

INTERVIEW WITH COMRADE CHRIS HANI

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Start counting down at 630

CH So let me start from the beginning. I was born in the Transkei on 28 June 1942 in a small town called Cofimvaba which is about 60kms from Queenstown. I was not born in that small town, I was born in a remote village, St Marks. My mother had never been to school and my father must have gone to school for about five to six years. Basically primary education. My father was a migrant worker. He worked in the mines earlier on and later on he worked as a construction worker in Cape Town. Later becoming a hawker and selling soft goods. We as young people saw very little of him and our group really was supervised and monitored by my mother. We went to the village school, walking about 8 to 10 kms a day going to that school. We were three boys. We were six in the family but three survived. Because in the rural areas those days there were literally no health facilities. A family was lucky to have the whole offspring surviving. If fifty percent survived, that was an achievement, so out of six, three of us survived and we are still surviving. Then from there I went to a Catholic mission to finish my standard 6. It was at this stage that I seriously considered being a Catholic priest, but my father would not have anything of that.

L Were your parents Christians?

CH Well, no. My father was baptised, my mother was baptised, but they were not practising Christians. I never saw them going to church. My grandmother never went to church. So it was not a Christian family. I grew up in an area where very few people were Christians. In the village, probably three or four people bothered to go to church. It was really a traditional African area where people practised their own religious worship. The influence of Christianity was very minimal. So, although I went to a Christian church, I must say I was under the spell and influence of the priests, the monks and the nuns. And one must say that there is something basically one admired in them. A sense of hard work, selflessness. These people would go on horseback to the most rural parts of the village, taking the gospel to the people, encouraging kids to go to school. Praying for the sick and offering all sorts of advice. In other words they were not only priests, but they were nurses, they were teachers, they were social workers. I must submit that had a very very strong impression on me and in the formation of my character. I thought I wanted to be a priest, but my father didn't want it so I had no say in this thing. I

branched, and I went to high school.

In 1958 I completed my matric and I went over to Fort Hare the following year to become a university student. I began to be consciously involved in the struggle in 1957. We had all been politicised by the introduction of Bantu education. It was very unpopular. Many teachers spoke out against it, and this impacted on some of us. One found his way to the African National Congress Youth League. One began to read an assortment of journals and newspapers, *New Age* whose editor then was I think Lionel Forman. That was before Brian Bunting. I also began to read the organ of the Unity Movement called *Torch*, published in the Western Cape. At the same time one read journals like *Fighting Talk* edited by Ruth First, *Liberation* and all that. So it was at this stage as a young matric student that I began to get politicised and I was reading quite considerable political literature.

L did you join the YL while you were still at school?

CH Yes, at the age of 15 I joined the YL at Lovedale.

L When you were reading *Torch* were you now being introduced to Marxist concepts.

CH Yes, I began to be introduced to Marxist concepts through reading both *New Age* and *Torch*. There was a page in *New Age* which dealt with the struggle of the working class throughout the world. What was happening in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, China. The life that people were building there. And that had an appeal in my own impassionate young mind. Given my background, I was attracted by ideas and the philosophy which had a bias towards the working class. Which had as its stated objective the upliftment of the people on the ground. For about six or nine months I was actually in the Unity Movement. I was a member of SOYA, the Society of Young Africa. My earlier political influence was the Unity Movement. It was strong amongst intellectuals in the whole of the Eastern Cape, most of the intellectuals, teachers and all that belonged to the Unity Movement. Some of them had taught us. But later on I began to examine the Unity Movement, and I didn't see them being involved in the mass struggles of our people. The struggle was waged in the mind, in the head. It was a theoretical struggle. The activism of the ANC began to make me shift my political allegiance from the UM to the ANC. Furthermore, I met comrades who were already in the YL like Comrade Siphon Makana, Anderson Ganyile who was banished from Pondoland during the Pondo struggle. I began to be exposed to the writings of Govan Mbeki who was writing a lot, he was a prolific writer on the problems of the rural areas and the struggles in the Eastern Cape. And so I began to join the ANC and belong to an ANC underground cell because it was illegal to become a member of a political organisation within the college, the Lovedale institution.

L I was going to ask what the nuns and brothers thought of it.

CH This one was not, I had moved away from a Catholic school, this was a

Presbyterian school, but with very strict headmasters and all that sort of thing. Political activity was absolutely prohibited. In a way we were introduced to the underground struggle before the ANC was banned. So in a way you can say that we as students were better placed when the ANC was banned in 1960 because our activities were illegal at the College, at Lovedale. And then, at this stage one began to read widely about the leaders of the ANC because the first requirement was to understand the history of the ANC going back to 1912, why was it formed, who were its earlier leaders, going through all the different periods. The period of the YL itself, the history of the YL. The contribution to the ANC by the YL in terms of the militancy, the programme of action, and who were behind this POA, people like Tambo, Mandela, Mji, Anton Lembede (559), Sisulu etc. And now, as youngsters, these were our idols. These were our heroes. These young people who actually transformed the ANC and made it to become an organisation which was militant, which was actually engaging the white government. Therefore this was the period of our general understanding of the contribution and the role of people like Tambo. We admired them because we saw in them a different type of intelligentsia. And intelligentsia which is selfless, which is not just concerned about making money, creating a comfortable situation for themselves, but an intelligentsia which had lots of time for the struggle of the oppressed people of SA. How they used their legal knowledge to alleviate the judicial persecution of the blacks through the pass laws, through Bantu Authorities, or the Group Areas. And as we therefore studied, we felt that our priority as a future probably intellectuals, should be to participate in this struggle. And I must say my life was shaped by the outlook of people like comrade Tambo, Mandela, Duma Nokwe and others.

BREAK IN RECORDING

CH One must point out that there had never been any physical meeting between me and Comrade OR. That had to wait until the ANC got banned in 1960, leading the situation where Umkonto weSiswe was formed in 1961. It was my joining Umkonto WeSiswe which lead to a development where I left the country. This is early 1963.

L How did you join MK? And had you joined the Party by then?

CH In 1961, at Fort Hare, at the University College of Fort Hare, I was doing my third year, studying for a BA degree and majoring in Latin and English. I am approached, I am already a member of the YL, by some comrades who apparently had been moulded or welded into a Communist Party unit by Comrade Mbeki. so In 1961 I joined the Party and I began seriously studying Marxism, the basic works of Marxist authors like Emily Bents (534) *What is Marxism*, the *Communist Manifesto*, the *World Marxist Review* and a number of other publications. I began to read the history of our Party by people like Edward Roux for instance, *Time Longer than Rope*, giving the earlier history of the CP. And other journals by people like Bill Andrews and trade union periodicals written with contributions from people like Ray Alexander, Gomas, Jimmy La Guma.

Now I am sure the next question is, why did I join the CP? Why was I not just satisfied with the ANC? I belonged to a world, in terms of my background which suffered I think the

worst extremes of apartheid. A poor rural area where the majority of working people spent their times in the compounds, in the hostels, away from their families. A rural area where there were no clinics and probably the nearest hospital was 50kms. Generally a life of poverty with the basic things unavailable. Where our mothers and our sisters would walk 3kms and even 6kms whenever there was a drought to fetch water. Where the only fuel available was going 5, 6kms away to cut wood and bring it back. This was the sort of life. Now I had seen the lot of black workers, extreme forms of exploitation. Slave wages, no trade union rights, and for me the appeal of socialism was extremely great. Where it was said that workers create wealth but in the final analysis they get nothing. They get peanuts in order to survive and continue working for the capitalists. So it was that simple approach that simple understanding which was a product of my own observation in addition to theory. I didn't get involved with the workers' struggle out of theory alone. Why did I join the CP? Why was I not just satisfied with the ANC? I belonged to a world, in terms of my background which suffered I think the worst extremes of apartheid. A poor rural area where the majority of working people spent their times in the compounds, in the hostels, away from their families. A rural area where there were no clinics and probably the nearest hospital was 50kms. Generally a life of poverty with the basic things unavailable. Where our mothers and our sisters would walk 3kms and even 6kms whenever there was a drought to fetch water. Where the only fuel available was going 5, 6kms away to cut wood and bring it back. This was the sort of life. Now I had seen the lot of black workers, extreme forms of exploitation. Slave wages, no trade union rights, and for me the appeal of socialism was extremely great. Where it was said that workers create wealth but in the final analysis they get nothing. They get peanuts in order to survive and continue working for the capitalists. So it was that simple approach that simple understanding which was a product of my own observation in addition to theory. I didn't get involved with the workers' struggle out of theory alone. It was a combination of theory and my own class background. I never faltered in my belief in socialism despite all the problems currently. For me that belief is strong because that is still the life of the majority of the people with whom I share a common background.

L What made you different in that you got as far as university?

CH Yes, that is an important question. In my family the first person to become a teacher, in other words two years after the junior certificate, it was called the Native Primary Higher, NPH, was my aunt. She is still alive. She stays somewhere in Zondi in Soweto. My father's sister. She was a source of tremendous influence to all of us. This girl coming from that sort of area, studying to become a teacher. I remember as a small boy I used to have a fascination of books, I would read those books although I understood very little. She encouraged me and taught me a few necessary rhymes and began to open up a new world even before I got to school. A world of knowing how to write the alphabet, how to count, in other words not only literacy but numeracy. Because of that background, when I went to school I was in a better position than most boys in the village, and I remember the principal of the school got encouraged, how I would read a story and actually memorise that story and without looking at the book I would actually recite it word by word. And then I became a very good pupil. For

instance instead of doing the usual, I wrote standard 5 and standard 6 at the same time, because I passed the Std 5 examination within the same year as Std 6 and then I was promoted to high school. Then there was a scholarship in the Transkei called the Bhunga (491), you know the old Bhunga, sort of an advisory board? Well I got that Bhunga scholarship to take me to high school and then I got even a bursary and a scholarship to go to university because I was performing rather above average. I got a bursary from the Bhunga and then later on my father was also helping to pay what the scholarship couldn't cover. He was in Cape Town by then. He was hawking now, and he helped to pay the rest of the fees. When I went over to Fort Hare, in addition to the Bhunga scholarship, I won a government loan to go to university. I think basically that is what helped me to go to university. It was extremely hard. One would have only one pair of shoes, one jacket and it was not easy because other students from families which were probably were more comfortable than mine, the kids would be better clothed than myself. But I had accepted the fact that this was not important for me. What was important was to get my education. It was through this spirit of self sacrifice and accepting that the priority was to get my education. There was a number of us coming from rural areas who got their pocket money because parents sold hides and wool whenever it was the sheep shearing season. We had some sheep and some cattle and goats at home. So my mother also, my father bought a sewing machine for my mother, so now and again through that I could get a bit of pocket money whilst I was at Lovedale and Fort Hare.

L This point about the long-term goal, it's interesting that you made short term sacrifices for the long term goal.

CH That's right. For me that was important and I was actually influenced by the sort of puritan life in the villages. During holidays I used to go and be with my mother, help my mother in the fields, growing maize and harvesting. Because if you harvested probably 20 bags of maize, the rest would be sold to the white shopkeeper. Because that was the only market available in the rural areas. It was the white shopkeeper who would buy at prices determined by him. [laugh]. In other words I contributed even to the slender financial resources of the family by working very hard during holidays in the fields and also looking after the stock.

BREAK IN RECORDING

CH Same village.

L In terms of the chronology, you joined the YL, you were in Fort Hare, you also joined the UM at Lovedale. So by the time you got to Fort Hare

CH I joined the UM at Lovedale and then at Fort Hare I was already a fully fledged member of the YL. Then I joined the Party at Fort Hare.

L But in a sense the UM was preparing you for the Party.

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CH Yes. The Party in those early years actually was very much involved in preparing us theoretically for the understanding of Marxism. What is Marxism, what is the SACP, why it important to become both a member of the ANC and the Party. Why is there no contradiction between the two? The need to yoke together the national and the class struggle. Which is the priority? The priority being national liberation, the liberation of mostly the blacks, leading to a democratic situation. And why it was important that the struggle should continue beyond the state of national democratic for socialism. (452). We were being equipped theoretically to understand these issues, and why it was important to work in the ANC and other mass organisations, and in the trade unions. So in a way the Party shaped our non-sectarian approach to the struggle in SA. the Party shaped our non-sectarian approach to the struggle in SA. These were the issues that we were discussing. It equipped us both theoretically and ideologically, but mainly the Party convinced us that the main area of struggle was in the ANC. It was important to have an ANC which accepted the Freedom Charter (FC) which committed itself to the implementation of the FC. And we felt that the FC was a revolutionary document in terms of the struggle for national liberation and democracy. And basically that is what we spent a lot of time discussing and debating all these issues in the Party cells.

L And then, MK?

CH Well, as I indicated, 1960 becomes a very difficult year for the ANC. It is banned, it has to go underground and 61 people like Mandela had to go underground after making a call for a stay at home at the All In (440) Conference in 'Maritzburg. In a way this became a period of serious questioning and introspection and soul searching on the part of the ANC, the Communist Party. With the growing repression, with the growing violation of basic human rights, with the imprisonment without trial, detention without trial, the question was being asked, were we going to continue in the old way with non-violence, with non-violent protest? And this debate was never conclusive. There were divisions within the ANC about the next move. And that is why the formation of Umkhonto we Siswe was not endorsed by the ANC leadership. What was said was that the ANC leadership understood the need for the formation of MK, so joining MK became voluntary. The Party itself had debated and I think the Party as a whole, endorsed MK, but in the ANC the leadership was split. It was not a hostile split. a period of serious questioning and introspection and soul searching on the part of the ANC, the Communist Party. With the growing repression, with the growing violation of basic human rights, with the imprisonment without trial, detention without trial, the question was being asked, were we going to continue in the old way with non-violence, with non-violent protest? And this debate was never conclusive. There were divisions within the ANC about the next move. And that is why the formation of Umkhonto we Siswe was not endorsed by the ANC leadership. What was said was that the ANC leadership understood the need for the formation of MK, so joining MK became voluntary. The Party itself had debated and I think the Party as a whole, endorsed MK, but in the ANC the leadership was split. It was not a hostile split. Those who did not agree felt that there was still room for a non-peaceful [sic] strategy. But they said of course they understood the arguments for some

form of armed struggle.

L Those who didn't join the armed struggle, how did they visualise the struggle continuing? A struggle through the labour movement?

CH Yes, they thought of a struggle through the labour movement, they thought of a struggle through even less revolutionary organisations, some of them continuing to exist within the system. How to get into the advisory boards and other things, and use them as platforms. There was no well-defined strategy, but they were saying that we could exploit a number of avenues. Although they were not explicit in terms of which avenues, apart from the trade unions, but even the trade union movement, the labour movement was also under tremendous attack. The leaders had been banned in the same way as the ANC leaders were banned. People like Mark Shope, Moses Mabhida, Leon Levy, and all that, they were receiving the same attention from the police as the ANC leaders. People like Vuyisile Mini. So you couldn't argue convincingly that there was space in the labour movement because the labour movement was also under attack and there were attempts to undermine it and to subvert it by forming a rival union. I remember FOFATUSA characters from abroad, from ICFTU came actually to drive a wedge and split the trade union movement. It was just the uncertainty about moving from non-violence to armed struggle without the existence of objective and subjective factors. Our people knew nothing about military struggle. The last wars that we fought were fought towards the end of the 19th century. People had been deskilled in terms of understanding war. They were not even allowed to keep spears in their own houses. So I think the task of moving to an armed struggle was found daunting by many leaders of the ANC. There was not even a single country which was an independent country, next door to SA. There was no rear base. People felt that, some people were saying, was this not an exercise in adventurism or something of the sort. How realisable was the strategy of armed struggle? I think these were debates that were taking place. But those who opted for armed struggle moved swiftly. They used the expertise of comrades who had been involved in the last war, in the Second World War, people like Jack Hodgson, like Strachan, like Ben Turok and others. Like Denis Goldberg, engineers like Denis Goldberg, to teach the rudimentary skills of the manufacture of bombs, the manufacturing of timing devices, the mixing of chemicals and all that sort of thing. What was important for many of us was the armed propaganda. For the other side to understand that we are sick and tired and if they don't want to sit down and negotiate, we are going to fight.

L At that early stage armed struggle had a tremendous symbolic effect.

CH Yes. It had an armed propaganda effect in the sense that we wanted to encourage our people to fight back and not to be demoralised. You must remember that this was a time when there was a massive swoop on activities. People arrested, and detained throughout the country, especially the Eastern Cape. Thousands are detained, tortured, in the Transkei. Others ultimately were executed. People like Mini in 1963 and Bongco (390) and there was a feeling that we cannot just turn the other cheek.

L Were you a part of the M Plan? Would you say the tradition of the M plan was

distinct from a Leninist cell?

CH There are similarities. It is the tradition as far as I am concerned, of the experience of the Bolsheviks in Russia where there was a lot of repression and Tsarist autocracy. Where the communists and socialists and other radical elements couldn't organise openly. The activities of the South African Special Branch were hardly different from the activities of PRANA, the Russian security police. And now the Eastern Cape being the most repressed area, had to start implementing the M Plan. Meetings of the ANC were banned there as far back as the 50s. Open meetings were not allowed. Meetings of more than 10 people were not allowed. That is why in the Eastern Cape, especially around Port Elizabeth, there was the experimentation of underground units. The building of units, zonal leadership, unit leadership, and all that sort of thing, in order to minimise the crippling effects of arrest, to prevent the chain reaction whenever an arrest was effected. So the Eastern Cape was in a better position to build underground structures when the ANC was banned in 1960, because for more than ten years the ANC there had been subjected to cruel repression on the part of the security police.

L How did you join MK?

CH I joined MK in Cape Town. After finishing my degree at Fort Hare I went over to Cape Town where my father was working. I got articles. I wanted to become a lawyer. So it is in the course of my serving articles that the comrades in the Western Cape, the underground leadership of the Western Cape, the Committee of Seven, appoints me to that committee. I became a member of the Committee of Seven, in overall charge of the underground of the ANC in the Western Cape. It is in the course of my activities within that Committee of Seven that I am recruited to become part of the MK set up. I am recruited into a unit and I begin to operate in small way, throwing molotov cocktails, cutting telephone cables and all that. This is in 1962. Sometime in 1962 I get arrested, and I am charged with distributing illegal leaflets. I am sentenced to 18 months hard labour. But I was out on bail. Then instructions come from MK High Command, nationally, for me to leave the country to go for military training. So it is in May 1963 that I leave the country for military training abroad.

L What was your father's attitude to your political activities?

CH Well, both of us were involved. My father is also involved in the ANC underground. He is a member of the civic association called the Langa Residents' Association. He is the chairperson there. He is very active. He is an influential community leader. So my activities met with a lot of understanding and support from him. In other words, I had no domestic problems in terms of my political activities. My uncle in Stellenbosch was a member of the CPSA before it was banned, and also later becomes an important community leader. So there was this tradition, this background, of support from, and activity from many of my family members.

L When you left, you skipped the country

CH I skipped the country illegally via Bechuanaland, Northern Rhodesia and eventually Tanzania.

L Was there a reception in -

CH Reception in Johannesburg first of all, underground reception, where we were assembled. We were more than 20 coming from the different parts of SA, from East London, from Durban, from Johannesburg, from Cape Town. And we were all meant for Botswana. In Botswana there was also some underground reception. Some arrangements were made to truck us to Kasangula (337) on the Zambezi River, and then we got into Livingstone in Zambia. And then even in Zambia there was some ANC underground presence there. Ultimately we struggled to Tanzania where there was an ANC office. And it is where that for the first time I meet Comrade Oliver Tambo. In Dar. That was in 63. I mean physically meeting Comrade Tambo, Comrade Duma Nokwe, and the other comrades.

L They had set up the office and

CH They had set up the office and reception houses. We were received and kept at a house called Luthuli House in one of the suburbs of Dar Es Salaam.

L Which had been donated by?

CH Yes, by the Tanzanian government, by Nyerere. Then we were received by him, we were addressed by him, we were inspired by him. Sort of quite convincing style of OR. He comes to see us whenever he had time and to discuss with us, and to listen to us. To listen to our own experiences. What we thought were insignificant experiences, we never thought they were important. But Tambo would come and ask us, listen, to those experiences. We are encouraged to visit the office now and again, to read books and all that sort of thing. It is also there that I later met Ronnie Kasrils and a few other comrades. Then preparation was made to send us abroad for military training. And then I was sent to the Soviet Union together with 30 comrades. In that same year. Actually, we didn't spend more than three months in Dar Es Salaam. we were received by him, we were addressed by him, we were inspired by him. Sort of quite convincing style of OR. Very humble. He comes to see us whenever he had time and to discuss with us, and to listen to us. To listen to our own experiences. What we thought were insignificant experiences, we never thought they were important. But Tambo would come and ask us, listen, to those experiences. We are encouraged to visit the office now and again, to read books and all that sort of thing. It is also there that I later met Ronnie Kasrils and a few other comrades. Then preparation was made to send us abroad for military training. And then I was sent to the Soviet Union together with 30 comrades. In that same year. Actually, we didn't spend more than three months in Dar Es Salaam. And we went for military training. Then it is at this course that my beliefs in socialism are actually strengthened. You must consider that I came from a very racial society. And therefore the first time most of us as blacks are received as human beings, as equal human beings, we are received by people from the Central Committee who

are based in a secret house and at this time we have these white ladies actually cooking for us and looking after this place. So for us this is a new world. A new world of equality, of people where our colour seems to be of no consequence. Where our humanity is being recognised. And for us we thought that this could only be possible under socialism. We had not been exposed, we had not been to Britain. We had no comparative experience. So for us this strengthened our feelings, our strong feelings in socialism. We are introduced to lots of subjects, not only military subjects. In terms of the theory of guerilla warfare, the politics of socialism, the great October Revolution. We visit museums, even our cultural education now begins to start. Going to concerts, to the Bolshoi theatre and other theatres. For the first time actually watched ballet dancing. I mean a new world for us. We never saw it in our country. We begin to appreciate classical music, another new world for us. We move around in Moscow in buses. Of course these were guided tours, and we don't see starving people, we don't see beggars. We go to factories and watch the Russian workers. Now of course I know that we were not exposed to everything that was happening, but that partial opening of the window into this new society served to strengthen our strong socialist convictions. I want to say, without reservations, that shaped my outlook, strengthened my politics. Looking at the sacrifices of the Russian people during the years of the civil war, 1917, 1918, made an indelible impression on me. How Lenin would sacrifice sleep, food, to lead his people, to fight the privileged classes who didn't want to see a Soviet power and the emancipation of the Russian working class. The famine, and how communists were always in the forefront of the struggles, the armed struggles, the mass struggles. The attempted assassination of Lenin, how he had been on his sick bed and he would worry about what was happening area by area. People in this country and even throughout the world tend to push aside that glorious chapter in the history of the Russian working class. Everything now is covered up by the excesses that followed. And yet for us as people in this country, let us look at those few years after the Russian revolution, 1917, when power actually was taken from the hands of the rich few into the hands of the working class. And let's forget about the aberrations that happened afterwards, and we must draw the important lessons of what appeared to be a popular democracy, the Soviets, the people coming into the streets. The people seizing the properties of the few and trying to run them because the bourgeoisie wanted to sabotage. And running away in order to cripple the revolution. So we were actually eating and lapping all this information. It is information that was hidden from us in this country. We had never read anything like that before in this country, so our appetites were really whetted, they were sharpened by this new experience. For me that was an unforgettable experience.

L How long were you in Moscow?

CH I was there for more than a year. I come back to Dar Es Salaam after finishing my military training, and again I meet Oliver Tambo. We are received by him, and this is important to observe, for Tambo, our well-being was always important. Not wellbeing in terms of getting our food every day. But Tambo wanted us to feel an important part of the organisation. We were ordinary cadres, we were not names. We were not important names. But Tambo paid this attention to us regularly. Visiting us, asking us about our experiences in the Soviet Union, about our courses, and also briefing us on what was

happening during our absence in the country, the Rivonia arrests, the conviction of our leaders, the need for

L Did he personally brief you?

CH Yes, he personally spoke to us about these things. The need for us to go back to help rebuild the organisation and he painted a sense of challenge, a sense of challenge on the part of the young enthusiastic people that you are needed by South Africa, needed by the people of SA. And I think that really impacted on us positively. And made us actually feel that despite the hazards of going back to SA, there was no other way out. We have got to go back and be part of that struggle. Part of that challenge of rebuilding a shattered organisation, and beginning to lay the foundations for ?? (248).

L How did you go about preparing to go back?

CH Well, we set up a camp in a place called Kongwa(246). Tambo had negotiated, in the south of Dar Es Salaam, not far from Dodoma, with the liberation committee of the Organisation of African Unity, with the Tanzanian government, and we were given land to set up tents and also to build the infrastructure for a military camp of the ANC. For us it was also the beginning of important lessons in self help because, you remember that Nyerere attached a lot of importance to self help projects, to community development. We were given basic infrastructures, it was important for you to build for yourselves, to plant food, chickens, pigs and all that sort of thing.

L Did your group set up

CH Yes I was the political commissar of that group. I was appointed political commissar. We started it. There was only one structure there, and then we began to build other structures. Build armouries, we set up, we pitched tents, we built a wall, we began to cultivate the hectares of land that were made available to us. WE build recreational facilities, playing football, volley ball, table tennis and all that. That was started by us. We learnt a lot of skills. There were few comrades who had skills in building, but we knew now how to make cement, to drive wheelbarrows, and it was good for people like me, who had never had an experience of being workers, just got out of university. This was another educational centre for us. The need to integrate your intellectual knowledge with manual and physical labour.

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L That period in Moscow was good preparation.

CH It was good preparation, theoretical and also physical preparation.

L Were you quite fit by the end of the course?

CH Of course. Because you see it was compulsory. Every morning we had to go out, we had to go on marches, tactical marches. WE had to go out into the Russian villages, set up camps there in the forests and the marshes of around Moscow. And stay there and look at maps, orientate ourselves. We learnt topography, firearms, engineering skills, the manufacture of explosives and the use of standard explosives. So I was fit physically, I was in very good shape. For me those are important years because I was about 19, 20, 21, 22 and I was prepared both mentally and physically for the great tasks ahead. Then I come to Dar Es Salaam and that process continues, of disciplining ourselves to endure hardships.

L How long did this camp last?

CH Well, I am selected in 1966 to go to Zambia. In 65 Zambia had become independent and I am given the task together with two comrades to be stationed in Zambia and to begin the process of reconnaissance of routes through Rhodesia into SA. And then I become physically involved now in driving between Lusaka, Livingstone, towards the Zambezi River. And I begin for the first time to work together with comrades from ZAPU. We are preparing routes now, how to create conditions for taking us back to SA. Illegally through Zimbabwe, through Botswana. A long way, but we were convinced we were going to make it. And again, I meet Tambo now and again, Tambo is actually commuting between Dar Es Salaam and Lusaka, we have got an office in Lusaka by now. And he becomes an integral part of this discussion of these preparations and we report to him. He was totally involved in the whole military strategy of preparing for the trained combatants to go back into SA.

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L He had a strong faith that this had to happen and it would work.

CH He would be involved in the smallest details. Sometimes when he had the time he would go with us towards the Zambezi River and he was convinced that this had to happen. He was the driving force behind all these activities. It is at this stage, towards the end of 1966 that the leadership decided to let us really rough it through Zimbabwe and Botswana and send our people into SA to build the underground. We had got to work together with Zapu to get into Rhodesia, survive with ZAPU in Rhodesia and create an infrastructure within Rhodesia that would be able to take us into SA. I become amongst those who were selected for this task. We were about 30 from the ANC, and about 20 or 30 from ZAPU. A mixed group, known as the Luthuli Detachment. Tambo becomes the brains behind this, the organising spirit behind it. He comes to stay with us. We were actually deployed not far from the Zambezi River, away from the cities. We have prepared for three months, physically, politically, and militarily. Together with ZAPU. So that we should know one another, and get to know the language, the customs, and the traditions of Zimbabwe. I was one of the joint leaders of this project. And ultimately then in June or July we crossed the Zambezi River. Tambo is there up to the last moment of crossing. He actually goes to the Zambezi River, together with us. We spent a few days on the banks of the Zambezi River, about two kms from the river and Tambo stayed with us, slept there with us, in the open, not even in tents. We were just sleeping in the bush. And this convinced us again of the type of leader that Tambo was. A practical leader, an exemplary leader, and one who was prepared to share the hardness of this very difficult and demanding task with his soldiers.

Of course we crossed into Zimbabwe highly motivated into then Rhodesia. We were intercepted after some time then we fought a lot of battles. Running battles with the, because we were convinced that they were not going to allow ourselves to be captured. So we fought them throughout until we decided tactically to move into Botswana, because we were running short of supplies and we had lost communication with the rear. We had to take this decision on our own that, look, another ??(156) of a revolutionary is survival. Let us make sure that we see that not everybody is wiped out in the detachment. Let us go to Botswana. Well we must have lost about 10 to 12 people, but we must have also killed about 20 enemy troops and we captured a lot of supplies which were taken by the Botswana government. We had captured their weapons, we had captured their logistics as well, including communication equipment.

L How did you feel about the Botswana government arresting you?

CH Well, we felt a sense of betrayal. Because at first we had refused to be arrested and they negotiated with us and told us how their leaders were sympathetic and that we

would not be convicted, it was important that Botswana's independence should not be jeopardised by the South Africans. And we agreed. We thought that it was a reasonable argument. After all, Botswana was a member of the OAU and it was not our intention to fight Botswanan soldiers. But then they changed. I think they were under pressure, politically I understood it. They changed and actually charged and sentenced us, and we served prison sentences. Yes, I served a prison sentence in Gaborone. Over two years. I got remission - I was sentenced to six years. But I got remission and that is why I stayed for over two years.

L Basically to satisfy the South Africans.

CH Yes, we had not committed technically. We had committed a technical offence because we had brought in weapons of war. But we had not committed an offence, we had not fought anybody there. And therefore some of felt that what they should have just impounded the weapons and allowed us to back to Zambia. But I think the pressures were too powerful. The neighbour ... They were actually demanding that we should be handed over and one must say, we admired the fact that Seretse Khama's government refused to hand us over, and instead, after serving those few years they sent us back to Lusaka. An important experience. I have never read so much in my life. I got an opportunity to read in prison all sorts of novels. I was not reading for any course, I was just reading for enjoyment. Of course there was a library, and friends sent books. Friends from Europe, from America, they sent us books.

L How did you feel about Lusaka's having to negotiate with the South African stat?. Kaunda had a meeting with Vorster.

CH That meeting I think was in 69. It was in 69, I was already out of prison now. We were all bitter about the Lusaka Manifesto, about the negotiations between Kaunda and Vorster. But we thought it would be wrong to denounce Kaunda for a number of reasons. Though he was continuing with his negotiations, he was keeping us in Zambia, and for us this was important. So we had to weigh our priorities. We thought, let him; he was entitled to do what he was doing, but basically it was important for us to retain Zambia as some base for the ANC in order to continue with our strategy. That was Kaunda's strategy. He was not hostile to the ANC because he was talking to Vorster. We felt let down (101) we would have preferred a situation where Africa would totally isolate the apartheid regime. Because this was our strategy, that SA must be isolated continentally and internationally. But we knew that some African leaders were having secret talks with the regime because of their dependence on SA economically and they traded South African goods. I think Kaunda this time had problems with Smith, because Smith had declared unilateral independence and Zambia had closed its borders and everything with Smith. I think he was playing SA against Zimbabwe in order to ensure that Zambia which was a landlocked country did not suffer the long-term effects of the blockade that Zambia, with the support of the international community, had imposed on Zimbabwe. But we knew again, and this was one of the qualities of Oliver. Oliver had developed a very strong relations, personal relations with Kaunda, and many leaders in Africa. He was actually so well respected continentally that I think we survived as a

movement sometimes when there was a crisis in relations between these countries because of Oliver's outstanding leadership qualities and integrity. He was respected and admired because of his style of leadership, his frugal style. His nearness to his people. His logical analysis of the situation. His presentation of problems. And his avoidance, even of confrontational situations with the leaders of these countries. Where sometimes they had acted heavily against us, and it is very difficult to say this of an individual, we owe the cohesion of the ANC to Oliver Tambo.

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I say this because I got into trouble with the movement in 1969. I had become disillusioned with the style of leadership of the ANC. After I had come out of prison from Botswana. I had a feeling, call it subjective if you like, that there was little concentration on building the ANC outside and people were really so involved in international work, and international work which involved a lot of travelling, luxuries and everything, and I criticised, together with a few comrades that style of leadership. I felt that after we had crossed, there was not an immediate follow up, and I used very strong words too. I felt that we did not get proper support, a proper follow up. And I didn't think that when we came back there was a interest in our experience and what we had done and what was the next step. We stayed there literally waiting. And these were people who had acquired some experience. And we waited, we didn't know what was the next step. We were in that state of limbo, state of suspense, and I and others could not stomach it.

We blurted out, we blew our tops. And some leaders go angry. I think people generally were not used to being criticised. They thought that we are going to just applaud everything they did, and say hallelujah. I think the leadership at that time was not ready to get criticism from underlings, from subordinates. And some of them blew their tops and wanted us to get punished and we were punished in the sense that for some time we were left in the cold. But again it was the intelligent leadership of Tambo that again brought us together and we came back. some leaders go angry. I think people generally were not used to being criticised. They thought that we are going to just applaud everything they did, and say hallelujah. I think the leadership at that time was not ready to get criticism from underlings, from subordinates. And some of them blew their tops and wanted us to get punished and we were punished in the sense that for some time we were left in the cold. But again it was the intelligent leadership of Tambo that again brought us together and we came back.

L Can you give an example of how he did this.

CH There was the Morogoro conference in 1969. An important conference which actually began to say, how do we build our organisation inside the country. Our detractors would not say that we contributed, but if we had not spoken out, in my own view there would have been no Morogoro conference. I stand to be challenged on that, but our criticism created a crisis within the movement which jolted them up. There was the Morogoro conference where there was a lot of straight talking, a debate on strategy and tactics and this was the first time that there was a debate on strategy and tactics within the ANC. The need to build an internal leadership, the need for concentration through the creation of a revolutionary council on the building of the movement inside the country. The need to mobilise our people inside the country to participate in a mass struggle taking a number of forms. This was the first time that that was discussed. The pillars of our struggle, the mass movement inside the country, the underground movement, the international, without concentrating only on one pillar of the struggle. This is what came out of the Morogoro conference. And again a clear definition of the objectives of the ANC, who is the backbone of our struggle, the working class. The ANC began to say the working class is the backbone of the struggle. Of course, working with other classes and strata. And I would want to believe that our erratic, if you like, criticism and anger did contribute to this sort of thing. I got into trouble with the movement in 1969. I had become disillusioned with the style of leadership of the ANC. After I had come out of prison from Botswana. I had a feeling, call it subjective if you like, that there was little concentration on building the ANC outside and people were really so involved in international work, and international work which involved a lot of travelling, luxuries and everything, and I criticised, together with a few comrades that style of leadership. I felt that after we had crossed, there was not an immediate follow up, and I used very strong words too. I felt that we did not get proper support, a proper follow up. And I didn't think that when we came back there was an interest in our experience and what we had done and what was the next step. We stayed there

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L He wouldn't take criticism personally.

CH No. He had no inferiority complex. He never felt that he was being abused or his

dignity was being impugned, or he was being attacked, and his leadership being questioned or challenged. He felt that he was leading a movement, he was remaining there as a leader because the people actually agreed with him and he saw himself as a interpreter, as an implementer of collective decisions. Decisions which came from a number of levels throughout the movement. He had no inferiority complex. He never felt that he was being abused or his dignity was being impugned, or he was being attacked, and his leadership being questioned or challenged. He felt that he was leading a movement, he was remaining there as a leader because the people actually agreed with him and he saw himself as a interpreter, as an implementer of collective decisions. Decisions which came from a number of levels throughout the movement.

L That shows a remarkable political maturity.

CH Absolutely.

L You talked about OR's relations with Kaunda, and his ability to get respect from all the African leaders regardless of their politics. Give examples.

END OF SIDE 'A' FIRST TAPE

Start counting down from 627

CH Well, before I tackle the whole question of OR's relations with other African leaders, it is important for me to point out that OR was a world leader who enjoyed very close and warm relations with key world leaders. He was close to Comrade Fidel Castro, to Che Guevara, very close to Soviet leaders and leaders of the socialist countries. But in addition he was respected by leaders of the Labour Party in Britain, by the leaders of the Social Democrats in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries. He was really a political giant and an international figure. OR must not be seen just as an ordinary leader. But coming to the continent, Comrade Tambo was respected by all leaders in Africa including conservative leaders. He was respected by Mobuto, by Bouguiba (619) by Hassan, and they listened to what he said and whenever he wanted to intervene to stop them from moving closer to SA, invariably they listened. But then he had special relations with the former president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, with Moalimu Nyerere of Tanzania, with Samora, Augustinho Neto and later Dos Santos and the leaders of the Frontline States depended on the political sagacity of OR in terms of strategies in fighting for the liberation of SA, for the liberation of Zimbabwe, and for the liberation of Namibia. But again, OR is the humble person. He was never swollen headed because of this respect that he enjoyed the hands of his people. He felt that they were not respecting him as Oliver Tambo, but respected him as the President of the ANC and as a representative of the oppressed and exploited people of SA. So when the whole story is written, we must see OR as a world figure. As a world revolutionary. As a continental leader, as somebody who was involved in the vision of Pan Africanism in the broad sense

of the word. The unity of the continent. Where he saw SA as playing a role in the liberation, total liberation of the continent, both political and economic. Some people don't understand that even the alliance between the ANC and the CP owes something to OR's style of leadership. Here was a man, very Christian, never a member of the CP, but who saw the need for this alliance to unite our people. An alliance that would deliver to the people of SA, not just political freedom, but also economic justice. OR has been true to that style of leadership. An alliance of the national struggle and the working class struggle. Some people argue and say the CP has strengthened the ANC. The ANC has strengthened the CP because the ANC always had a non-sectarian leadership exemplified by Comrade Oliver Tambo.

L Tremendous respect that he enjoyed must have boosted the ANC. Compare ANC & PAC in exile, in relations to the leadership.

CH Well, the fact that the ANC survived the most difficult period in exile is due to the ANC leadership as a whole, but I think, in particular to Comrade Oliver Tambo. Oliver Tambo is not a demagogue. He is a scientific analyst. He pays attention to the needs of the movement. He never forms cliques with any individual in the organisation. He encourages people to be critical and he listens to criticism. He avoids taking administrative action against those who take a particular line which sometimes is a departure from the line of the organisation. He maintains very strong links with members of the organisation wherever they are. That is why the ANC didn't suffer the fate of the PAC, riddled with divisions, with infighting. It is because it had a President who saw his historic mission as keeping the ANC together. For Tambo this was the overriding need. In conditions of exile, the ANC should remain a united organisation. An ANC that works closely with SACTU, the trade union movement, as well as with the CP. An ANC that works closely with the youth. That is why OR spent a lot of time in the camps of MK so that he could actually understand the problems of the army as well.

Until next time.

BREAK IN RECORDING

CH The CP has always been a champion of a broad united front of the forces of liberation in our country. And again our Party, and this is unique in terms of other parties in the world accepted the leading role of the ANC in this stage of our struggle. The stage where we are fighting for freedom and democracy. A stage which needed the unity of many classes and strata in our society. And I think that theoretical approach served to reduce or eliminate tendencies towards sectarianism. I think people like Comrade Tambo appreciated this contribution of a Party. People like Slovo and Dadoo who spent a lot of time strengthening the ANC. Well, you might say for reasons of our own strategy which saw the revolution in two stages, national liberation and then the struggle for socialism, and Tambo valued the support of the Party. He had very close relations with the late Secretary General of the Party, Comrade Moses Kotane, with the late Chairman of the Party, Comrade JB Marks. And he used to appreciate their advice. And he would consult with them, on key and crucial elements of strategy tactics. Later this relationship

was extended to Dadoo, to Slovo and many other communists. Again this was unique for a liberation movement to develop those close relations between a nationalist movement basically, and a working class organisation. I think this history should be known to our people, because the richness of our national liberation is due to the existence of these proper tendencies within the mainstream of the national liberation movement. The struggle for national liberation, for freedom and democracy, but at the same time saying, that freedom and democracy must be prefaced on the need to bring about deep going socio-economic changes in our society.

L What about that other tendency, was it the Gang of Eight? They saw the CP as manipulative and dominating.

CH I don't think they actually believed in that. Amongst them were members of the CP. Others were not members of the CP. They were disaffected, I agree. I think it is people who were pursuing an agenda, and that was an agenda of personal ambition in my view, who resented the very close and comradely relations between the Party and the ANC and who felt that communists were occupying influential positions within the ANC. You must remember that that remains the situation in the country. Some communists are occupying strong positions within the ANC. But this is a product of the way the communists work within the broad streams of our struggle. The readiness on the part of the communists to sacrifice, to build a strong and fighting ANC. An ANC which is just not a narrow, nationalist movement, but an ANC which is really a democratic movement, very sensitive to the needs of ordinary people, the working people, the poor. That is the ANC that the Party has always championed. We were never, and we should never be seen as a small lobbyist group. We never lobbied for position. I think people got positions because the members of the ANC appreciated their contribution. And again I think they basically wanted to undermine this quality, this revolutionary quality of our movement, of combining these key aspects of national oppression and class oppression. A movement built on the need to change our society. Not just to have a new government, a flag, some parliament, with the emergence of an elite bureaucratic black bourgeoisie. I think some of them were actually pursuing, as I say, their own agenda.

L Party members were trained and disciplined, so they were bound to stand out.

CH We were trained, we were motivated, we were disciplined, we had a mission and we wanted to accomplish that mission. And politically we were really above the average member of the ANC. We knew how to handle and analyze the situation. We were ready to provide leadership, both theoretical and practically.

L But you also had criticism from UM people as well as Africanists. The Party is manipulative, they have these secret caucuses, they pretend not to dominate in fact they get their own way.

How the Party worked

CH It is true that we always met as a Party. That the cells of the Party met. But one must ask the question, what did we discuss in these meetings. We never discussed the

question of who were we going to deploy to become a leader in the ANC or SACTU. We discussed how do we strengthen our revolution. What is our theoretical contribution. What strategies and tactics would we debate. And then once we agreed, we would debate these strategies within the ANC. We did not impose them. If we met together as we do even today, it is actually to discuss how do we take the revolution forward. And I cant understand if people would actually regard that sort of set up as manipulation, or that's entryism. (524) We discussed as concerned revolutionaries. We never discuss how do we remove the Secretary General of the ANC because we don't like him, how do we remove so-and-so because we don't like him. We never individualise or personalise problems. We discussed a situation broadly around strategies, around tactics, around the definition of various class forces, around the understanding of the balance of forces, around empowering the movement and empowering people. We get concerned when the ANC and COSATU are weak and we say, how do we strengthen them. If we feel that these organisations are endangered, because there are individuals or groups which want to push these organisations from the correct line of march which has been debated and agreed upon at conferences, we see ourselves as custodians of the correct positions which have been debated and accepted at national conferences of mass organisations. We see ourselves as good and reliable members of the ANC.

We need to speak further, because again, OR's contribution to the Harare declaration, to negotiations. His always maintaining strong lines of communications with various organisations, with leaders, with Mandela on Robben Island. We need to find time to talk about those things. I don't think I have said everything about him. It is very difficult to say everything within an hour.

BREAK IN RECORDING 510

CH Now I was saying, I want to focus on OR's role in the seventies and beyond. This OR who obviously emerged as a leader of a very high calibre. Who began to focus his attention to the building of an organisation inside the country. Because we had to bring together a number of pieces after the immense destruction of whatever structures that existed in the 60s. We had now to focus on building a mass movement. A mass movement that would draw into it as many political groups as possible. So OR began to spearhead the need to build a broader front to confront apartheid.

L In the 50s the ANC built up a mass movement. ANC got banned, went underground. That destroyed the mass movement in a sense, and that was one of the criticisms by those, including the left, about the decision to go underground. That actually smashed the mass movement. Wasn't this now a daunting task?

CH It was a daunting task, but I don't believe we had any other option after we were banned, other than going underground. Because the regime would not tolerate any form of opposition. The regime went out to smash the trade unions, to smash student organisation. They went out to smash even moderate organisations like the National Union of South African Students, NUSAS. They banned NUSAS, they tried to cut off funds to NUSAS. So actually this was a period of totalitarianism, of neo-fascism. And for the

ANC to salvage anything out of that mass destruction of our organisation, there was no other way except to do it from underground. Because every time a group emerged, a leader emerged, he was smashed. The regime had armed itself, or equipped itself with a battery of laws that made it impossible for any legal organisation worth its name, to continue. The only option was just to join government or near government organisations. The Urban Councils, the collaborationist organisations. And for me there was no other option, and we had to do it from underground. We had to inspire people. People are dispirited, unmotivated, crushed. The situation was hopeless. Part of the strategy of the armed struggle was to stir up the anger of the people. To build morale. To say that yes, we are on the receiving end, we are being attacked, but we are hitting back. We are not broken, we are not crushed. That perception had to be developed. And I think the most notable contribution in my view of the armed struggle was to encourage our people and inspire our people to stand up, don't give up. We can also in a small way hit back. And I think the operations that were carried out by MK inspired many organisations, especially organisations of the young people, students' organisations, youth organisations, and elements even within the trade union movement. And therefore, people must not forget that this contribution was made by the underground as well as the armed struggle. But I think the contribution of the ANC in terms of strategy was to weld together underground activities, mass struggles, as well as the armed struggle into a common strategy. I think the fact that we moved away from sectarianism and said this is not just the struggle of the ANC, it is the struggle which must involve all the forces of democracy. The churches, and the organs of civil society. Civics were coming up. Anti-Coloured Representative Councils organisations were springing up. A movement amongst Indians, for instance, against elections for Indians only began to move up. Students began to come up against bantu education, and these were the developments which ultimately jelled up into the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). And I think one of the notable achievements of the ANC was to encourage this process. We are not saying that it was only the ANC which had pushed forward this process. But the ANC welcomed this process and began to engage, from London, from a number of places. Personalities, key personalities who were involved in working up the strategies of the UDF. And OR was key in this strategy, because OR had become acceptable to a number of key personalities in this country. In the labour movement, in the church movement. His messages broadcast on Radio Freedom, calling upon our people to unite, to smash apartheid found a receptive ear on the part of many people and many organisations. And therefore he had become a leader, not just of the ANC and the alliance, but a leader of the entire people of SA. In other words, his status as a world leader also began to be extended now to SA and he was being embraced now as an unchallenged leader of the resistance struggle in the country, cutting across the broad spectrum of organisations.

L Specific examples of how he did become the legitimate symbol of the struggle.

CH Well, Oliver became a unique figure. Somebody who had managed from a disadvantaged position of waging a struggle from exile, somebody who had built a cohesive movement, and somebody who had used his immense popularity abroad to

convince the UN, the Commonwealth, the OAU that apartheid was a crime against humanity. Somebody who had managed to bring together the socialist countries in the East and the Western countries in a common struggle against apartheid. And I think this earned for OR the respect of the fighting people of SA. Whether they were in the churches, people like Bishop Tutu, like Alan Boesak, like Smangaliso Mkhathshwa; or in the labour movement, in FOSATU, which became COSATU afterwards. But again OR had begun to earn the admiration of many intellectuals in the universities, both black and white universities in this country. They saw him as a figure that would actually unite our people in a broadly based struggle against apartheid. He had achieved a situation where actually apartheid had become completely isolated. The boycott and sanctions have begun to have a crippling effect on the apartheid regime, and OR was an indefatigable campaigner for the isolation of SA. He would be addressing meetings of the UN, of the OAU, of the Commonwealth. He would be addressing the World Council of Churches, he would be addressing the labour movement. He would be in the Scandinavian countries, he would be sought in India, in Pakistan, almost everywhere. And I think this unique position of OR began to be a rallying position, and also it became a situation where the morale of the people in the country was boosted. The mass movement in the country began to be infused(enthused)⁴²³ with a new life with a life of militancy, with a life of urgency, with a life of unity in the 80s. And for me the 80s were a period where we saw the crystallisation of the crisis of apartheid. Where actually the internal struggle and the external struggle began to be welded together into a tight fist against apartheid. And then this was the beginnings of the serious crisis of apartheid, which actually led to a situation where apartheid was seen as being vulnerable. And where even now it began to see the effects of the isolation of SA. The effects of a build up of the mass struggle inside the country. The effects of the intensification of the armed struggle, leading to a situation where the regime now began to feel that it had exhausted all the options of maintaining apartheid, and the realisation that negotiations had to begin. But again the ANC under the leadership of OR began also to detect and to identify the crisis of apartheid. Hence the ANC was not lagging behind events and the ANC would come forward with a strategy of negotiations, the Harare Declaration. And OR, what destroyed for instance the health of OR were those hectic demands to explain the correctness of the strategy of negotiations. First of all with the Frontline States, to the OAU, to the Commonwealth. He literally didn't have time to rest. And that stroke was the result of OR's identification of the need to adopt the strategy of negotiations and the formulation as we have seen of that strategy in the Harare Declaration. He was moving from capital to capital. He hardly had any time to rest.

L Also keeping abreast, his finger right on the pulse of what is happening inside.

CH He was receiving delegation after delegation from inside the country. From the UDF, from COSATU, from the churches, from NAFCO, from Afrikaner intellectuals, from universities. And he had to listen to all these people, because OR is meticulous in listening to details. Because OR wanted an ANC which would formulate a strategy on the basis of objective reality, not on subjectivism.

L To what extent the ANC encouraged the anti-apartheid movement across the

board, but to what extent did the ANC actually initiate these things, like for instance there has been a debate about to what extent SACTU was right there from the beginning in 73 with the unions. I think that FOSATU, the young intellectuals, without a sense of history, probably had no idea what was happening on the ground.

CH You know, Luli, if there was any organisation which helped to initiate the unity of the unions in this country, it is the ANC and the alliance, in the 70s. We actually, through SACTU, and through the CP, established contacts with trade unionists in this country. Before 73. Quiet contacts. I was in Lesotho from 75. I was nearby and I was having meetings with SAWU, with GAWU, with individuals from FOSATU. As individuals, not FOSATU as an organisation because FOSATU was not monolithic. In FOSATU we had elements which were pro SACTU, pro ANC, pro CP. You had 382 syndicalists, you had elements which were hostile to the old tradition of the trade union struggle, who were influenced by developments in the ICFTU and other organisations. So there was a struggle, say about the tendencies within FOSATU. But our approach was that whatever, we must form one federation in SA. We should bring together, weld together, all these tendencies. We should go to what was called the populist or charterist unions, which were very close to the ANC Congress tradition. Like SAAWU, like GAWU, like the Food and Canning Workers Union. And then weld them together with those which had been promoted and founded by intellectuals, and as a result of the old Wages Commissions Board and everything. Influenced by the New Left. Without traditions of struggle. Those who didn't see the trade unions as a component part of the national liberation struggle. Our approach has always been to say the trade union struggle is part of the broad national liberation struggle. That the victory of the national liberation struggle would actually create better conditions for the workers in this country, and that the workers had to participate in the struggle. They would not have to remain on the sidelines as spectators. If in the final analysis we got a COSATU it was because of the influence we had built up. The influence we had initiated into the unions, especially SACTU. SACTU, the CP and the ANC. Because the strategy of SACTU were strategies discussed between SACTU the CP and the ANC. I am happy to say that if today we have a militant revolutionary trade union movement, it was because of the slow grinding pushing strategy of influencing all these trade unions in FOSATU. We didn't say because some elements rejected us in FOSATU, we didn't say, no, no, no, to hell with them. We felt that it was our duty to engage ourselves in the struggle to influence FOSATU. To contest the influence with the New Left, with neo liberal elements, because FOSATU was a mixture of all things. And I think ultimately we have succeeded in building a federation which ultimately became close to the national liberation struggle.

L Can you comment about the ANC's involvement in the civics?

CH Yes. In the 80s we felt that we needed to build the unity of our people in the struggle against an imposed system of community councils. The community councils were seen by us as being undemocratic and being manipulated by the state. These were state organs ultimately. And we also detected that the community councils were set up by the regime in order to destroy the influence of our movement in the townships and the locations. And therefore as far back as 77, 78, after the banning of the Black

Consciousness (BC) movements, we felt that we needed to form civics so that people could have a forum that cut across ideological affiliations, that cut across political affiliations. A movement that would bring into its fold those who were pro PAC, pro BC, pro ANC, pro CP. And that the key task and the key demand was to fight for bread and butter issues that affected our people. You don't say to people, come and join us, we want to overthrow this regime and have a democratic government. You must be seen to be having a concern for better housing, for electrification, for water, for lighting, for streets, for schools. And therefore we saw civics as a terrain of struggle that would bring together all our people on the basis of their common problems, their common concerns for a better life. To mobilise people on bread and butter issues. I think the strategy worked well and saw the emergence of the civic movement in the country, which became a key element in the struggles in the Eastern Cape around PEBCO, in the Western Cape around CAHAC, in the Transvaal around the Soweto Civic Association which began to spread to other areas. And I think that element of struggle, the civic struggle, also made an important contribution in building a vibrant mass democratic movement (MDM) which totally undermined the stooge organisations, the puppet organisation of the councils, the urban councils, the community councils. 1986 saw the beginning of the crisis of the community councils when councillors began to resign as a result of the strength and the power of the civic movement. And as a result of MK activities and the MDM, because it began to get isolated from many people in the townships. And now today, SANCO has become a national civic movement. It has got a few teething problems, but it is there now. It has really impacted itself on the South African scene. It is going to be an important organ of civil society in future. Defending the rights of ordinary citizens in this country, black and white. Where you would be having tax-based municipalities, and where democracy is not going only to be seen at the level of parliament and the cabinet, but we are going to be seeing democracy vibrant at grassroot levels.

L I have been writing about the civics and I have come across people in Kagiso who say of a comrade, the first time they thought about civic organisations is when somebody had a meeting, and talked to them about it. And then they disappeared. They were actually a member of MK. Were MK moving around in the community...

CH You see, what I want to say, Luli, what people don't understand is the fact that every MK comrade was trained not just to shoot or to place a bomb. Part of the integrated training of MK was part of being political organisers. They were taught that, look, you won't survive if you don't create organisations around yourselves. You have got to build up the underground, you have got to build the mass movement, you have got to build civics, you have got to help in the building of trade unions. So wherever MK comrades came into this country they would actually set up political discussion groups. To discuss strategies, to discuss the need to form organisation, mass organisation. That was our approach, that you won't survive, you must be like the fish and for the fish to survive, you must have water in which it will swim and survive. So that was our approach, and a lot of MK comrades participated in setting up student structures, civic structures, trade union structures. We said to them it is important for every MK cadre to deepen the political consciousness of our people. To produce leaders. That it was not enough for

you to just be a leader in that area, you must reproduce yourself ten times and even twenty times.

L Wasnt this risky for security.

CH It was risky but it was necessary. If they did not build this organisation, they would have been isolated. If you look at our survival record, where there were organisations, civic, trade union and underground, our people survived better. Because they would be able to move from one place to another assisted by people who were committed. And this commitment could only come out of proper politicisation. It was risky, but it was a risk that we had to undertake.

L Do you have names of people I could talk to about examples of building the internal base.

CH Well I have lots of people.

TELEPHONE, BREAK IN RECORDING. 287

CH Specific examples. I think we should speak to people like Tony Yengeni. They got into this country and survived for more than two years. They were the people who initiated contacts with civics, with youth, with the trade unions, all over Cape Town. With UDF. People like, I've a comrade here I think you should interview who survived in the Eastern Cape. Comrade Kgoji (282). He is our education officer. Skenjane. He was actually inside the country and survived and interacted with a number of organisations. We have people like Jeff Radebe who is the chairperson of the Southern Natal Region. I am just thinking of other characters who came into the country and were received by our people. We have people like Sihle in Southern Natal who came from Robben Island but survived for a long time inside the country. Young girls like Dipuo, she was part of Vula. I don't know whether you have interviewed people like Siphwe Nyanda, the Chief of Staff of MK. He also came into the country.

L I spoke to Sipho Makana.

CH He was outside. And speak to people like Mufamadi who actually received cadres from abroad.

L I would like to talk to people inside who never met OR but

CH Who felt his inspiration.

L Even ordinary young people who used to listen to Radio Freedom.

CH Speak to women. You must include women. Women like Nosizwe Madlala (262), she is in Natal, the chairperson of the CP in Southern Natal. She went to prison for receiving MK cadres. She is studying at the University of Natal but she is the chairperson

of the CP Southern Natal. And then my deputy general secretary here, he came in with Vula as well. Comrade Charles Ngqagula (256). And before he left the country, Charles only left the country in the late eighties, 86 or 87, he received cadres once inside the country. He was the publicity secretary of the UDF in the Border Region. And linked up with cadres coming from outside.

L So in terms of OR, to what extent was he in touch with information about trade unions, civics, these kind of civil society.

CH OR made it his business to receive everybody coming from inside the country. He

L We are talking about before the business men came.

CH Before the businessmen, at the time of the underground! OR would receive underground workers. He would receive activists in the MDM in the trade unions, in the churches, in everything. He would receive comrades coming from inside the country underground, when they came back to report. He would find time to talk to them, to inspire them. Because after they had seen OR they felt inspired. So it was important for them before going back to the country, at least some of them to have talks with the President of the ANC. And OR all the time organised time. He always found time. OR I think worked up to the early hours of the morning. OR never enjoyed normal family life. He was away from his family most of the time. When I was staying in an area called Makeni in Lusaka, about six of us were actually sharing that building with OR. He was sleeping with us, on an inflated bag. He would inflate it. He had no bed. He was sleeping in his office.

L I think he overdid it.

CH Well, probably, he still overdoes it now. He was sick the other day, but he pushed himself to go and, but he went on Sunday, to the Gandhi Walk. Its selfless(?232). For him there is no other life except the struggle. He is impatient for this country to have a democracy. And I think he would die a happy man if he felt that he is still contributing. And he is still doing that. He is just a marvellous person.

L Last week people thought he was going to die.

CH I went there myself. We had a meeting of the Politburo here, we adjourned it to go and see him before he dies. We thought he was dying. We have that love for him. Ask anybody, I think the verdict would be the same. OR was a father to everybody. You know I met OR at the age of 21, I was very young and my love grew day by day. My love and respect for OR has never wavered. As a communist I would trust OR with my life. Because although he is a Christian, I believe that there is a lot in common between true Christianity and communism. The ??214 for humanity, the hatred for suffering and exploitation and OR embodies all those qualities.

BREAK IN RECORDING 212

L OR's determination to rebuild the ANC into a mass movement from underground, was there a specific time?

CH No, this emerged clearly after the Morogoro conference of 1969. This was the first time that the ANC, since it left this country and went into exile, began to come out with a coherent strategy. So the building of the ANC after 1969 actually followed a consciously adopted strategy at the Morogoro conference. There was even a book on strategy, "Strategy and Tactics of the ANC". So the building of the ANC after 1961 actually followed a well thought out strategy. An informed strategy. Whatever we did after 1969 it was in pursuit of this strategy of building a MDM, of building and internalising the armed struggle. Of building even the united front. It came out of that strategy, adopted at the Morogoro conference in 1969.

L I am interested that the Morogoro conference also came out from below.

CH From the ground! It might have been incoherent, but it came from the cadres. And again it was the greatness of people like OR and other leaders, Joe Slovo and Yusuf Dadoo that they listened to those criticisms. There were a few elements which wanted to dismiss those criticisms, because some elements had never seen an ANC built from below. It had always been their approach from top to bottom. Top down.

L What major events in the development after Morogoro.

CH Well, after Morogoro there came the period of the emergence of the trade unions and the incipient mass democratic formations. 1976 was the watershed in the ANC and in the armed struggle. Because we began to receive in big numbers cadres from inside the country. A different type of cadre, angry, impatient, and a cadre which wanted to see the demolition of apartheid as soon as possible. And with huge expectations and readiness to sacrifice. They didn't want to waste their time outside. They wanted to go back and confront the monster. I was in Lesotho from 74. And those were exciting days for me. Because I was receiving these cadres coming from the Transvaal, from the Orange Free State, from the Cape and Natal. I was in touch with trade unions. Absolutely, I was dynamic touch. I used to go in and out. I did, into the country. Meet comrades at Sterkspruit, in the Transkei, I used to send some of my colleagues from our collective in Lesotho to Cape Town, to Johannesburg, to Durban for a few days. We had little meetings. We discussed strategy with few individuals, all members of the ANC who had come out of Robben Island, new cadres in the trade union movement. We had been joined by dynamic young people from SASO in Lesotho. People like Skenjana, the late Vanda, Tenjiwe Mthintso (168) and many others. So this was an exciting moment. We began to build education groups within Lesotho. Before the moved to Angola and Mozambique, we prepared them in terms of understanding the ANC and our struggle. We would select the best to send them again back into the country underground. To set up contacts, so that we don't loose contact when they leave now for training. In other words so that we are in dynamic charge of the situation. Communication. The fellow would come and say I am from SASO. We

would say, no, no, no, we are not going to rush you and send you to Mozambique. We send you back. We prepared them, we discuss with them strategy. We say go and form a cell of two, come back. We are giving you a week. And we began, when I was in Lesotho 74, 75 and 76 onwards, we began to set up and build internal structures. It was an exciting time because there was the general upsurge inside the country. And all the theories that we had acquired in our training, and our limited experience we began to apply creatively in a new situation. And for me that was a turning point in terms of our struggle. It was a qualitative turning point. Building organisation, strong organisation. An organisation which could not be crushed. And the examples are there. The system came out with strong arm tactics, state of emergency (SOE), arrest, elimination and murders. But organisation survived.

L The way you were winning over BCM people, from different organisations and groups.

CH Actually the ANC fared better than most organisations in terms of influencing the young people in this country. The majority of the activists and leaders from the BCM or the MDM movements opted for the ANC. If one were to do a comparative study we would find out that more than 60 or 70% of BCM leaders opted for the ANC. Why was this possible? It was possible because we were able to communicate with them. It was also possible because we engaged them in discussions and we came with a clear ideological approach. We had a coherent and concrete programme of struggle. We were not sporadic. We followed a strategic path. And that is why we were able to influence trade unions, youth organisations, SASO, BCP and all the BCM movements. And if you look around now at top levels of the ANC leadership, you will see the most of comrades who came from the political school of the black consciousness movement. Terror Lekota, Popo Molefe, Cheryl Carolus, Trevor Manuel, Tenjiwe Mthintso. Many of them. It is very difficult to mention everybody.

L I am thinking in terms of the Party influence.

CH Well, from Lesotho we began also to build the CP. We set up cells. We influenced comrades from the trade union movement, and we influenced the youth, and that is why again you see a lot of the comrades were in the BCM movement, also opted for the Party, and today they are outstanding leaders of the Party. People like Nosizwe Madlala, I have referred to her already. People like Tenjiwe Mthintso, people like Skenjana Kgoji, young people like Tony Yengeni, Sydney, Moses Mayekiso, Chris Dlamini. John Gomomo, these are people who we contacted during the days of the underground.

L Probably, with the trade unionists, the Party would be more attractive than the ANC. Maybe through the Party they saw the relevance of the ANC.

CH Through the Party, through the ideology of the Party, through the politics of an alliance, they saw the relevance of the ANC. The ANC as a broad national liberation movement. I think if there is any organisation which explains better the alliance, it is the CP. The CP has always explained the need for the alliance. Not just explaining it, but it

has participated in building and strengthening the alliance. And the broad non-sectarian approach of the Party actually inspired young people to see the ANC as a legitimate vehicle for national liberation and democracy. As a left-inclined nationalist movement. Different from the nationalist movements which we have seen in a number of third world countries.

L Comment on the ANC in exile, MK and compare it with other liberation movements, because I think the ANC is more successful than most others.

CH Again, I don't want to be subjective, but when you compare the ANC with other liberation movements, there are certain streaks which one notices in the ANC. It is a movement which looked into the whole question of democracy and social justice. It is a movement that saw the struggle not just as the liberation of black persons, political power and all that, but which said, for liberation to be meaningful, then socio-economic restructuring of society is important. But above everything else, the ANC looked at the need to broaden and strengthen the alliance. The ANC never saw itself as the sole participant in the struggle. It realised that there were other forces, other organisations, and all the time the ANC wanted to draw these organisations into a broadly based united front. That is why even as far back as the 60s, the Anc tried its best to work with the PAC in the United Front. But the PAC was at that time flushed with the success which came as a result of the Sharpeville shooting, and it decided to compete with the ANC and even to try to ??(79) the ANC. Exploiting the so-called Pan-Africanism, and saying the ANC was a non-racial organisation, dominated by whites. They were appealing to the raw emotions of people in Africa. But the ANC never competed with the PAC on that basis. The ANC pushed on and explained its non-racialism. That this non-racialism was not just to see moderate, but it was a radical non-racialism, a non-racialism which accepted the need to build a South African Nation out of all groups in our country. We never saw whites as settlers. We saw ourselves as fighting a system and not fighting a race. I think that is why the ANC was found attractive by almost all our people inside the country. Whether at that time they were in small numbers, but if today the language in this country is non-racialism, it owes it to the consistency of the ANC, to the commitment of the ANC to non-racialism, even under difficult conditions. that is why I think the ANC has influenced so many organisations. Today they wont admit, De Klerk, Zac de Beer and others wont admit that we are the only formation, I mean the alliance, which stuck under very difficult conditions to non-racialism. And I think that legacy is important, and is something that we must fight for in this country all the time.

L I think that the Party preceded the ANC.

CH No, I agree. I don't want to say that but we taught the ANC. The CP as far back as its inception brought non-racialism to the ANC. I think one of the stirring contributions of this Party to the ANC is the theory and the practice of non-racialism. I think the qualitative transformation of the ANC from a narrow, rather conservative nationalist movement also owes it to the CP. Not just by preaching and standing on rooftops and shouting about it, but we actually practise it. Communists black and white went into the ANC, worked for the ANC, worked selflessly, not from positions of leadership, but as

ordinary activists. If any organisation took into the ANC political education, it is the SACP. Or the CPSA as it was called then. And despite the fact that you see there were attempts to isolate our party. But our party saw that as a correct strategy. I mean the question of working within a broad movement like the ANC. Because the ANC at that time was the only broadly based nationalist movement. It was big, it was mass, I mean comparatively speaking.

L On the other hand OR points out that the ANC always had a non-racial, apparently, from the constitution in 1912.

BREAK IN RECORDING

CH In the 60s, before the ANC was banned, tried to apply for membership. Wanted to join the ANC. But though it was

BREAK IN RECORDING

CH It is true that probably in the constitution there was no clause which said whites could not become members, or Indians or coloureds. But in terms of practice, the ANC was a black organisation. And yet with the party from the very beginning it was a non-racial organisation, accepting everybody committed to socialism and national liberation. And I think it was in direction and inter played (21) between the ANC and the Party which ultimately led to a situation where the Anc became non-racial. Up to Kabwe in 1985 we had no white members in the national executive of the ANC. The ANC was opened up. Although they could be members of the ANC, but the national executive was black until Kabwe. But the CP was already functioning as a non-racial organisation at all levels. This Party has had the chairperson and secretary general being either white, Indian or black. And I think it is that influence which spread into the ANC. No because the party manipulated the ANC. There was differences amongst Party members whether blacks should get into the national executive of the ANC. But you know the debates, the arguments that must help a non-racial organisation because we are crystallising towards a non-racial society. And you may as well start practising non-racialism at all levels. But I must quickly say in terms of practice and everything, the ANC was non-racial. The ANC was never a rabid nationalist movement. Hence it was able to be comfortable with the Congress Alliance. Meeting and discussing with the Congress of Democrats, with the Indian Congress and with the Coloured People's Congress. In other words (00)

L The criticism from the nationalist

CH Yes, that is why the PAC broke away. But the ANC defended the correctness of this approach. I think the ANC leadership didn't want to proceed rapidly, leaving the masses behind. It wanted this process to be absorbed and to be accepted by the membership. And the ANC argued that it was through revolutionary and struggle practices that ?? ideas of non-racialism would be strengthened. The BCM converts got into touch with the Party, with personalities in the Congress Alliance, with white comrades

in the camps and everywhere. And they began to see the bankruptcy of the philosophy of black consciousness. The limitations. The point I want to make is that it was true

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SIDE A TAPE TWO REWINDING FROM END OF RECORDING.

Counting down from 241

L You were talking about the mutiny.

CH The mutiny was an unfortunate development in our history. The mutiny actually was a crystallisation or a culmination of systematic infiltration of the ANC by skilled and well trained enemy agents. We exploited the grievances of the people because life in exile was very difficult. There would be sometimes shortage of food. We didn't have doctors and we had to train medical workers in the job. We were living in a situation where there was a civil war raging in Angola. These elements were sent by the enemy, manipulated these grievances, leaving the situation where there was a rebellion, and the killing of some of our best comrades. When we defeated the mutiny, it is true that the ANC had to set up a tribunal and some people were sentenced to death for having killed some of our outstanding officers. I remember that a big number had been sentenced to death, but OR intervened, together with the leadership of course, to stop those executions and save some of those people who were very young and gullible, and influenced by 229. Even those who were actually sentenced to death were kept in a rehabilitation centre. The ANC never carried out those executions. Those elements are outside, some of them now busy in propaganda against the ANC. And they would not have been in a position to do that if the ANC had not been lenient. I think the ANC took the right decision. I have no regrets that we stopped executing them because the ANC showed that as a movement it is not very keen on capital punishment. And that is why we upfront for instance in fighting against the preservation of the capital punishment or death penalty. People are saying that the ANC violated human rights. I think that is a strong phrase. I think there were some abuses, unknown to most leaders of the NEC. Carried out by a few young people who in their own way thought that they were defending the ANC. And I think we should have intervened early to reduce instances of abuse. And again I think it is a credit to the ANC that it is the ANC which is saying today, yes, we are appointing a commission. Some mistakes were made, let the commission go into it and even give a chance to those who are being accused to explain themselves. The Nationalist Party and others have not done this sort of thing. They are always touching the tip of the iceberg. They never dig deep to the bones, cut to the bone. De Klerk uses the phrase, but he never cuts down to the bone. He never even apologises. Because he is part of it.

L This ANC tradition of bringing on board, converting people. I am thinking of people like Tom Boya.

CH We bring on board everything. The ANC has got that tradition. The ANC will reach out even to those people who are a threat to within government institutions. Take

the homelands administrations. The Bantustans. People who collaborated with apartheid against us. We are not vindictive. Once somebody says, look people, I am ready to work with you. We don't say no, we are going to set up a trial or a commission. We say, come brother, join the struggle. Come sister, join the struggle. We understand why you did certain things. And I think this has earned a lot of respect for the ANC. That is what makes the ANC different from the PAC and AZAPO. The ANC is like a big omnibus. A train that stops at every station to enquire whether there are passengers or not. It doesn't just throw quick glimpses, then we are passing. It actually stops and says, are there any passengers around. And if they come, please, there is still space in the train.

L There are weaknesses in that approach. The UM says that the ANC is opportunist. Some homeland leaders who in the past behaved in a pretty shoddy way and ordinary people now see them waving ANC cards, and it makes them furious.

CH I don't think it is a weakness. I think it shows maturity. It shows the application or the implementation of a strategy of isolating the main enemy. These guys were never the main enemy. These were just small cogs in a machinery of oppression. It shows a deep understanding of strategy. Who is your main enemy. How do you isolate that main enemy? How do you actually bring in some peoples who are serving that enemy to your side? And I think we have really succeeded. De Klerk today is in trouble because he is facing revolt and rebellion from those who religiously supported him in the past. A person like Holomisa was trained at Voortrekkerhoogte. He was their bright military cadet. So was Ramushwane. And others. But now we have brought those people on board. As a result they have become unpopular now. Look at our problems if we had not succeeded in winning them over. They would be behaving exactly the same way as Gqozo and Mangope and others. Well now we have reduced the numbers of Mangopes, we don't have many Mangopes, many Gqozos. And I think though that strategy, like any strategy, might have certain weaknesses, but on the whole I think that it is an effective strategy. And of course we have got to educate them, these converts. They cannot only work with the leaders at Shell House. They must actually establish working relations with the comrades at grassroots level. If they say they are part of the democratic movement, we must see them indulging in democratic practices. They can't persecute a civic movement in Sekhukuneland or a students' organisation, or SADTU, and be happy now to go to a meeting of the Patriotic Front in Lenasia. But what is important is that the ANC raises these issues openly with them. It is a sort of political way of winning over hearts and minds. The regime uses its resources to win over hearts and minds by corrupting people, by offering them money, by offering them bribes. We win hearts and minds by showing the nobility of our struggle, by telling them that victory is inevitable.

L That is a very inspiring thing. In terms of OR's style, in slowly deliberately consulting first, some people have said that in this respect, with the tortures he should have moved swiftly and put a stop to it instead of first working out a code of conduct.

CH Well, I want to say that he himself knows that we have clashed on this issue. I

thought he moved slowly. And I didn't say this in SA. I said so in a number of ANC meetings abroad. I said that there was a need to move quickly, to put a stop to what we saw as abuses in the camps, to what we saw as incorrect method of interrogation and handling of suspects and agents. But OR is a person who wants to study a phenomenon first, who does not want to make rash judgements because I think he would like any judgement to stand the test of time. He has a mind which says let me get all the sides of this story. He appointed a number of commissions which reported, and we must also put ourselves in his position. Probably it was easy for me, I was not the President of the ANC, to say, "Act immediately. I know there are rogues in the security department." But OR was saying, look, I have lost men and women as a result of the activities of agents, I have to account to the people of SA what I did about their children. As a movement, what measures were taken to protect our cadres from elimination and everything. You must remember that lots of cadres died because of information given to the security police, of leaks and everything. Comrades were intercepted, killed at roadblocks. They were entering the country. Ultimately the person to answer is the head of the organisation. So OR could not be brash as me and Pallo Jordan and others. We were feeling strongly about justice. We felt strongly because I used to go to Quatro and meet some of the detainees and talk to them. They would give me a story about being tortured. I did this in the course of my duties. I was regular there because I am Chief of Staff and Political Commissar. I would come and report. But I think it was wrong for me to expect that other leaders who didn't have the benefit of practical exposure to that situation to act. They would prefer the careful way of sending commissions and abuse and everything. And of course the security department, like every where else, tends also to defend itself and to defend its actions. To cover up is natural. It is happening even in the most democratic of democracies. In America, in Britain, countries which are paraded before us as democracies, we know how the security forces behave in those countries. We know how they behave in Russia. And we know how they behave even now in countries like France. They go and whisper to the President, and always say there are dangers here and there. The security does not operate openly, their views are not tested. They are not verified openly like my views as a politician. And OR had to contend with all those things. This was his security department and he had to be seen to be sensitive to his own concerns. And again, in all fairness to the security department, Luli, they were working under very difficult conditions. They had to protect an organisation. They were subjective. That was their priority, their own overriding priority. I was not a member of the security department, so I had different perceptions.

L ??138

CH Well, I don't know. My approach is to persuade people. I have never been a hard person. That's my makeup, and I resented the tough methods. At the back of my mind I had thing that probably these people could be innocent. Call it naivety, but I always said I would give the person the benefit of the doubt. Probably it was easier, as I say, for me because I was working outside the security department.

L The leaders didn't necessarily know the extent of some of the abuses. Examples of

women being abused.

CH Many leaders did not know. But some of us knew and we raised it. But in all fairness, therefore, I don't think we should justify ourselves or defend ourselves for not knowing. It is the duty of leaders to know. That is why I think the ANC is correct by saying we all have collective responsibility. We don't want to say it was so-and-so who knew and did not do anything. I must say, what did I do in order to equip myself with information. Because there were certain things which were being whispered. I don't think it is quite correct to say nobody didn't know. There were whispers in the corridors about these things. I think we acted slowly. But again, even what I am saying must be viewed against the background of the demands of the struggle. We were always on the move. Always on the run. We had to build an organisation inside the country. We had to defend this organisation both inside and outside the country. OR had to be busy with international work. We had to look after the welfare of our people. It was really a battalion of problems.

L Can you compare other liberation movements' security?

CH I think again, Luli, I am proud of our organisation. I think we are the first organisation in history to say during our armed struggle, we made mistakes, we sometimes detained people wrongly, and at times probably used third degree methods. We are investigating ourselves, we are going to come out openly and cleanly. I don't think we are the only movement which did arrest people, detain them. But I think our approach is extraordinarily refreshing. It shows an overriding concern for justice, for morality. For always examining whether what you did was correct or not. I am proud that we are doing that because we are not saying that we are paragons of virtue. We say, yes, we are human beings involved in a very difficult struggle against a cruel and ruthless enemy and sometimes we are saying probably we are paranoid about persecution. About the South African security branch and it is possible that probably we lumped together the innocent and the guilty. And I think the ANC must preserve this culture of examination, reintrospection, time and again. And I think at the end, we shall emerge with something quite extraordinary in terms of democratic practices.

BREAK IN RECORDING. 101

CH The ANC has emerged as the central organisation leading our people to democracy because of its own history, its own track record, its own non-sectarianism, its readiness to be flexible in tactics. To stick to strategy but be flexible in tactics. Its avoidance even of romanticising the armed struggle, and placing it above other forms of struggle. An ANC ready to negotiate when conditions change. You must remember that we have been criticised for negotiating with the regime before it announces a mutual ceasefire. I think we have grown from strength to strength because of the ability to explain coherently our strategies. I think, finally, the ANC will have to fight a new enemy. That enemy would be another struggle to make freedom and democracy worthwhile to ordinary South Africans. Our biggest enemy would be what we do in the field of socio-economic restructuring. Creation of jobs. Building of houses, schools,

medical facilities, overhauling our education, eliminating illiteracy, building a society which cares, and fighting corruption and moving into the gravy train of using power, government position to enrich individuals. We must build a different culture in this country, different from Africa, different from the Nationalist Party. And that culture should be one of service to people. Some of us, especially we in the Party, have been discussing how we should cut down the salaries of Ministers, of parliamentarians and all the subsidies, so that if you are in parliament in Cape Town or Pretoria, you actually rent a flat like everybody. We are thinking in terms of a number of guidelines so that those people who go parliament or go into the government should be those who are prepared to serve the people, not because it is a way of enriching people. And I think the ANC therefore must now position itself to tackle the problems of grassroots people. And that is why the ANC must allow the formation of many democratic formations in this country, organs of civil society, like the civics, independent trade unions, students' organisations, teachers organisations, organisations of housewives, women, gays and everybody else, so that it is kept reminded of the need of the people on the ground.

L OR, who comes from a culturally straight background, self-disciplined, and how when the ANC was asked about its approach to gays, I think it was Thabo Mbeki who said, we are for freedom of choice etc. Somebody said that OR at the NEC wasn't really consulted on this and apparently Pallo said, well we don't know if everyone in the ANC would have agreed with this. But OR is a natural instinctive democrat, and whether he understands gays or not, he would instinctively give them the freedom of choice.

CH Absolutely. He comes from a straight background. He is an exemplary person, a straight family man, and he has always been an outstanding example in terms of certain norms of behaviour and conduct. He doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, he is very private, he is deeply religious. OR would be the last person to impose any religion on others. That is what accounts for his very close relations with outstanding leaders in the SACP. He respected their views on atheism, and similarly, on the question of gays, OR would say, Oh, gays, what are gays? He would probably say, I am not part of it, but he would say, but isn't it the right of everybody to decide the sexual orientation he or she prefers. He would say, well the gays should be given the right, if they believe in that, to practice it. Who are we to impose preferences for them to decide for them. He would have that sort of attitude. He is not a rigid religious person, an orthodox fundamentalist who says, thou shalt ... this is the only path! I am a Catholic so everybody should be a Catholic. Unlike many Christians, narrow Christians in this country, who will think that because you are not a Christian, you an atheist, therefore you have bought evil (42). OR has got an understanding, even for things probably he doesn't like, he doesn't prefer. He would never crusade against those things. I think we ought to learn a lot from his general and basic attitude. He never berates, he never shouts at you. He never prescribes. He feels that things should be tested by debate, by arguments, by persuasion. He is a persuasive leader basically.

L He symbolises the ANC because the ANC is like that.

CH Yes. Well, it is an old tradition of the ANC. I think really reflected in Albert John

Luthuli. The tolerance, the willingness to engage everybody in debate, readiness to address the Nationalist Party. When thugs attacked him and broke his ribs, never vindictive. Luthuli, although he was not convinced by the armed struggle, he was the first person to go and plead in mitigation for those comrades at Rivonia. And comrades ??(27) for them heroic and outstanding South Africans, and understanding why they opted for armed struggle. Although he was not convinced that that strategy was correct, he never said, I am expelling them, and I am against it. He never crusaded against it. He understood the frustrations of young people who had been, as he said, knocking for years. Luthuli was that type of person. He was a role model for OR. OR worked as his Secretary General, as his deputy for many years. And I think Luthuli's outlook had a tremendous impact and effect on OR. I think OR wanted to move along the path that had already been opened up by the late President of the ANC, Albert John Luthuli.

L He was influenced by Moses Kotane.

CH Tremendously.

L What were the qualities in Kotane?

CH Honesty. Integrity. Total openness. Hard work. Kotane was a practical politician. Brash, but he was very frank and was totally committed to the unity of the ANC, the unity of communists and nationalists. And I think if OR valued this alliance as he does, he was influenced by the fact that for years he worked very closely with Kotane and JB Marks.

L They were intellectually quite stimulating.

CH It is interesting because when you speak about intellectually, these were not men who went like OR to a university. These were products, graduates, of the university of struggle. Young boys who left their rural areas, their villages, to go into the uncertainties of urban challenges. Who grew up to become outstanding leaders out of their experiences and in trade union movement, in the ANC. Especially Moses Kotane. A worker. Semi-literate. Kotane got his education through Party schools. Through Party night schools. But he grew up to be a giant because he moved away from narrow nationalism, got into the CP which educated him (00) and Kotane's sharp intellect, understanding of issues, deep analysis, impressed a sharp mind like that one of OR. Because OR's mind is razor sharp. Meticulous attention to details. He sits down with a paper, he writes everything down. Whether it is said by an ordinary underground worker, by a soldier, by everybody. OR will never brush aside. OR will never give you the impression that he is not taking you seriously. He takes everybody seriously.

END OF RECORDING