of friends in Durban, but my family would come down as well.

People in Durban organised to send me food and they came in every day. Or whatever with visits. I don't remember how many visits you could have - I think two a week or one a day, I can't remember.

Anyway, so when I arrived in court, there were people there.

Q: And (?275)

R: On the final day, they were quite upset, you see, I think they were upset when I talked in court and I think the way they run the show, the way court cases are depicted - on the one hand, you've got the state trying to present an ideological picture of someone who deserves to be sent to jail, who's done these terrible deeds etc, etc.

And when you watch this being unfolded, it doesn't actually correspond to the way you understand what you've done.

Although I was admitting that I had done various things, the way the court case actually depicted it - I've actually written on these things in that South African Review article - it actually depicts it in a way that demerits it of all social content.

So it became a technical matter. It was helluva boring this court case - really I was like falling asleep most of the time.

So, it's only when you do get a chance to have your own say, that you sort of set back - I don't know what you call it - the forces of evil! - but you set back once again and affirm the correctness of what you've done and set a new, and you contest the terrain.

Rcont: And you contest the terrain saying No, I'm not prepared to accept this, that and the other.

I was getting a bit upset about that obviously. And that was I think a day or two before I was sentenced. I was found guilty and then on the day of sentencing I seemed very upset and I didn't understand why. And then when I rocked up there, Winnie Mandela was there, wearing green gold and black you know. I didn't expect her there, but I thought it was very nice.

Q: '76 was this?

R: November '75.

Q: So she was still living in Soweto?

R: She'd just been unbanned for a while. (Yes) There hadn't been political trials for a long time. And I wasn't quite sure whether to stick my fist up and I wasn't sure how people would react. And when I stuck my fist up they all immediately stuck their fists up. It was a mainly black crowd and I believe when I was downstairs, they were all singing 'Nkosi Sikelele Africa, and my mother told me the Judges registrar was in tears.

So, it was an unusual case, because people I know hadn't seen a case for a long time and they were a bit shocked that I should say I was correct and that my career should be wasted as they thought it was.

Q: And there hadn't been any black trials recently before that?

R: Not so many.

Q: When you saw Winnie Mandela, did she say anything to you?

R: Yes. I can't remember something like hello, how are you??. I was telling about Nelson mainly and I was shouting across the dock you know and basically I don't think we understood what one another was saying, with the distance between us and the number of police between us.

Q: I think there's a quote of what she said to you in the book I read.

R: I have seen it. I don't know if that's what she said to me, but it was in the newspapers - I've got cuttings of the trial.

Q: Do you want to say much about the trial itself?

R: Basically very boring. The thing with these cases is they produce every typewriter and every piece of paper and I'd already admitted half the stuff.

Basically they wanted to give the impression of this terrible communist who'd done all these things. And one of the newspapers had a photograph - I can show you the cutting actually, it's quite interesting. They were making out that I was a very attractive personality, always smiling and this, so the impression they were trying to give is that I was underneath this deep criminal, sort of this psychopathic personality.

So, the image of the apparently nice guy, along with these lots of boxes and pamphlets and equipment was meant to imply that this is how devious these types are and that while appearing to be so they used a word 'innemindeglimlage' meaning engaging smile or something like that. and it was actually to entice people into these nefarious activities.

So they go through all these boring activities to prove that sort of you know. I was falling asleep except that they produced various things. Like they

Sechaba with sort of quotes from our magazines and I was very interested in that and I wanted to see my own copy. For my defence I said, and they wanted to play excerpts of Freedom Radio but the defence lawyers objected. But I was very happy about this I would like to have heard it. But they thought it would prejudice my case you see.

As interest goes I thought it was helluva boring.

Q: Who were your lawyers?

R: George Bizos and Raymond Tucker.

Q: Is there anything to say about the trial in terms of you being white?

R: I don't know. I think I was given quite good attention by the press. I thought the press treated me reasonably well. The judge, I think the judge said I was disgusting especially to entice this young woman - it was shocking! Judging from the judgement, they sort of implied that this person had recently had a romantic involvement and someone like me took advantage of this, to entice her into my - he used the word nefarious - activities.

Q: And how would you say - I read the thing you wrote about in the South African Review - that what the State's trying to do with the white trials as opposed to a black trial.

R: I think a white trial - it's similar in a way, except in a black trial, they have to extract from a whole history of repression, suppression, denial of rights

Now in the case of a white, obviously that's not part of my history. And it's more in my head a motivation which aren't really taken account of in the trial. Only when you give your speech from the dock - you can't do that anymore. Then you can bring out your side.

But I think with the whites they want to depict people as ordinary - no, I wouldn't like to say ordinary criminals, that's too simplistic. I think they have problems with it. I can't remember how they treated Brahm Fischer.

In my case, the judge didn't try to engage me on the moral questions.. I raised moral reasons why I did things and he just said basically that's no excuse and didn't go into it. He just bucked the question.

So, it would vary. I didn't like to - you know in Barbara Hogan's case however, I've actually done an analysis of that in some other article. But this chap says 'When we come to punishment, we apply basic principles. The punishment must fit the criminal and the crime.'

Now, what he's doing here is first of all he's abstracting from a variety of other things. First of all, apartheid's a crime in international law. Now, that doesn't come into consideration. Barbara Hogan's own motivations, the fact that she acted in support of a movement that has a lot of support whatever one might think of that. That isn't taken account. She's abstracted and isolated as an individual criminal.

He then goes to talk about this very serious thing that she's done. Disturbing the peace and tranquility in South Africa especially in so sensitive a field as the labour field.

Anyway, this again implies there's peace and tranquility in South Africa. Now what sort of peace and tranquility is there in Crossroads? Resettlements and so forth. There's an attempt then to individualise the offender as the sort of exception who has disturbed a basically peaceful society.

Most judges don't go that far. This is a particularly reactionary judge who did this.

Q: And why did you think that was, because they were being too effective?

R: I don't know. I don't think that's necessarily why. I think that they had other reasons. There's a commission that was amended abolishing a State Witness from the dock, for other reasons. I don't know whether it had anything to do with statements which people made. I'm not sure.

Q: O.K. So the trial - I was interested in your situation with whites and also because you obviously with your whole legal background, did you feel you got anymore insights into the role of the judiciary through your detention?

R: Yes. But I must say first of all, I got a lot of support in certain sections of the university academic sector. Law sector - there was a lot of antagonism amongst certain people. I don't know exactly why, but there was a lot of very heavy attitudes. You know, although I generally had a lot of support, I didn't get it from a lot of these sectors.

As regards students, they were very supportive. Young people in general.

As regards insight into the judiciary, the sort of thing I'm writing now, is partly as a result of seeing from the other side the way a trial is depicted. I didn't recognise myself as the way it was depicted. I look at the way a trial is constructed, as a reconstruction of an historical event, a series of events - now they actually only consider certain things significant. The result is that what the accused considers most significant seems to get very little showing often. And I was aware of that, but I didn't write on it for a long time, because I wasn't studying law in prison until near the end. And basically it was only when I was allowed to register at Unisa for a doctorate in law - you had to do too many theses - the one is this thing that I'm going to publish on the judiciary.

I started to do quite a lot of work on it. It's supposed to be twenty five pages and it was ninety nine pages double spacing. I did quite a lot of work but it was ideas that I had been thinking of before I went to jail but I think that that experience helped to crystallise some things.

Q: And is that experience one that whites wouldn't even be able to understand that aspect of apartheid society except for being in that position?

R: I wouldn't say so. No I think there are a lot of things you can begin to understand without experiencing them. I think that prison is something for a white to go into if he or she wants to understand what it's like to undergo privations every day like blacks do.

R: But trials is something else you know.

Q: At the trial there were lots of blacks in the court. Were they blacks you knew or were they just there because of what you represented?

R: Some of them I knew, but most I didn't. They were very warm.

Q: So that must have been really interesting.

R: No, it was very nice. I saw the last copy of the daily news, so I could see the headlines and I realised they had sung in court so I had some idea. And it was something that kept me going for a while. Cos they kept me in solitary for three and a half months after that. It was quite important as that memory.

Q: And when was this July '76. So after the trial, you were in solitary for three months and then they put you into Pretoria Central. So was that finally important to get in with those guys.

R: Yeah. It was terrible in solitary. Because I was expecting to go straight to the others and they interrogated me some more.

Q: Why?

R: Well, they thought I knew about Jeremy and David and other groupings and so they kept me there. You get quite a fright. Suddenly you find sixteen of these guys rock up to question you and well I just wasn't sure what would happen - whether I would get beaten up or what. And they still kept me there after that for another three and a half months.

It was nice being put with the others.

Q: Who was there?

R: Dave Kitsen, Dennis Goldberg, Alex Mombares, Marius ~~Sidon~~ Sidon, Shaun Hosey, John Matthews, Tomms, - Raymond Tomms - I didn't actually communicate with him, because he had been a State Witness, in the case against Harold Strachen.

I'm trying to think who else. That was all at the beginning. but do you want to know who was there during my whole period or?

Then Jeremy Cronin, David Rabkin, Tim Jenkins, Stephen Lee, ..

Q: What were they two bust for?

R: Same things as me.

Q: Doing pamphlets.

R: They were very effective, because Jenkins had had very high level training in that sort of stuff. He was very good with his hands. He could produce very

Rcont: He could produce very effectively.

Then there was Renfrew Christie and Guy Berger I'm trying to think who else. And I didn't see Rob Adam though he was there at the same time as me, but in a different part. And well there's others there now.

Q: Who else is in now since (?..518)

R: Guy Gerrard and Carne House (?) and what's this guy's name. Hannekom, Roland Hunter.

Q: So, it was a pretty small group.

R: It's always pretty small. The maximum which we had was ten.

Q: Were you welcomed right in or was it kind of high initially?

R: Yes, it was terrific. I hadn't spoken to anyone for months, so it was very nice. And it was a very supportive community. One has problems because we're in such close contact. But if anyone is attacked or has a difficult time with the authorities, we all stand together.

It was very moving in that respect. But it was difficult, because why you're actually quite enjoy being alone in your cell at night, because it's quite tense having such a small group. But I learnt a lot in the experience.

Q: And this is a difficult question, but what do you think got you through your time in prison? Was it that comradie with the others?

R: Prison is not so difficult if you are a political prisoner. Because in the first place you go in there with your head held high - you're completely proud of what you've done. And if you remember that all along and don't forget that, a) psychologically, you start off very well. Secondly, your job in prison is to come out a better person, better able to play a role in the struggle and I think it's important not to waste your time in prison and to come out feeling that you've grown. I feel I grew morally and intellectually and my political understanding is better. And, some people come in and they feel very sorry for themselves as if they're the only people who've ever been in prison.

And it wasn't very difficult because of I used every moment - there was too little time in prison as far as I'm concerned. I worked hard, there was a

Rcont: I worked hard, there was a lot of discussion, I understand a lot of things much better. And morally, it's very difficult and out of moral difficult situations, you can either collapse or you grow.

And I think that most people grow in them. And it wasn't a daily problem. Really heavy at times but on the whole no problems.

Q: And was there any one of the white political prisoners who was more of a mentor, who you looked to in terms of theoretical knowledge or ...?

R: We tended to work collectively and learn a lot from one another.

Q: Did you compare notes with other political prisoners? Is there really a bond between people? Like Hugh Lewin's book?

R: No, I read Hugh Lewin's book before. It was very useful to read. I disagree with some of the positions he takes in detention - I actually wrote something criticizing one of the charges against me. It's a bit defeatist in my opinion, the opening part of it. But the book itself is very good.

Q: What, that he doesn't have a better attitude about what detention can do?

R: No, I think once Left which gives evidence against him, he feels betrayed and I can't remember the story.

As far as I'm concerned, even if an individual betrays you there's something bigger than the individual involved. And I can't remember the grounds but it seems fatalistic and it's a very good book. I've no problems - I'd like to meet him. I hope I meet him sometime.

Q: Have you ever compared notes with other political prisoners? Black political prisoners?

R: Yes, a lot.

Q: What is that like? Again I'm into my black/white thing.

R: I think that it's easier in some ways for them. In the beginning both white and black prisoners before I got to jail had a very heavy time, especially on the island. I mean many of them were treated badly it sounds.

But I think a small group is much more difficult. It's much more difficult to smuggle. We didn't have newspapers for years, we didn't have radios for years. And we had to smuggle all these things.

Reont: Well we did with radios. But they smuggled easily. They had a great time in that regard.

Also we didn't have a lot of senior people and the consequence is that the extent to which you can learn is less in a community like ours was. And also the degree of authority that some people can have if you've got about twenty people there who are really top people.

But also, the degree of tensions at a personal level is less there than it would be in our group.

Q: And the question I asked about the differences you put in between your era of political prisoners and the new whites who came and there was the Goldberg/Kitson

R: The differences were interesting in the sense of people's - these guys went to jail in 1953-64.

The consequences were that there was a big cultural gap in the things that we experienced. I think there was also, people like Jeremy Cronin, David Rabkin must have had a very similar type of background academically.

That's the one thing. On the other hand, we grew up in a different period. The things we knew the friends we had, these people didn't have.

There was a sort of cultural barrier and the age barrier was a problem.

It also affected one's attitudes to different things. There might be different attitudes to women say and so on a political level also - for years there were political discussions going on arguing about certain things.

There wasn't always cohesion. Eventually there was more cohesion. One position became more dominant than another. But I mean, there was a lot of room for discussions and differences.

Q: Did you feel that someone like Renfrew Christie represented a whole different era?

R: I don't think he was specifically recruited and therefore under an organisation's discipline.

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