

To Change the World ! Is Reason Enough ?

Ron Press - His Story

Ron Press, London, August, 1995

This is Ron Press' story of his part in the struggle against apartheid. Forced into exile in the early 'sixties, Ron Press contributed to the struggle by providing much-needed technical expertise. Read here how equipment and weapons were smuggled into South Africa and how the movement's 'Technical Committee' created a variety of devices that were used in operations against the apartheid state. Ron Press also contributed to the setting up of secret communications networks that were operational in the late 'eighties. Ron Press may be contacted by e-mail at: repress@gn.apc.org

Contents

Chapter 1 [Mists and Images](#)

Chapter 2 [Images in Exile](#)

Chapter 3 [Recycled Images](#)

Chapter 4 [Coda](#)

Dedication

Ilya Ehrenberg said that he was proud to be a Jew because of those thousands of Jews who died fighting the Nazi's. I am proud to be a white South African because of those of us who fought Apartheid.

I remember when I was in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in the then East Germany in one of the huts there was the picture of a young Jewish girl. When about 16 years old she led an attack on a Gestapo office and killed some Nazis. She was captured and was imprisoned and died in the camp. It was for me a lesson in humility and reverence. One so young could be so brave and determined. To die so young and so beautiful. To die in the fight against fascism. For people like these we must be humble and reasonable and not use swearwords loosely. It is not leaders alone who make history. It is the small people the little people whom we must honour. And these are found in all countries in all walks of life and are the hope of humankind.

1 >..... Mists and Images

Bombs

I made my first bomb when I was at school. It was quite unconnected with anything except driving curiosity and the demand in my nature to succeed in making things.

In this I blame my father. He did everything, from laying paths in the garden, cutting down trees, decorating, plumbing and electrical wiring. He made a rotary lawn mower way back in 1945. It did not hover like the modern ones but it preceded them by many years. It worked well without accident. But then only he and I were allowed to use it, it was deadly. The motor was a squirrel cage 240 Volt, quarter horse, without a cover and with the lead trailing all over the garden. The grass cuttings had to be periodically removed from the motor's innards. The blades were of steel about twelve inches in diameter rigidly fixed to the shaft and without a guard of any kind. I certainly received the rough and ready training of the frontier's man in working clothes.

My teacher was, in his own way, also to blame. We students never did any experiments in chemistry. There were no laboratory practicals and the teacher demonstrated the various chemical reactions from time to time while we merely sat and watched. This was not to my liking. One of the experiments

was about explosives. Teacher made the guncotton and proceeded to show how when you subjected it to a sharp shock it was supposed to explode. A bit of the compound was placed on an upturned steel mortar and hit with the pestle. He banged away and to his embarrassment and our delight nothing happened. Not to be defeated next day he returned with some more of the supposed guncotton and this time we could hear the faint pops above the sharp clash of iron. His problem was that he did this out of view behind the demonstration bench. Naturally we had little faith in his success. But he being a brother in his long black cassock and white collar made it all the more difficult to think that he was lying.

Well, I determined to try it out for myself. We had a room in the house set up as an electrical and mechanical workshop. There we had an electric welder, a drill press, air compressor, steel work bench, and lots of tools. There was no fume cupboard but that did not deter me. I proceeded to make guncotton by treating my mother's cotton wool with a mixture of concentrated sulphuric and nitric acids. The acid mixture gave off nitrous fumes which I wafted out of the open window. According to the books there was no danger of explosion unlike in the manufacture of nitroglycerine. I removed the treated cotton wool washed it well with water and let it dry. The spent acids I flushed down the toilet. The guncotton was slightly yellowish in colour and brittle in texture. Next I had to test it. A small bit burned rapidly and brightly and that was a good sign but according to the books one needed a detonator to explode it. I only ever saw a detonator many years later. So what to do? Again according to the books it would explode if confined and heated. I rammed the guncotton into a threaded half inch steel pipe coupling, my dad used to call them nipples, and sealed both open ends with steel pipe stoppers or plugs. I screwed them in tight on the understanding that pressure alone would not set it off.

Next I took it into the yard at the side of the garage. There I set up a small methylated spirit burner in a tin can with a cotton wick. This was then surrounded with loosely stacked bricks. Balancing the coupling over the flame I quickly piled bricks on top. A few minutes later it went off with a loud crack. Removing the bricks revealed a shattered coupling and a neat hole in the can that had held the methylated spirits. The piece of shrapnel had pierced the can and buried itself in the earth beneath. This was dangerous. This was interesting.

The College was run by a Roman Catholic religious order, the Marist Brothers. It was at the top of a hill in Observatory, Johannesburg. I was not a catholic but my parents were keen on me having a good education and it had this reputation. I never did very well at junior school. I was naughty and always argued with the teachers, until Junior Certificate when we got a new teacher. Then I began liking to understand things. From then on I seemed always to come second in the class. That is one of the stories of my life. Coming second. I was however quite bright. I won most prizes in the year prior to the matriculation. Prizes for Geography, Science, Mathematics, second prize overall and the Valerian Bursary, entitling me to free schooling in this my last matriculation year.

Which Side Are You On

My first revolutionary act occurred in the English class in 1946. The classroom was in the corner of a quadrangle of classes built of red brick. The wall facing us held a large black chalk-board. To the left were windows facing a sandy lane lined with a hedge. On the other side of the hedge were the sports fields where I had found that one could not play rugby while wearing glasses and that cricket where one could, was boring. We were being taught English by the only lay teacher on the staff. He was a neat dapper middle aged man, small and precise in manner. He always wore a grey suit with a collar and tie. Our essays were being returned with the usual set of comments. He handed me mine and said, "Press you write like an uneducated coal miner." I always was, and still am, quick on the draw. I generally regretted it later. "What's wrong with an uneducated coal miner?" He had touched a nerve deep seated in my subconscious.

Well, he wasn't having that. So for the first time in my life I was punished for sticking up for the poor and dispossessed. I don't say that I consciously thought so at the time but actions reflect inner urgings. I was somehow proud of having come from a working class family. I have never regretted this my first act separating me off politically from the majority of my fellow pupils. Being successful at my studies gave me the ability to stand on my own feet and not to require too much of others. In this I was well trained by my mother and father who were both self contained and largely self educated. The punishment was to be sent out of the classroom to wait in the corridor at the top of the steps leading out of the quadrangle. I remember being on an emotional high, not resentful nor sorry, but rather

confused. What if anything had I done wrong? It was also an unusual punishment for me. I usually got the cane or the strap.

It was true that I was very poor at languages but I enjoyed examinations especially when I knew the answers. I nearly did not write my matric at all. I had singed eyebrows and burned glasses when a chlorate and red phosphorous mixture exploded in the bathroom. It was a week before the examinations and I had read of how the mixture would explode when a pellet of it was dropped. This seemed a good thing to do in ones last year at school. It required that the mixing be done very gently while wet. As I mixed it I got the impression that it was getting a little dry. Wandering into the bathroom, I was about to pour in a drop more water to keep it wet when it exploded. A bright flash set my glasses alight. I flung them off as the bathroom was filled with smoke. The ceiling dripped with a brown, black acid and my fingers and eyebrows were singed. It is often said that the wearing of glasses is a bind. Well it is, but it also has it's up side. They have so often saved my eyes from damage. This was one of my less successful experiments. My folks took the accident with little recrimination. They more often understood their children than chastised them. I often got beaten by the brothers at school but never at home. The doctor was called and the school was phoned to say I would not be well enough to write my exams. My recovery however was so rapid that a few days later they phoned the school to say that I would write after all. The school was more annoyed by having to re-arrange for me to take the examinations than they were sorry for my having had an accident.

Before school was over I had prepared some of the mixture again. This time successfully. One day in the last weeks after the exams and before we broke up I took one of the little pellets to school cradled in cotton wool and during a lesson threw it out of the window. It went off with a loud bang. Persistence had paid off.

None the worse for wear I did well in the matriculation exams getting "A"s in Chemistry, Mathematics, Geography, "B" in Latin, only a "C" in Physics and English and a better than expected "D" in Afrikaans. I had dropped History as being a boring list of dates and events with no logical connections between them. In South Africa at that time History ended at the end of the first world war. Much later I realised that this was because if more was covered the Russian Revolution would have to be mentioned. The dropping of History meant that I split science into Chemistry and Physics. At the time the Brothers had said that they would give me special tuition to catch up in Physics. Because they never took this promise seriously I never did catch up thus my rather poor "C". The marks for Geography and Latin surprised everyone including my teachers.

The examination results opened the path to studying Chemical Engineering at Wits. It had the right balance of intellectual and practical challenge. For the four years I absorbed science and engineering. During the holidays we had to undertake various trips to chemical factories such as the dynamite complexes at AE&CI near Durban and Johannesburg. Once I was assigned to an engineering works. There I worked with the apprentices and craftsmen making gears, gear trains, chains and watching them harden precision parts. It was all very instructive and interesting. I really quite enjoyed it, even the repetitive job of turning steel bushes out of silver steel, which in their turn were made into chains. I remember the apprentices decided that I must be initiated and they grabbed hold of me to perform this ceremony. I decided not to make a fuss and just let them get on with it. They took me into a passageway between two buildings and pulled my trousers down and spread red grease all over my balls. It was very silly, but in a funny sort of way it made them feel better and I was now initiated. The ways of man are wondrous to God.

There was also some extra curricular activity like tennis, swimming, and listening to classical music. For the latter I am eternally grateful to Robert Vogel, who introduced me to so many of the great composers and their works. His family were relatively rich and he had a great collection of 12" classical records. But we were generally kept very busy at college. There were a few extra-curricular lectures on the history and philosophy of science that I remember fascinated me. I came second in the graduation year but I got a Cum Laude and a thirst for the reason "Why?". Politics was not in my curriculum official or unofficial and was never mentioned amongst science or engineering students. There were no black students in the faculty to disturb us with doubts. Our intellectual walls were precursors of white South Africa's garden walls, raised high against any intrusion and topped with broken glass to keep our thoughts pure.

Political Philosophy

It was only in 1952 when I was doing my Doctorate that politics knocked on the garden gate. It first enticed me with the gentle call of reason. I could not accept God as an answer to so many of my questions? My mother asked me when my 13 th. birthday was in the offing if I wanted a push-bike or a Barmitzva. My father added that a Barmitzva was expensive and I would have to learn the Haphtorah and read a portion of the Torah written in all those funny symbols. The choice was obvious. I chose the bicycle. It was a bad choice in one way because it was stolen from the garage a few months later. It was insured and they paid out £13.00 which my mother kept. I still feel that was an injustice. Even one's mother is not perfect. When I was about 15 years old my family had decided that my sister and I were growing up and perhaps religion was necessary. So we were trooped off to the reform Synagogue. There two things happened. The bibles we were given in the services had one page Hebrew and the opposite page the English translation. That was a mistake on their part. I had been to the orthodox Synagogue before but it was all gibberish, with singing and ceremony. Very impressive, awesome and unintelligible. Now for the first time I could read and, I hesitate to say, understand what the rabbi was saying. He was in essence talking meaningless rubbish. "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one, blessed be the Lord our God..."

The second thing I remember is my Father coming home one day and saying that he would never go back there again since all they wanted was his undoubted ability to fix things mechanical and electrical. He refused to be used and taken for granted. He had some years ago commented on Christians as, " Preying on their knees on Sunday and on their neighbours on Monday." For him Catholics were "Cats in Dreck" He had no religious prejudices.

The questions however persisted? How does it all work? Why is it so? The research for my PhD. was into the reaction between azide ions and Iodine. It produced Nitrogen and was catalysed by Sulphide ions. (1,2 & 3). I was developing the system as a method for the determination of small quantities of sulphide in solution. The work was going well and I had spare time to go into philosophy. The books of Kant, Nietzsche, Spinoza, Berkeley, Eddington, Russell, were scoured for answers. The first pattern matching came when I was invigilating an examination in the great hall. It was part of my duties as a research student to help out here and there. Well, it was a boring unrewarding job, walking round and round supposedly seeking miscreants. The hall was large with rows and rows of desks seating hundreds of students. These left their notes, books and such like strewn untidily along the floor at the back of the hall. A small pamphlet, Marxism and Modern Science by Maurice Cornforth caught my eye. Nobody would mind if I read it on my perambulations. I don't remember much else about the examination but that small book matched the patterns already developing amongst my neurons and synapses. All the other philosophers seemed very learned and erudite. They, specially Russell, used beautiful language but they obscured rather than simplified. Here at last was something I could grasp. I finished it before the end of the examination and dropped it back where I found it. I never knew or thanked the student who left it for my edification.

In the basement of the library were the "stacks," rows and rows of books and documents. I had access to these in pursuance of my chemical research. I discovered a shelf of banned books. It had me hooked. Lenin, Marx, Engels, lined up in chains, imprisoned like precious jewels. But worse the jailers did not admire their treasures. I liberated them. They in their turn liberated me. Freedom brings its own chains but more of that later.

A fellow student asked me if I would be interested in coming to a talk by a Charlie Feinstein, something about the Congress of Democrats or such. The title and the organisation were not clarified. Some of us research students used to eat and have tea in a little cafe on the corner just opposite the main gate to the University. It was not far from the Chemistry block, cheap, friendly and off campus so one could relax. The meeting would be held upstairs. It was all very informal and Charlie gave a rundown on how all people were equal and discrimination was wrong. I found it all quite interesting but clearly obvious. At the end of it he asked me what I thought. I just shrugged my shoulders and said I agreed with all he had said. He had clearly expected some argument or disagreement for which he had prepared. My answer rather dampened the atmosphere and we parted with no clear commitments on my side.

About this time I met my first African on terms of near social equality. I was writing up my thesis. Malcolm Clarke, a mathematics professor, was helping me with my statistics. My mother was typing the manuscript but I had a number of graphs to draw. I was and still am not very neat. One of my weak subjects had been engineering drawing. I easily understand the subject but I was constantly

making blots, smudges and my script was very untidy. I was advised to seek somebody who could do the graphs for me. A Mr. Mashugane was recommended. I remember his name because it is the Yiddish for being a bit mad. He worked in the Engineering Department and did a great job on the graphs. He was besides being my first experience of social contact with the opposite colour also a surprise because he was the model of your petty bourgeoisie. I had been programmed to think all black people were workers with working class attitudes. How wrong I was.

First Flight

I graduated with a doctorate and my father arranged a job for me with his boss a Mr. Harmel, a Director of the Schlesinger organisation. I was appointed as a plant chemist in their soon to be erected colour film processing laboratories in Killarney. They sent me to the United Kingdom to the Rank film processing laboratories in Denham. It was my first trip overseas memorable for broadening my love and knowledge of the arts. I regularly went to symphony concerts at the Festival Hall on the south bank. I used to go by train straight from work in Denham, have a bite to eat at the hall and return to Gerrards Cross where the firm had put me up in the Bull Hotel. I went to the Tate, the National Gallery and saw the sights. On the way back to South Africa I persuaded the boss to let me have a two week holiday. I spent them in Paris and Rome. I stayed in a small hotel near the Arc de Triomphe, visited the Louvre, the Musee d'Art Moderne, the Eiffel tower, Montmartre, my eyes wide open to every sight. I went to the Folly Bergere with a fellow South African I met by chance. He invited me to go with him to find a prostitute but it was against my inner nature or nurture I am not sure which. In Rome, the Vatican, the Forum, all fascinated me. In St. Peter's square I was accosted by a peddler selling mass produced tinsplate crosses. They were of exceptionally poor quality with raw sharp edges. Although they had been allegedly blessed by the Pope I expressed no desire to buy one so he lifted the tray and offered me some dirty pictures. This and the flying of the red flag from a building just opposite provided a strange twist to the nature of society. Works of art to marvel at. Music which uplifts and transports. All done by people. Buildings and streets that inspire amazement. There are great wonders in the world. There were even more curious contradictions.

I learnt that people are people all over the world. None are better or worse than any other, language, culture, colour, all these things are irrelevant to the main Humanity of people. Or rather they make up the humanity of people. The ingredients of the stew may be different in each country but the result is still food for the body and the soul. Seeing the old Rome, St. Peter's, the old temples now taken over by the church, I learnt of how every age is built on the previous age. How the church took over the temples simply replacing, Mars by Christ, Athena by Mary. The peasants and labourers just carried on being exploited but prayed to the old gods in the new form. The new rulers did not dramatically change everything they just distorted it to their needs. The vision was changed but the substance remained.

I learnt how to be alone but to survive. This is necessary. We are in the ultimate all alone. But it took me a long time to learn to combine the thought for and concern for the future with the realisation that one's life must end and there is no individual future. Our society does not give us a rounded picture of life. They inculcate in us the necessity to plan for our futures. To live our lives as if the present is not as important as the future. This is just not true. They are linked. We as individuals have only the present and a very limited future.

To be an extremist is very easy but to conceive of the whole picture is very difficult even in its barest outlines. Beware those who present simplistic solutions to the question "What is it all about." My only answer is, it is about living. There we have no option. Here we are and we live. Make the best of it. But the best can only be the best if it includes all of the people of the earth and their children. And this means that the future of the people of the earth and the earth itself are our personal concern.

On my return I was rich. I bought a car, a Morris minor. The path of the professional white worker opened before me. However it was not to be. I received a request for a donation and I sent six pounds to the Congress of Democrats. I never went to any meetings but at the end of 1953 I got an invitation to a new year's eve party. I asked one of the lasses at work to go with me. She turned me down. I was very old fashioned, or perhaps I was in step with the times, but I thought one could not go without a partner. So I spent the dark of the night walking in the rain up Louis Botha Avenue towards town feeling very sorry for myself and enjoying it.

Joining the Human Race

The first meeting I attended is lost to me. I do however remember a meeting at which discussion took place about the policies of the Congress of Democrats. The liberals were there and representatives from the ANC. I did not understand the nuances of the discussion but in the midst of it all Jack Hodgson grabbed my arm and asked me to follow him out of the meeting. He pointed to a chap walking in front of us and said something about a police spy. We tailed him up the road until he went into a building about five blocks away. This seemed to satisfy Jack that he was a policeman. I never knew why or what happened later. I was very immature in these matters. But joining the Congress of Democrats was auto-catalytic. I met people outside the confines of my family, they introduced me to a maelstrom of activity. These sucked me into a larger community of all races all with the desire to see a more rational world. Instead of discovering the wider world confined by my own inadequacies, the world was being revealed to me by a dynamic involvement with others. I never made friends in the commonly accepted sense of the word. At school, at university, I became friendly with people but friendship never survived even a short separation. There is probably only one person, Percy Cohen, who could claim that title. Comrades I have had a plenty. They have remained my comrades for decades. Rusty and Hilda Bernstein, the Hodgsons, the Browns, John Nkadimeng, Wilton Mkwai, Solly Smith, Moses Mabhida, Uria Maleka, Obed Motshabi, Mosie Moolla, Lillian Ngoyi and so many more. One of these comrades was a Mick Harmel whom I learned years later was a close relation of the Harmel who was my first employer. Being a comrade is signing a contract, and I always tried to honour my contracts.

My social life blossomed. There were parties and fund-raisers attended by girls of my own age. There was the discussion club held at Molly and Bernie Arenstein's house. Here we met every Friday night and had speakers from the university, the ANC, authors, and celebrities. It was very open and expansive. Ruth First, Rusty Bernstein, and others on the left came from time to time and participated in lively debate. There was a talk on art by the director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery and I said that a supersonic airplane was a work of art. It aroused a lively discussion with no conclusion Tea and biscuits and good company. A discussion club camp was organised and for the first time I spent a weekend with young lads and lasses of all colours. I never had any problems with voicing my own opinions but listening also came easily. I had a lot to learn of social conduct but I was too busy to recognise the difficulties. As far as women were concerned my problem was that my pheromones and all the other 'ones' were well developed but I was always over anxious and serious, shy and pushing all at the same time. My psyche was ill coordinated in the interaction of the sexes.

There were the unattainable like Ruth, she was the Greek goddess destined for the higher pedestals. To my credit such inevitability's were easy to accept. But there were many others who while being attracted soon generated an indifference towards me. Yet others who saw me, or perhaps their families saw me, as a good buy. I was wary of them. If they were so keen? Why? There was one pretty young thing, small, simple, nice, I was quite serious and I thought she was as well. I visited her at home and had tea with her parents. In the ultimate it revolved around my political activities. I got the feeling they were afraid. Perhaps it was echoes of Nazi Germany. In one of my more poetic moments I quoted "Ours is not to reason why, Ours is but to do or die." I had to reason why. They only saw the die.

Then there was Dushka Dimovic who had left Yugoslavia as a child because Tito had allegedly taken away their property. She had been educated at a free school. Her father earned his living by running a bridge club. All this made her approach to life extremely open and uncomplicated but also self contained and self centered. She became my friend on the rebound from another member of the discussion club. We got on famously and intimately. But I was brought up in the old school, or rather not brought up but merely emerged without any real knowledge of the niceties of sex. She was not serious and when her previous love became available she returned to him. So that affair was at an end. He left her a short while later but we never got together again. Looking back perhaps it was all for the good. She would always be more concerned with self than with others. The relationship also exposed inner secrets both in my family and myself.

One night mom and dad asked me to go to the Coliseum cinema with them. Dad used to get free tickets since he was the foreman on the electrical shop of the Schlesinger cinema empire. I asked if I could bring my girl. There was no problem until the next day. "Ronnie," my mom said, "She is a shicksa." Well so what? I thought. But I respected my family so I remained silent. "You know we never told you but before Issy met me he was married to a `shiksa' (gentile). They got divorced. It never worked out." Shock! Horror!. Well, not exactly but I felt that for the folks this was a considerable

revelation. The anxiety and concern could not but have an effect on me and my ties for Dushka relaxed. Perhaps inwardly I was really a coward or perhaps respect for the family can overpower weak attachments. Some years later when I was married with a child my mother said, "You know Ronnie we were much more worried that you would marry a `schwartzte.'" (black) There are it seems degrees of racism.

There were others. The tubby lass who would have been great but her father had had a stroke and she was determined to take over as head of her family. Or the big bosomed dark beauty with long black hair. And the Indian nurse Miriam who lived at Kholvad house in President Street. She fancied me but not I her. Harry's sister Ann Barolsky? How much is chance and how much conscious design. I assure you that with me it was mostly unconscious. But choices are made, seeds sown and even the most uncomfortable bed with time becomes a place of rest.

The human race is bigger than you think

Politics in South Africa at this time was an adventure. As a white man I did not have the driving necessity to be active but I had found a group of my sort of people. For example every November the 7th. Congressites were invited to the Soviet Consul in Pretoria. For all of us it was a great time out but for many of the African comrades it was the opportunity to be free from the shackles of Apartheid if only for a few hours. Booze was plentiful and the police could not arrest them for drinking. My memory of my one and only such trip to Pretoria is stopping at Half Way House and walking up the red dirt path from the Jukskei river with an African comrade at my side. There were trees alongside and it was unusually green. Elias Motsoaledi and I got to talking about Marxism. I was delighted, surprised, and excited. Here was a fellow spirit who thought the same as me. I remember that the emotions were not unconnected to the fact that he was black. I too had much to rearrange in my inner thoughts about black people.

Sometimes these were rearranged in a rather brusque manner like the time Kathie asked me to come down to the ANC Office. It was in a cellar in a side street not far from Kholvad house where Kathie lived. One went down steps and the offices were dark and unimpressive. But they were the gateway to the future. Kathie said "Ronnie we want you to take a comrade Shadrack Rapolile to Alex." "Who?" "Listen comrade! You had better get used to African names." Well, he was right. On this occasion the objective approach obviated the racial overtone that could have been exacerbated. There were other occasions when the intense hatreds and divisions could and did enter into Congress life. But the necessity for change was overpowering.

Racism is however very complex. Take the case of the sheep. I was returning from the Eastern Transvaal where I had driven Gert Sibande in my green Morris minor. We had had a few successful meetings and were relaxed and readying ourselves for work on Monday. The sun was still up but it was getting towards the evening.. I drove up a steady slope and as I topped the rise there in front of me stretched a long straight road. No traffic in sight. Clear and uncomplicated as far as the horizon. We coasted down the gentle slope when I saw in the distance three sheep being driven across the road by a ragged African man. I saw no danger and gently directed the car to the right aiming to pass the sheep as they trotted of the road on the left. As I came up to them the shepherd suddenly realised that a car was coming and decided to drive the sheep back to where they had come. Too late the car and the sheep attempted to enter the same volume of space and time. The impact was not violent but one of the sheep was dead and dung was scattered all over the car and the road.

We stopped and I gave him my address. The car was damaged so we phoned one of the comrades in Johannesburg and he came and took us all home and arranged for the car to be fixed. I remember getting home in the early hours of Monday morning and having about one hour sleep before going off to work. I really do not recall anything of that day's activities except that I contrived at an intricate mixture of sleeping and working.

A month later I got a summons to proceed to court where the shepherd had laid charges. I persuaded one of the African comrades to come with me. It was a small court with a magistrate who typed out the court proceedings as they went along. He was clearly very proud of his typing speed. The prosecutor asked the usual questions and in particular asked why there were no skid marks. I proceeded to pontificate on how one could use ones breaks without skidding. How in fact it was better not to lock the wheels as it was more efficient. I gave quite a lecture. Nobody seemed to mind and we proceeded with further questions. It was then after I had explained how the sheep had suddenly

changed direction that the prosecutor asked what I knew about sheep. I said, "Well they could do anything." At this point I had put my foot in it. I was guilty. We adjourned for lunch. I asked the African comrade to talk to the shepherd. He would receive no compensation even if I was found guilty. Would it not be better if I personally compensated him. He was having none of that. It was clear that he would be satisfied if the white man was to be found guilty. It was a small measure of revenge for all the indignities he had suffered being black.

He had his wish. I was convicted of careless driving. There was a small fine. It was all in the course of the struggle.

I went on many such expeditions both before and after the Congress of the People. One particularly memorable meeting was a report back on the Freedom Charter to the people of Ermelo, Gert Sibande territory. On the way we stopped for a bite and a bottle of lemonade. The three of us, two black and one white, sat on the curb in the middle of the little dorp. As we chatted and ate our buns a large white Boer looked at us but seemed too startled to comprehend a white man and kaffirs being so familiar. We noticed him as he walked away from us across the road. He was big with the build of a rugby prop. He was dressed in white that contrasted with his well-tanned skin. His shorts were drawn tight across his broad backside and he waddled like a baby hippo. He was so proud of his physique and was showing it off to the best advantage. He appeared like a model on the catwalk of boere-stad selling Afrikanerdom. We all burst out laughing but as he started to look back we cut our noise. We were not looking for trouble, it would find us soon enough and we were not in a position to educate him at that point. It was not racism on our part but a mocking of the white man's arrogant stupidity.

We arrived at the Ermelo location at midday. The square next to the location was dusty and filled with people mostly Africans with a few Indians. The meeting went very well. I was asked to speak and I went through the Freedom Charter clause by clause. I was like a teacher engrossed in his subject and his mission. The crowd was highly charged. Everything I touched upon was what they wanted for themselves and their families. There was a feeling of oneness and expectation. I felt not only part of the people but someone whom they respected and cherished. I was a white man but that was not a problem but rather a symbol of the solution that was possible. It was the best speech I ever delivered and the best reception I ever experienced. It was one of those few occasions in a lifetime when all the colours and shapes, the thoughts and actions, the hopes and desires seem to harmonise. I had accomplished something useful not only to myself but to others.

Gert Sibande was great. He had my respect. He and I were very different. He was a large well-built man with a history of struggle. He had little or no education but he had a deep understanding of life. He was from African peasant stock, his whole life had been one of discrimination and deprivation. He had by his own efforts and determination risen above the absurdities and barbarism of Apartheid South Africa. Although we were so different I had a great affinity for him. We respected each the other for what we were and what we had accomplished in each our own spheres. When added together we were much much more than just two humans struggling against unreason.

Like all young people I developed my own myths about leaders. One weekend I was with Oom Gert and an Indian comrade from Johannesburg. Oom Gert was to address a public meeting in the location in Ermelo. His ban had just been lifted and the meeting was a bit of a reception for him from his people. It was a very big meeting and Oom Gert appeared to be wary and cautious as if he was unsure at the same time as he was pleased to be amongst his own. I was on this occasion acting as the driver and just listening. When he had finished I noticed a tension in the crowd. Then two burly white men walked up to him and arrested him for allegedly breaking his ban.

I had created the image of a leader to whom arrest was a challenge and taken in one's stride. I was disturbed to see that Oom Gert was visibly shaken and apprehensive. The specials were about to take him away when I confronted one of them "Who are you?" He was taken aback. The crowd was pleased. He did not know what to do. Here he was being confronted by a white man and his automatic reaction mechanism had not been programmed for this eventuality. "Please can I have your name?" He gave it to me and I wrote it down. It was a small success. One up for us. The Indian comrade told Oom Gert not to worry he would immediately get a lawyer and arrange for food to be sent in from one of the local Indian families. Oom Gert brightened as they marched him off. He was soon released as he had not broken his ban. My view of reality was a bit clearer. When I thought about it I realised what arrest meant to an African. It meant beatings, brutality and humiliation. When Oom Gert had realised that he was not alone and that the movement was springing to his defense and assistance he felt

much better. A leader is a human being.

It also indicated that whites could help, and that they were appreciated especially by the ordinary African people. One could even make an impact. The ANC in Port Elizabeth was holding a big regional conference. Now PE was a big well-organised area so the meeting would be very large. Helen Joseph, Retsi (Elias Moretsele), two others and I were sent down by car. We arrived the day before the meeting and I was put up at a comrades' flat for the night. The meeting was being held in a big hall. There were marshals dressed in khaki and a feeling of good organisation and discipline. Themba Nqota, Wilton Mkwazi, and other legends were present. I was more used to the self organised chaos of the Transvaal. However we were ushered onto the stage. Helen spoke. There must have been 500 or more in the audience. It went down well. Then I was asked to say a few words. I was on a high. I started with a loud mayibuye. Now I have a powerful voice and the crowd was surprised. I said the usual things. But I was young enthusiastic and militant. They warmed to me and it was fine. In the closing I said, "Those Whites do not want to join with us will have to be thrown into the sea." It was foolish and not Congress policy but it was what they were pleased to hear. They had clearly not expected it from a White man. I had not intended to say it either. Emotions are dangerous things.

We adjourned for lunch and had pumpkin, meat, and potatoes eaten on the stage. Then we were off back to Jo'burg. I was dog tired. I slumped in the back seat next to the window and slept with my head on Retsi's shoulder. He was large man consistent with owning an eating house in Sophiatown, old enough to be my father. A good man on the nationalist side of Congress. I often wondered what he thought of the white boy sleeping on his shoulder in the night on the way through the Veldt. It was so natural but in South Africa so unnatural.

For congressites colour was a factor of decreasing significance. It could be and was used from time to time to gain individual advantage with the less politically clear amongst us. A thick skin and the ability not to be provoked were useful. The enemy was a racist that was sufficient. To further the political struggle the movement eventually had to return to the use of arms as in the days of Hintsa, Shaka, Moshoeshe, but never to the use of racism. Ideologically racism cannot be fought with racism. The movement knew this and built on it. The big meeting in Tongaat was a case in point. Chief Luthuli was confined so he could not easily be smuggled out of northern Natal. It was essential that he attend so we all found our various ways to a garment factory in what was known then as Zululand. We sat amongst the checker board of sewing machines, in a factory owned by a sympathetic Indian businessman. It was hot and steamy. We came from every part of the South African community. Whites, Africans, Indians, Coloureds, workers, intellectuals, professional revolutionaries, ministers of religion, communists, nationalists. I do not really know why I was there but it was a proud time for me. The discussion was amongst the leaders and we listened and learned. I learned to be part of a greater whole.

"Congress" of Trade Unions

The South African Congress of Trade Unions held its founding congress in 1955 and I served the tea and white bread rolls. This was the noble task allocated to those members of the Congress of Democrats fired up with the desire to see an end to Apartheid. It was a job I was particularly suited to. After all I had a degree in Chemical Engineering and a Ph.D. in Chemistry and of more importance, I came from a family where trade unionism was a way of life.

Father's Tales

My Father told of the days in 1913 when the white miners were on strike. As a lad he was on the roof in the market square in Johannesburg and threw bricks at the dragoons who charged the strikers. He told of the time when he used to go to the market and steal vegetables to help feed the family. Of how they used to walk the railway tracks to pick up mielies that had fallen from the trucks. He went to work when he was eleven years old and earned one shilling and sixpence a week. He said that he could have bought an acre of land in the middle of Johannesburg for half a crown. When in my innocence I said in a pained and surprised voice "Why didn't you buy it?" He said resignedly. "I never had a half a crown." He was one of a large family of somewhere around 19. His father came from London, England and had been a smous (a petty salesman) on the Capetown docks. His father who was a bit of a drunkard, had evidently come from somewhere in Eastern Europe. They were of Jewish extraction but from what my dad intimated they were not religious.

Dad became a cinematograph operator and learnt to make advertising signs to go outside the cinema. I remember a book of sign writing in the house and him saying that there was heavy unemployment and he thought he would be better able to keep his job if he could do that little bit extra. He became the secretary of the Cinematograph Workers Union, a post he held for some 20 or more years.

He was in one of the white worker-commando's during the 1922 Rand Revolt and was a dispatch rider. He had a big 'Red Indian' motorbike and was shot at by the army.

Mother was a shorthand typist in the Trades and Labour Council and worked for the secretary Creswell. She was better educated than my father and read a great deal. She remembered when the police came to arrest Creswell at his office in the Trades Hall, Rissick Street and he jumped out of the window and ran across the roofs.

Later they married and I followed my sister Lydia into the world.

Dad was a battler and eventually became foreman in the electricians workshop of the Schlesinger organisation. He was clearly a reformist trade unionist. He cooperated with the boss to found a union for the usherettes and others in order to prevent them from being organised by people less favourable to the the company. I remember he got the closed shop and trade union deductions for the new union that killed off the opposition. He battled for the workers but never led them in struggle and never let it get to a strike.

He was in the Trades and Labour council and sided with the right wing against the left. He evidently had had meetings with the Communists. He told how one time he was asked to meet the general secretary who turned out to be a 'native'. But he hated the reformers. They were the spearhead of the Nationalists in the trade union movement whose job it was to capture it for the white racists. I never understood a certain fear that crept into the conversation when I had become active in the congress movement and the Nationalists were mentioned. Only later did it come out that the Cinematograph union was in the Trades and Labour Council and was being wooed by the communists on the one hand and the nationalists on the other. Dad was against the communists but equally he was against the Nats. He feared the latter since the death of Charlie Harris the secretary of the mine worker's union whom he was convinced had been killed by the Nats. He spoke of how one day he had been visited at home by the reformers. Never in detail but always with fear. It was clear that the union was registered with more votes than members on the council in order to swing the vote to the side of the social democrats.

My dad had a number of brothers. The one he only mentioned much later, when I had become political, was an electrical engineer in America. Dad said that he had gone to the Soviet Union to help build the hydroelectric dam on the Dnieper. They were in a way proud of him but also a bit scared, and felt that they ought to disapprove of his going. In practice they signalled the opposite feelings.

Mother's Tales

Mother told me about her family that was very large. Her father was a gambler and they had a bad time of it. She was born in Leeds, England and had come out to South Africa in 1912. Her father was a schneider, a tailor and they had originally come from one of the countries in Eastern Europe. I once saw an old man in an old persons home. We took some cigarettes, Sobrani's, in a round tin to this place and I remember the tin much more than the old man. He was my grandfather but I do not remember on which side.

So one can say that I am the child of East European Jewish refugees. Working class in that although the grandparents were on one side petty merchants on the other side they were workers. My immediate parents were not only working class but participated in the struggles of the white workers. When I was in my formative years I learnt about trade unionism, about struggle, of poverty and how to fight and organise. The union held meetings in the family house, my mother typed the minutes, I helped turn the handle of the duplicator (a hand driven Gestetner with wax masters). The duplicated pages were laid on a large square table and we used to walk round and round collating the documents. The arguments and battles on the executive were gone over at lunch and tea. My fathers' friends and enemies were almost exclusively connected with his life as an electrician and as a trade unionist. I do not remember him ever relaxing by going out to a football match or a pub, or playing cards, gambling, or getting drunk. We were very much a family and relaxed together and went to picnics, read books, or made things. I helped dad in making and repairing things, all sorts of things,

and making biscuits, sewing, and cooking with mother.

We were always on the move. I think we moved to a new rented house almost every year. The first I remember was a tall block of flats. It was not very nice. Then I remember a house where we erected a tall radio aerial from some pipes left by the workmen who laid the local water mains. From there we went to a house in Joel Road that had a cellar and fruit trees in the garden. I never forgot eating cherries, yellow peaches, apricots and plums direct from the trees. Marvelous. The cellar was fun too and I tried to do it out as a hideaway.

I remember my aunt Becky and her son Godfrey and daughter. I had been ill and during the spare time while recovering I made some model battleships out of thin cardboard. They were all curved and with guns and turrets. Mom asked me to make some for Godfrey and I recall some puzzlement as to why he could not make his own. I was good with my hands but never artistic. I could not draw freehand, faces, hands and such like but I could design and make things mechanical.

I first went to school in the district, near Hillbrow. The trams ran nearby. I was not much good at school. I suppose because we often moved. I never had any school chums or became part of any gangs. I think there was something about us being Jewish but not being part of the Jewish community. My father evidently called me Ronald Edwin because he was called Israel Ernest and had been discriminated against and ribbed for his Jewish name. My sister was Lydia June.

I, like my dad, have had no friends outside the movement.

We were part of a large extended family but we seldom saw uncles or aunts on my father's side. On my mother's side we often visited the aunts. Mother was a twin to a sister named Lena with a husband named Sam. They had a daughter Priscilla, with whom I was quite friendly. One aunt, Becky was married to a jobbing builder, Fred Saber, and they became quite rich and this caused some friction. Dad was very proud and did not like it that they always expected us to come to them and be entertained by them. There was also an uncle, husband to one of my mothers' sisters, in Durban with children Eric and Aubrey. They were not the flavour of the month. Once we had an accident on the Pietermaritzburg to Durban road, My uncle repaired the car, did us down on the repairs and stole the battery and the tools. Or so it was alleged. They had two sons Eric and Aubrey. Eric was a fighter pilot during the war against the Nazi's and was shot down in flames over Yugoslavia where he was rescued by Tito's partisans.

There were two uncles on my father's side. One in Capetown who had a drapers shop and one who worked on the mines. We seldom visited them, the reason for which was never clarified.

Work with My Hands

I have already said the family was essentially very practical. My father always encouraged me and bought me practical toys. One of his pleasures was to window shop for tools. On a Saturday night we would go to town and wander around the streets. While mom and Lydia looked at the dresses we would seek out the tool shops. I had electric motors and lamps, switches and wires and the run of dad's tools. Once I had been given a spring driven mecano motor and took it to pieces to see how it worked. The spring unwound and the brass cogs fell all over the table. I could get the cogs back and set it up but I could not squeeze the spring so that it would fit into it's housing. Try as I might I could not get it back. I was in tears of rage and frustration and a little bit frightened when dad returned from work. He immediately showed me how to rewind the spring using the motor mechanism. It was really quite simple. He assembled the mechanism with a long tongue of spring hanging out. He then merely used the winder key to wind it in. He said that I had been right to take it to pieces because how else could I learn.

We eventually bought a house of our own at 64 13th Street Orange Grove. It must have been in the early 1940's. It was a big house a single story with a corrugated iron roof. It stood at the corner on a quarter acre of land. There were 5 rooms with the usual kitchen and bathroom. There was the Kia (the servant's room) in the yard. We had a servant like all whites, her name was Lizzy. She was with us for 20 to 25 years.

Uncle Fred's firm built a large extra room for the union meetings and a beautiful face brick wall around the house. Dad and I did all the decorations and painting. The exterior walls were lime washed with quicklime mixed with water. The stuff boiled and bubbled and we used rubber gloves. The brushes were large and floppy and the lime sprayed all over the place. The roof was painted red. We remade

the kitchen, knocking down the wall between the old kitchen and the larder. We put in all new built-in cupboards with marble tops (some old cinema had been pulled down or re-decorated and dad 'acquired' the white marble). We were not much as gardeners.

I made a toy washing machine with an agitator, a wringer and water pump and so on, using bits from the old Mecano set with tin plate for the tub. It all worked, with an electric motor driving the the water pump, the agitator and the wringer. I also made a telephone in tin plate. It did not work but it was quite realistic. I did however make a radio receiver, a Hi Fi (an all valve affair with 6L6 push-pull output, based on a circuit in the Gramophone Magazine). It drove a massive 12 inch dual concentric speaker in a 16 cubic foot cabinet. I also designed and made a free standing bookshelf, easy chairs and a twin turntable set up for the Hi Fi.

[Photo of desk and chair](#)

Later I used to repair my Morris Minor doing the brakes, rings, valves and even the bearings on the cam-shaft. We of course did all the electrical work, the gas for the stove and the plumbing. The old style plumbing with iron pipes, cutting threads and hemp and paint on the joints.

We had a workshop with a Myford lathe, (which I bought with the money I earned at my first job), a spot-welder, (made from a transformer wound and set up by ourselves). a reciprocating hack saw made by me, an electric arc welder made from a transformer taken from an old cinematograph projector light source, drill press, long steel bench and all. It was great. There were two large wooden toolboxes crammed with all sorts of hand tools. The house was supplied with town gas and we had an air compressor so that I could do glass blowing and heavy soldering. All the large items went when dad died and I became a wanderer.

I still have many of the hand tools and some of them are with my son- in-law Ian. But I get ahead of myself.

Tea and sympathy

So I had the background to serve the tea and rolls with cheese and cold meat to the assorted delegates at the SACTU conference.

Not that my parents approved. They were not "Kaffir Lovers," and my dad had fought against the Communists on the Trades and Labour Council when they wanted to allow Africans in! I had joined the underground South African Communist Party in May 1955, the year of the founding of SACTU and the holding of the Congress of the People.. Rusty Bernstein first asked me if I would like to come to some political classes. Which I did. Then I remember a drive to town with him when he asked me if I would like to join the Communist Party. I said I would think about it. I felt that I should not appear to be too keen but to have given time to and reached a considered decision. Actually there were no questions in my mind. I joined some weeks later. In spite of all the trials and tribulations, the mistakes and tragedies, it is a decision I have never regretted.

My folks did not suspect that I was a member of the party but my Dad strongly disapproved of my association with the ANC. Still, we had come to a working arrangement. My father said that I must give up my politics. I said that I would not do so, and if necessary I would leave home. Mother said she did not want that to happen so we settled the matter in my favour. I continued to live at home and to continue with my political activities.

I particularly remember the first resolution on the conference agenda, what should the name be? We youngsters were all rooting for the name "South African Congress of Trade Unions." With the choice of name came the choice of path. The hall was full, the debate calm but heated, People I knew by sight sat on the platform, and in the hall. Leslie Massina, Solly Smith, Obed Motshabi, John Nkadimeng and many others. The congress voted overwhelmingly for 'Congress'. The die was cast, the path was chosen. After that everything was an anticlimax. I do not remember much else except that I was more deeply embedded in the struggle.

In the months that followed I worked in all my spare time representing the Congress of Democrats on the Congress of the People Transvaal Committee. It was an interesting committee on which amongst others sat Obed Motshabi, and Bartholomew Hlapane. On one occasion the chairman, Retsi fell asleep during the proceedings. We felt it would be unkind to wake him. It was also because perhaps we did not take his contributions too seriously. His politics were not quite in tune with the rest of the committees. We carried on without him. Retsi awoke and proceeded at just the exact moment at

which he had left us. The meeting stuttered and readjusted itself. It was about this time that the work was being held up for lack of cash and the ANC asked me for a loan of fifteen quid. I do not think I expected to be repaid but for the record, I am still owed. When I was about seven years old the barber in Twist Street charged my mother nine old pence for my haircut. In my first job in 1953 I was earning £1000.00 per year and I bought a car a Morris Minor for £300.00. In 1987 when I finished working for a boss I earned about £18,000.00 per year and a car cost something like £5,000.00. A haircut now costs me over £5.00. So I reckon the ANC owes me at least £300.00 not taking into account compound interest on the loan.

There was no trade union representation on the committee because trade unionists were thin on the ground. Being a trade unionist was not on my agenda but by November 1956 I became the general secretary of the Textile Workers Industrial Union.

Working for a living

As already mentioned my first job in January 1953, after finishing my Ph.D. at Wits., was as a chemist for African Film Productions. Within a year I had insulted one of the directors. I was busy sorting out a problem on the cinematograph colour film developing machines when up he popped. He had considerable experience but did not offer advice so much as tell me what he "knew" to be wrong. He said, "You don't want to take advice." I replied "I do take some people's advice." I suppose it was arrogance mixed with pride and lack of respect for high office. When I was young I used to help my Dad. Later I did things on my own and he used to give advice. This became irksome because I wanted to go it alone as all young people do. It got to the stage when I occasionally burst out in anger when he kept looking over my shoulder kibitzing. This occasion was a bit like that. The general manager called me in and asked me, "Do you intend spending your life working for us?" I thought that was a nonsense. How could they expect me to predict the future? "No" I replied. I was too honest. I was looking for employment.

It was at this time that I first became active in the Congress of Democrats. In February 1954 I started work with the Chamber of Mines Research Laboratories. There I learnt of the scientific precision with which they calculated the maximum work that could be done by the African mine workers, for the minimum outlay on their diet, taking into account the high humidity and temperatures a mile underground. In this they pre-dated the processes of the Nazi's in their treatment of the Concentration Camp prisoners. Africans were not human beings, only profit margins. I also learnt of how the dust count was regularly reported by the technical staff as being below the danger level because figures above that were generally unacceptable to management. When identity numbers were introduced for whites I refused to have my photograph taken and one of my colleagues drew swastikas on the lapels of his laboratory coat for his photograph.. My next job was at the University of the Witwatersrand. It lasted from February to December 1955. My contract was not renewed because I was arrested for being in a location without a permit

Actually what happened was that I had been asked by the ANC to address a Congress of the People meeting in White City Jabavu. As per usual the Special Branch was present taking notes. It was quite a small crowd of about 30 or 40. Sunny, dusty, in an open space a little away from the shacks. White City was relatively quite posh for Soweto. I followed one of the African comrades and lead off by saying that we wanted the demands of the people for incorporation in the Freedom Charter. One of the specials was leaning against the police car throwing peanuts into the air and catching them in his mouth. "One of our demands will be, that we don't want monkeys at our meetings eating peanuts." I remember a sudden tension in the air and this big burly white man dragging me off. Things moved quickly and I found myself at the police station being charged. In came Nelson Mandela. He was representing me he said. The white police looked at me and then at him and seemed to be amazed that I agreed. It was not natural that a white man could even consider being represented by a black lawyer.

It was my first experience of the real struggle. The case was reported in the papers, I spent a short time in the cells and found out what the Prisoners Friend was. I also found out that Professor Bockriss my immediate boss who had recently arrived from England was no friend of mine or of freedom. He called me into his office and informed me that he could not ask the Nationalist Government for research funds if there was a Communist in the department. Of course he did not really know that I was a communist. As far as he was concerned anyone who associated with the blacks must be a Communist. I suppose it was in the end no loss. I could never have developed into a full-time

academic. In practice at that time I was much more focused on the Congress of the People Campaign.

This was reinforced when Joe Slovo arranged a meeting with myself, Sidney Shall (he later became a biology professor in England) and one other on the top of one of the mine dumps. The agenda was simply that if we did not make a special effort the Congress would not be a success. This was my first commission by the party. Well, it was a success and I did my bit organising for it and at it.

Prior to the Congress I helped collate the demands that were collected from all over South Africa. We sat in the lounge of a flat in Hillbrow and sorted the demands into piles. Education, Passes, Industry and so on. Then we handed them over to those who were drawing up the draft Charter. I remember one demand that came in from a group of shop workers in Eloff Street. It was calling for Socialism and aroused my curiosity. It seems John Motshabi was working there which explained why it was so framed. I knew that John was banned for being a communist. His brother Obed was very proud of him. I discussed it with Rusty saying that perhaps Socialism should be one of the demands of the Charter. He however said that it was not a correct demand at this stage. If we could win the demand for one person one vote, socialism would surely follow. To put it forward at that time would not be useful. It showed the maturity of the movement and how the Communist Party, of whom I knew Rusty to be a leading member, understood their role as facilitators, activists, and supporters of the fight for National Liberation. In the decades that followed the adoption of the Freedom Charter by the Liberation Movement there was much discussion questioning if it was a Socialist document. The fact that it was not, enhanced its appeal to the people of South Africa and the world as a unifying program. Socialism in the light of history still provides the only basis for solving the world's problems, but the concept of Socialism is a bit more complex than we imagined at that time.

At the Congress of the People in Kliptown I was under the speaker's platform looking after the set of car batteries driving the public address system. In the 1990s I read in the literature that I delivered the message from the Peoples Republic of China but my memory of this is vague. What I do remember is the time when the police who had been hovering around all morning suddenly surrounded the meeting and descended on the platform. A great murmuring surged like a wave through the assembly. With it the pulse beat faster and the murmurs created echoes of anger and beckoned violence. The specials and the police began to react. Disaster loomed. Then a voice rose in song. Rapidly one section after another took up the refrain. The pent-up anger and fear dispersed into the river of melody. The people had won. The police were disarmed. They were no longer in charge. If there is any reflection of my love for the African people it is in the happiness roused in me by their voices in song. The Chairman announced that the meeting would proceed and that we would continue the adoption of the Charter.

In the descending darkness, having hosted its historic meeting the square began to empty. The people drained away through the bottleneck of the Special Branch who recorded each person and took their pictures. Dozens of small fires emerged into the growing gloom, revealing circles of comrades feeding them with documents, notes and addresses. My help was no longer needed. It was time to leave. I had nothing to burn. My job was done. I joined the exit queue and a flash of light transferred my face to film.

At the next historic gathering, the march of the women to Pretoria on August the 9th 1956, I acted as a taxi for some of the leaders. I stood at the side of the great arc of the amphitheatre and listened to Lilian delivering her now famous challenge in front of the thousands gathered. "You have touched the Women. You have touched a rock. You will die." The air rang with silence.

After such moments earning a living was not living but merely necessary. My academic career ended in December and my next job was in January 1956 with a firm of analytical chemists, McLachlan & Lazar. While there I soon made friends with one of the African workers who was a member of the ANC branch in Sophiatown. I also met my first player of the stock market, my direct superior. His name is best forgotten. In any event he must be dead by now. Every morning he would busily consult the stock exchange prices in the Rand Daily Mail tutting and clicking his tongue. It made my working class blood boil. The work itself was boring but required some considerable technical skill. In a way I quite enjoyed it when a cement analysis added up to 100.1%. When one had to repeat the exercise day after day it no longer represented an achievement. It represented work.

Representing the Movement Overseas

It was early 1956 and I had been working at for McLachlan & Lazar for a few months. "There is a

peace conference in Stockholm. They want a scientist. Did I have a passport? Would I go?" I do not remember even thinking about my reply. I did however remember to ask the boss for two weeks unpaid leave. It was my first conference where I represented the movement. I did not do a great job but I did not disgrace myself or the ANC. At one session of the congress in the great hall, I was sitting listening to the speeches when a side door swung open. Into my mind jumped a picture of the Special Branch. It was a raid. No! That was a different country a different time.

During the breaks for food I got friendly with a group of Australians and they were great. One was a Lady something, another was a member of the Waterside Workers Federation. During the conversation I said I would love to go to China. They advised me to ask the Chinese delegation for an invitation to China. I was reluctant to be so pushy but they persuaded me that it was not wrong. I asked the Chinese delegation and they agreed. I felt that it was a bit wrong but every-body else seemed to think it was correct. It is indeed difficult sometimes to know right from wrong. Perhaps there are some-times situations where the whole concept of right and wrong does not apply. There is no right or wrong way to eat an apple or pray to God.

Before I left I sent a post card to my comrade at McLachlan & Lazar. Then together with a group of Arabs from the Middle East I traveled by air to Helsinki, and by train to Leningrad, and Moscow. This was my first time in the USSR and I admired the brickwork of the History Museum in Red Square, the ingenious humor of St. Basil's Cathedral, and visited the Lenin Museum and Mausoleum. Then on to Omsk, Tomsk, Ulan Bator, and Beijing (then Peking). I spent a month in China and then back home via Delhi and Cairo.

I remember Lufthi, he was a big Arab truck driver, a Muslim from Sudan. I was an intellectual, a Jew, a small white man. But there was only the respect and friendship of comrades in common struggle. On May Day we danced with the Chinese in Tien an Men square and holding hands walked back to our hotel. Or the Mayor of Shanghai whose only instruction given him by the party at the height of the struggle against the Kuo Min Tang, was to survive. The co-operative farmers were so proud of their straw hut, the ceiling covered inside with old newspapers. When I asked what the revolution meant to them they looked amazed at the question. One old man answered, "Before we drank the water in which the rice was boiled now we eat the rice." Or of the old man in the jade carving factory who could not work any more but was given the special place of an honoured adviser. Much better than our western style retirement.

They laid on a dinner for the peace delegation in their major restaurant in Peking, or Beijing as it is now called. It had over forty courses, fish, chicken, vegetables, sea slugs, shark fin, steam bread, rice, birds nest soup, a few speeches, green Chinese tea, and plenty of mulberry juice. The latter was very pleasant and was served instead of rice wine or other alcoholic drinks in deference to the Arabs in the delegation. This meal spoilt any Chinese meal I have had ever since. It was the way they served the dishes, the care taken with the decorations, and the fact that each dish was served straight from the cooking. We were taken to the Opera, to see paintings, a coal mine in Hanschow, and a chemical factory. They really did take good care of us.

Then there was the unknown boatman on the River in Kowloon. I was standing on the balcony of my hotel. The sun was bright, it was hot and placid. The broad river rippled as it flowed down to the sea. There alone in midstream was a boatman. He stood in the stern, a small figure in the wooden boat loaded with goods. With every stroke he launched himself against the two oars straining with his whole body. The boat seemed to stand still in the current. Again and again he strained his whole being. Slowly painfully he made headway. Life was hard but he would win against the river, against the pitiless odds. With every stroke he gave everything and yet found more for the next battle. In Delhi a few days later I watched in the midday sun, as a man stripped to the waist pulled a heavily laden cart with wooden wheels. He was harnessed in the shafts like an animal. It was over a hundred in the shade. With every step up the hill his feet left a pool of sweat on the hot tar. Who or what planted the devil within them that drove them?

It taught me lessons of solidarity, of struggle, and it put this struggle in a context. There is a top layer in society which when divorced from the ordinary people lose so much of the meaning of life that their thoughts are froth. Their souls are barren and their comments destructive of human values. They give up the right to leadership, perhaps to existence. There are those who deliberately refuse to see the people's struggle for survival and only have eyes for the stock exchanges and money markets. They give up the right, as a species, to exist.

When I got back about two months later, I found a letter with my dismissal from work. I asked for a meeting with Mr. Lazar, the boss, to explain what had happened. He granted my request. He accepted my explanations and said he would perhaps have forgiven me "But to write to one of his Kaffirs and not to him," this could not be tolerated.

I was unemployed again but after a while I got a job with Buffalo Salt Works. They had a project building a tall climbing film evaporator for the purification and production of table salt. The system was nearing completion and final construction was under way. The white engineer doing the fitting and welding was a work-a-holic. He was not a bad man but hyperactive in all directions including his love life. This did not bother me but I was unsympathetic to his treatment of the African labourers. I started talking to them and getting on friendly terms so that they could begin to get organised. The white engineer took the path regularly traversed by racists. He told the boss all about it. I had only been there a month when I was hauled over the coals. The boss had me in his upstairs office. "I don't mind you organising the blacks. I myself read New Age," He went over to the window and from under the shelf he took out a copy. " But I won't have you organising my Kaffirs."

For six months I was unemployed and unemployable. It was quite pleasant for the first month. There was plenty to catch up on and it was akin to a holiday. Then it began to get tiresome. I had been so active and busy and now there was not enough to do. I also found myself getting short of money and had to sell my car.

It was at this time that, in spite of the comments of my English teacher, I began to write with the encouragement of Ruth First the occasional article for New Age, the movement's news paper. The first came out in June 1956. I wrote about my trip "In Peoples China I saw Science in the service of Man." (We were far less conscious of women's liberation in those days.) Fighting Talk also carried a piece on science in its October 1959 issue. I disagreed with an article in Liberation written under the name of J. Johnson and discussed it with Jack Hodgson. He told me that he had written it but it could not be published in his name because he was banned. He induced me to write a reply. His thesis was that the majority of whites in South Africa could be won to support the Congress of Democrats and thus help to overthrow Apartheid. I was of the opinion that this would not happen and that only at the last knockings would they accept the inevitable end of Apartheid. This was my first venture into political theory (a, b & d) . It is strange to read some of these scribbling nearly 40 years later. I was so sure of myself, so confident. That confidence was not entirely misplaced. Certainly I did not get it all right but I was traveling in the same direction as the stream of history and the ones on science were factual and informative.

The Secretary of Textiles

Well being unemployed lead to me becoming general secretary of the Textile Workers Industrial Union, a job for which I had no academic qualifications. As in most things it is who knows you and what they think of you. The secretary of the union Piet Beyleveld was banned, they were desperate for a replacement. I suppose the political activists in the union knew about me and my participation in the struggle. I was elected and became a full time trade unionist.

We had our offices in Pritchard Street in the centre of Johannesburg. On the same floor on the opposite side of the stairs, Shulamuth Muller a lawyer had her offices. She was married to Mike Muller who had been the general secretary of the union before Piet Beyleveld. He was banned but offered to help me. On our side and in the same row were the offices of a number of African Unions, Solly Smith of the Toy workers, Uria Maleka of the Furniture, Lawrence Ndzanga of the Railway and a number of others. They were all small and struggling against enormous repression. They were on the whole penniless and often relied like the furniture workers on a single progressive boss, the parents of Ruth First, for survival. The offices were small, each about three metres by four. The Textile occupied three such offices and all the other unions two between them. Don Mateman was the Transvaal secretary and occupied the same offices as did the African Textile Workers Industrial Union. At that time the registered union could have whites, coloureds, and Indians as members but, by law, not Africans. There was no sense in such a separation so we tried to run the two unions as one.

It was quite a job. At the prompting of Mike Muller it was agreed that I do a round trip to visit all the major centres of the union. From this trip and from later experience I got a better idea of the structure of the membership.

In the Cape area most of the workers were 'coloured'. (That was how they were designated at that

time.) Things then became more complicated with many saying that if differentiation were necessary they should be designated as 'so-called coloureds'. Today the drift is towards phasing out any references to racial differences but this will take some time. They were not the most militant or political of the membership but the most proletarian. They had no ties to the land. They had nothing to sell but their labour. The apartheid pill was for them covered in the sweetness of not having to carry a pass. They were in the historic sense, all be it "illegitimate," the sons and daughters of the whites. They were good trade unionists but prone to walking around problems only to find later that the problem was still stalking them. I met all the leading figures, I. Topley, the Union President, Willie Martin the Union Treasurer, and Alex Calmeyer the Secretary at his house in Cape Town. George Kika was the secretary of the African branch.

There was a blanket factory in the Cape, S.A. Woollen Mills. Many of the workers we represented worked there. I found out a few years later that it was owned by an uncle of my wife. She told me that he had helped her with money when I was locked up during the State of Emergency. I never met him and never had an opportunity to thank him. Although we were poles apart, him a capitalist and me an organiser for his overthrow we somehow both felt a duty to the same person. People are not all bad, they are more complicated than that.

I also met Ray Simons who was already a legend. That is the trouble with preconceived visions, the reality is always disappointing. I am not sure what I had expected but I had been told that "She will put you right." Well, she may have been a great sculptor but perhaps my clay was of too poor a quality or the time was too short. The visitation left me much as I had been before but a bit letdown and more unsure of myself.

In Port Elizabeth my next port of call I met Lizzy Walton the registered branch secretary. Port Elizabeth was however much better known for its high level of organisation and militancy of the Africans. The ANC was widely known and respected. The Secretary of the African Union was Wilton Mkwai, who was also a leader in the ANC. He immediately became one of my heroes and remains so to this day. He was fearless, purposeful, and calm. One creates images and he was one of mine. Thus PE had all the potential for a well organised and militant branch of the union. It had been so in the past but somehow it never lived up to this potentiality. PE was not a large center for textile manufacture. It was and still is a great centre for organisation and solidity.

Durban was a major centre. Here Philip Frame one of the leading blanket manufacturers, filled his sails with the winds of apartheid, and ruled an empire. There were two main groups of workers the Indian and the African. The Secretary of the registered union was Alec Wanless. I remember when I mentioned his name to my father he warned me to be very careful since to his knowledge Alec was close to the Special Branch. I was quite shocked when I first saw him. He was a dissolute, disheveled and tramp-like character, gone to fat and drink. He wore a light gray suit, his trousers tied round his bulbous stomach with what appeared to be a piece of string. His shirt once white was now gray, tie-less and open at the collar. The appearance with his trousers half hitched over his big belly was of one who had lost control over his natural functions of decency and respect. The workers in textiles were poor but they carried their poverty with dignity and their union membership with pride. The African workers despised him. The Indian workers had lost all faith in him and were organising to have him dismissed. This happened a short while later.

It was clear to me that the Natal union was in difficulties. They owned a building but it was not kept in a good state of repair. The Indian workers were sophisticated and skilled. They were however divided. I heard of tales about "the weavers" or "the spinners". There was no leadership. The potential was clear but it would need a major shake-up, and reorganisation. Mannie Isaacs would become the Secretary with R. Chin the Chairman. This was after the big strike in 1957.

The African Union's organiser was Moses Mabidha. He impressed me greatly. He had an authority and presence. He commanded respect. Together with Steve Dhlamini they were the backbone of the African Union. The Union's problem was that Moses was into everything. He was active in the ANC, in the SACTU local committee, and the underground SACP. It is the unexplored vengeance of nature to overload leaders and thus to divide and rule high office. The movement never understood or solved the task of delegation of authority. It suffers from this still. I was to learn the effects of this disease but not in such an extreme form because I was not such a welcoming host.

So back to Jo'burg. The political and dynamic strength lay in the power and determination of the African workers. The organisational and financial strength lay with the registered union. Our task, my

task was to weld them into a unity. I see this only now, not then. At the time I only had crisis after crisis, battle after battle, and some successes.

My four years as secretary of the union was crowded with activity. In December 1956, the year I started work, I was amongst the 156 arrested for high treason. As usual the special branch came early in the morning. The warrant stated that I was accused of treason. My immediate reaction was one of curiosity and then a feeling that they were not being serious. I had certainly not been plotting treason more reason, as the old Irish patriots used to say. But there you are that is what it said. Mom and Dad took it in their stride. I had been raided before and they had seen it happen in the twenties. The usual searches took place and then off to Marshall Square. I note in my Prisoners Property Receipt that I went to jail with nine shillings and a penny in my pocket, plus a Parker pen and pencil, a handkerchief and some keys. The first few weeks we spent in Jail. Then we were let out on bail of #250. We were banned from meetings, our passports were taken from us, and we had to report weekly to the police. The conditions fortunately allowed trade union activities so I was not out of a job again. Nonetheless for the whole of 1957 I had to spend most of the normal working day in the Drill Hall in Johannesburg attending the preliminary hearings. The only evidence produced against me personally was a circular letter issued by the Congress of Democrats under my signature as Chairman of the Transvaal region. This meant that I carried on the union work early morning, at times when the court adjourned and at week ends.

[Photo of treason trialists fixing my tie](#)

A Small Interruption

In January 1957 I married Sibyl Sack. I had met her in the discussion club, and in the Congress of Democrats. She was a pretty little thing and quite shy. I myself was, I suppose, rather immature in matters of the heart and had been turned down quite a few times. I remember however that the first night out of the cells I went to see her and we spent the night together in her flat. I asked her if she would marry me but she must understand, "The people come first." It was one of those dramatic, foolish, simplistic, statements of a naive young man. The passage of the years has revealed a different underlying meaning. The marriage was not based on passionate love. I did put the "people" high up, if not first, on my agenda of life that is too complicated for numbers to categorise.

We announced our intentions to get married and I told the parents that we were going to get hitched in a registry office. My mother and father had no opinions on the matter but my mother, always the practical one, said "Ronnie the family will not give you presents if you do not get married in Shull." So being open to such sound advice, my mother and I went to see the rabbi of the reform synagogue. I told him without much ado what my mother had told me, and that therefore I wanted him to marry us. I further said that I did not believe in all that religious stuff. The Rabbi said very little except that he would be in touch. A week later my mother said that the rabbi had phoned. Since my mother was a Jew, I was a Jew, according to Jewish law they could not refuse to marry a Jew. It was a Jewish reform synagogue and we went through a reasonably simple ceremony. I wore a suit. This was in itself a very unusual form of dress for me. I did wear bright green socks as a protest. These were clear to everyone as I walked up the steps to the Chupa and chatted with Sibyl. So I got my presents, and very useful they were too about R800.00 if I remember. They were enough to later let me put down a deposit on a house when it became necessary. We had a small reception for family and friends in Orange Grove on the lawn at my sister-in-law's house in Orange Grove. Oliver Tambo also married at about the same time and a combined movement reception was held at an Indian night-club in Fietas (Vrededorp).

Strikes

In mid 1957 the workers in the big Frame factory in Durban were threatening to go on strike against a wage cut preceded by a laying off of workers. I flew down to Durban to lead my first ever strike. The strike was the first to be held under the then, new regulations. A ballot had to be held before a registered union could hold a strike. The ballot was a farce. The workers were already determined to strike so we quickly duplicated a ballot form, set up a cardboard box with a slit in it and the workers lined up to vote yes. It was illegal for the African workers to strike under any conditions. Although Moses Mabidha tried to get them to join the Indian workers the African workers knowing the retribution that would fall on them could not agree. There was however no antagonism between the two groups of workers. The Indian workers knew the score and accepted the African workers decision. Both

Moses and I were banned from gatherings so I could not openly talk to him or the Branch Executive. I remember once when there was a problem Moses and I held a conversation standing back to back surrounded by workers. The bail conditions however specified that the accused in the trial must report to the police once a week. They would not let me report in Durban so I had to fly back and forth to Johannesburg

One day some of the strikers came to me in high spirits. It was marvelous. Frame had come up to them at the factory gates and begged them to come and work. They had had their first taste of workers power and loved it.

Philip Frame would not talk to me so I had to rely on the good offices of SACTU. Leon Levy the SACTU President negotiated for us on the phone from Johannesburg. He was of course also banned from gatherings. I was told he spoke with Frame for over an hour. We had won. When I got back to court in June I was issued with a banning order restricting me to Johannesburg. We won the strike, prevented a wage cut and forced the blanket bosses to negotiate a national agreement.

In February 1958 3,800 African workers in the biggest organised factory, Amato Textiles in Benoni went on strike. I was banned and confined to Johannesburg so my participation was limited. It would take some thirty years for the African workers in textiles to recover. The police intervened violently against the strikers. Rufus Makaru the Chairman and Eddie Cindi the Secretary together with over a hundred leaders of the strike were deported to the Bantustans. The strike was lost. We received as much help as was possible from SACTU and the other unions but they were themselves poor and struggling. The WFTU sent us a substantial donation.

One story told to me by Eddie sticks in my memory. The Workers assembled in the factory yard and demanded to speak to the Union Secretary. Eddie addressed the workers. Amato who was never afraid to put his case directly to his workers also addressed them. The workers sensed that this strike was make or break for the union. They knew the forces ranged against them. One of the young weavers shouted, " Burn burn." Eddie bravely argued them out of such a line of action. I still think that young fellow was right. The Apartheid state had declared war on the African workers. The time was fast approaching when the the movement would have to fight fire with fire. Perhaps the young fellows call was premature but he was more in tune with the realities than perhaps we were.

While we fought the regime on the industrial front the Treason Trial continued in the old Synagogue in Pretoria which had been converted into a High Court. This meant a long journey each day the court sat. There were memorable moments when the likes of Bram Fisher gave the court a lecture on what Treason was, or when the Judge was called upon to recuse himself. These were great intellectual victories.

1959 a quiet year

. The treason trial dragged on. The Union work settled down to a continual struggle to survive. We managed to continue the job of organising and agitating. The Union brought out a few editions of a news paper, "Textile Unity" and a history of the Union, "25 Fighting Years," text by Alfred 'Tough' Hutchinson. I had a few science articles published, "A guide to Sputnik" in October and "Why did the Russians send up a dog" in November "New Age".(b) My aunt Lena who was the caretaker threw us out of our flat in town. She could not allow us to stay because I had invited Don Mateman, a coloured man, my branch secretary, to lunch. It seemed that the neighbours had complained. We still had some of the money from our wedding presents and we bought a small three roomed house in Henrietta Road in Norwood Johannesburg. SACTU was very busy and the textile workers organisers, members and branches were active in the various campaigns, especially the "♦1 A day Campaign". I was unable to freely take part in the committee work because of the bail conditions. I did attend one or two local committee meetings. I opened, in the invented name of Mr. Sarel Harbour, a building society account for the S.A. Railways and Harbour Workers Union. Lawrence Ndzanga was the Secretary/Organiser. The money came as a solidarity gift from The World Federation of Trade Unions. Rita his wife was also a trade unionist. They were both staunch dedicated militants. The Special Branch murdered Lawrence in detention in 1976. Rita's name was mentioned in dispatches as they say until the late 1980's.

There were a few smaller strikes. "Shoulderpads" was a small factory in Braamfontein where the boss was sympathetic to unions. He gave us access to the workers and I visited it regularly to collect subs. The workers were mostly African women and many were ANC members. There was one worker M.

who always avoided paying subs but claimed to be a union member. There was also another worker S who was not very sympathetic to the union as much as I tried to persuade her. I eventually found out that she was sleeping with the white foreman and thus I had no chance of getting her to join the union. Elizabeth the shop steward, on the other hand was great. She was bright, active, politically conscious, and a real leader.

One day I got a phone call from the boss. "Come down immediately the workers are on strike." Now all strikes of African workers were illegal. I was banned from attending and speaking at meetings. What could I do? There was nobody else in the office at the time. So there I was on the factory floor talking to the workers asking what the strike was all about. Evidently the boss had promised them a five bob a week raise but would only give them a half-a-crown. I tried to persuade them to take the money now and the boss agreed that he would pay them the rest later. S was nowhere to be seen but M began a tirade against the boss, and the Union. The Union was letting them down we should force the boss to pay. All the boss had to do was call the police and we would all be in jail. And here was M more militant than anyone else and demanding her say in how the Union was to operate. I quietly exploded. "When you pay your subs you can tell the Union what to do." Well, that sorted that out. The workers reluctantly agreed to the two and six now and the rest later. To the boss's shame he never gave them the delayed increase. Let us be thankful for small mercies that he did not call the police.

There was another small factory that was owned by two Jewish immigrants. It produced various knitted items such as bandages and sanitary towels. They were from the old school and very sympathetic to the plight of the African people. We had a stop order for Union subscriptions and full access to the workers. When the government passed a law making it illegal for deductions to be made they agreed to set up a medical aid scheme. In this way the workers would get medical benefits and the Union would be paid for its administration. In this way we maintained our income. There were some bosses one could work with.

1960 was not so quiet

1960 started quietly enough but the calm did not last long. The ANC pass-burning campaign got underway and militancy of the population escalated. The police shootings at Sharpsville and the general strike that followed were heralds to the declaration of a State of Emergency. At the end of March I found myself back in jail. There, together with thousands of others I had to leave my trade union and political work. Initially it was a shock, and then a feeling of helplessness and euphoria took over.

The cell in Marshall Square was a 20 by 20 foot empty black box of a place. There were small mesh covered dirty windows high up in the outer walls through which nothing was visible. One side was all bars from floor to ceiling. A toilet graced one corner with its smell. Fortunately we did not stay there long. The Fort was cleaner and we occupied a wing of the ancient building. This was divided into cells with a central corridor. I shared a cell with Monty Berman, and Hymie Barsel, if I remember correctly. One midnight Monty started to moan and mutter. We could not wake him. I started to shout and call out. "Its Monty I think he is going to die." Panic all round. In all the cells in our corridor there was a shouting and a banging of tin mugs on the doors. It had no effect. Nobody came. Next morning Monty was much better. A doctor eventually saw him and declared it was a stomach ulcer. We were different from the ordinary prisoners. We were all comrades. We stuck together. We were in jail because we believed in the redistribution of societies' wealth not its redistribution between individuals.

One of our group of prisoners was an old man who seemed set himself apart from us. He was clearly known to most of the old timers. Although polite to him they seemed to keep him at a distance. I remember one day seeing him creeping to his suitcase like a thief, looking around to see if anybody was watching. There he poked about and securely closing the battered old cardboard case he looked over his shoulder and sat down, alone. I was curious. Who was this individual? Why was he somehow set aside and avoided? What was he up to? Soon all was revealed. It was no secret. He was merely hiding bits of food to safeguard his future. He was Louis Joffe, the former Communist Party Secretary. I had the impression that he was once a powerful man who carried the mantel of a miniature Stalin. This was the man my father had so hated and feared. It seems that he now had mental trouble and his high status was gone. Nobody was frightened anymore but clearly he was best avoided. It was pitiful really. He deserved sympathy but then perhaps he had not earned it.

There were no newspapers or radio and we relied on the assistance of the occasional smuggled

paper from the ordinary prisoners. What was really amazing was that they were on the whole friendly and could not understand why we should be prepared to go to jail for political reasons. Most of them were in jail by mistake anyway? Like the one chap. He was caught in a friend's house. Outside was a stolen car with his fingerprints all over the steering wheel. By his own account he was innocent. "He was walking down the road. He had a bad foot and this car came along and gave him a lift. The owner dropped him off at his friend's house together with the car!" But there was the honest one who said that this was his fifteenth time in for stealing. It was almost a home for him. In a funny sort of way they admired us.

Then we were transferred to Pretoria. Here all the white male prisoners occupied a single large dormitory. It was previously a workshop. There were two rows of beds, a row of washbasins at one end and cooking facilities. Running along one side was a walled courtyard where we could play ball games. So other than being locked up we were really quite comfortable. Although most of the accused in the Treason Trial had been discharged from the court, it continued with a smaller group with Leon Levy from amongst the white prisoners. So he went off to court every now and then. One day a small pocket radio appeared. It had somehow been smuggled in. So now we could listen to the news. We were all delighted. Then suddenly the radio disappeared and the news stopped. It seemed that one of the prisoners had decided that somehow he was at risk because radios were forbidden. I later found a transistor in the ashes of the stove. I was annoyed and saddened. It seemed such a waste and so anti-democratic to burn it like that.

It was here that I began to take notice of a man called Vincent Swart. He had been brought in some time previously. He was dissolute. He looked and acted like one of the dispossessed, dispossessed of dignity, of thought processes, of health, of friends, one of life's mistakes. Slowly he regained the kingdom of humanity. His colour became pinker, his cheeks filled out, his eyes began to emerge from their dungeons, and he now and then joined with us in our activities. Curious as ever I inquired about him. Why was he here? Well, it seemed he was a democratic anarchist. He and a girl friend were at one time quite rich. They lived close to Alexandre Township and being free human beings saw no reason why they should not be free together with the Africans around them. They organised, well organise is the wrong word, they seeded a group that met, drank, discussed, and generally disturbed the regime of racial separation. There was no chairman, secretary or treasurer. There were no minutes so there was no need of a secretary. The two white participants supplied the booze so there was no need of a treasurer. Anyone who liked it at the time could be the chairman.

There were no tangible results of their activities except the drift into booze and drug induced poverty of our Mr Swart. It led to his arrest during the State of Emergency. In my opinion and that of many of my fellow detainees, it was the best favour the regime ever did for him. When he joined the slow stream of those released he quickly relapsed. He could have been a contributor, an asset, fate had a different destiny for him.

Rediscovery

I decided that I had been away from science for some years and needed to refresh my memory. Perhaps in my subconscious I felt the need for comfort and safety. Perhaps I was not angry enough. Perhaps my revolt was more in the mind than in the heart. I was not destined to be a full time politician or trade unionist. I really loved science and technology. I should have been an electrician. Much of my later participation in the struggle was to be of technical assistance to the ANC.

We were allowed non political books so I asked Sibyl to bring me my textbooks, Perry, Handbook of Chemical Engineering, Elements of Differential and Integral Calculus by Granville Smith and Longley, and a few others. To my credit I also requested and got the Complete Works of Shakespeare, one of my school book prizes.

We settled down to a routine and organised plays and lectures. I gave one on rockets and how to get to the moon. It was quite mathematical with equations, graphs and drawings, not normal fare for most of my cell mates but they were very polite and appreciative. I was also in a play staged by Cecil Williams on June the 26th.

We had Heinz 57 varieties of political views amongst us. There were liberals, reverends, anarchists, communists, democrats, and others in various combinations. Some were there because they were on some Special Branch list. Hymie Basner had for example, been a member of the CP but had left in 1939 over the Stalin-Hitler non aggression pact. He had been inactive ever since. But he was on a list.

So there he was with us. Still there we all were so we determined to live together and present a united front. A Reverend led prayers on Sundays so in the cause of unity we communists and atheists attended. There were plenty of discussions and arguments but all went well. Even after the decision to hold a hunger strike.

It was agreed we would not eat until we were released and the State of Emergency lifted. It was not agreed to by the liberals, and one of the priests. This priest said that what he had done for the struggle of the people was God's work. If however he was to be imprisoned then that was also God's will and he would not oppose it by joining a hunger strike. I tried to follow his reasoning but I am afraid about half way through I lost the thread. So with about three exceptions, we went on strike. There was talk of fasting to the death. I never found out if this was a serious proposition but I thought suicide was untenable. All we would take was water. The first day I was quite hungry, but after that it was surprisingly easy not to eat. I was lucky I could always sleep, day or night. So although hunger made me tired it was no problem I just slept. After about 5 days it was decided that to keep from serious health risks we were advised to take a spoon of sugar each day, together with plenty of water. The first spoon of sugar was magic. During the strike the conversation turned more and more to food. We exchanged recipes and my maths book became the depository not only of the genius of Newton and Leibnitz but of how to make 'Stuffed fillet', 'wine sauce', and 'potato pudding a la Issy Heymann'.....and the signatures of the thirty-four of us and J. van Zyl, our warder.

(Which reminds me of the only time I saw Joe Slovo close to tears. We had in the larder a half dozen eggs. I said that I knew how to make a fluffy omelet. This clearly revived memories and aroused the taste buds of Joe. So off I went to beat the eggs whites into a stiff consistency, I folded in the yolks and poured it into the frying pan. Joe hovered around clearly his anticipation increasing with each step. I brought it up to heat and the creature rose in the pan. Now I was brought up by my mum that food had to be cooked. In our house it was never underdone. So I placed the omelet under the grill to solidify the top. I presented it in triumph. Joe almost cried. All his anticipation was shattered. His cultural history was different. In his circles the whole beauty of the omelet was in its uncooked soggy nature. He never complained but clearly it was a low point in his respect for my cooking expertise.)

After a further five days we were summoned into the yard by the prison chief. We were lined up and told that we should cease the strike. The women had agreed and were breaking their fast with oranges. We said nothing. The silence lengthened. Then Eli Weinberg spoke in a calm, loud, matter of fact voice. "We do not believe you." Even the birds and the wind fell silent in anticipation of the storm. It never came. The chief just repeated his statement and agreed that we could get a direct message from the women to confirm what he said. A day later we found that the women had indeed stopped. We agreed to break our fast. Leon Levy had in his possession a birthday cake. We broke our fasts with a slice of rich fruit cake, topped with marzipan and soft white icing. It was supposed to make you ill to eat rich food after a fast. Nonsense It was excellent with no after effects. After the hunger strike I remember Rusty saying that that was the last time he would attend any religious ceremonies on a Sunday. If the priest could not stand by the majority he would not sacrifice his principles and attend religious ceremonies.

Slowly detainees were released. My wife Sibyl was pregnant and visited every so often. It was painful to see her and then to go back to the cells. It reminded me of the outside and disturbed the steady rhythm of the prison. I almost got to hate visits. One visit from someone else I remember very well. Five of the original white prisoners were now left, Rusty Bernstein, Leon Levy, Rev. D.C. Thompson (not the priest referred to above), Joe Slovo and myself. We were locked up and just doing nothing.

This became a way of passing time, just turning off so to speak. I had first practiced it during the long hours of the trial in the drill hall in Johannesburg, and again in Pretoria. It was a bad habit and our Council constantly advised us against it. I remember one time when I was so turned off. My curiosity was aroused when Council complained that the indictment had a lot of either/or's. We were guilty of doing either this or that , and or, this or that ... This roused my curiosity. I quickly worked out the number of possibilities arising as being some astronomical figure. I scribbled a note that got into the hands of Council in time and this particular absurdity in the indictment became part of our defense. I then went back to my musings.

We were all in this state of suspended animation when we heard a door being unlocked. There was a message for Rusty. The warder had come with the message and had clearly made the mistake of bringing Nelson with him. I suppose he was on his way to return Nelson to his cell. We did not think.

Nelson did not think. We all did the natural thing. Nelson walked in and shook hands all round. But for the warder it was disaster. In the inner sanctum of Apartheid, he was witness to the open flouting of the rules. He blustered while we carried on in mild amusement. Then it was just too much. Nelson was whisked away and insanity returned him to his cell. It took a bit of time for me to return to my state of meditation. It was the closest I came to Buddhism.

Bribery and corruption?

We were still cut off from access to newspapers and radio. So it was with pleasure when we heard that we now had a small radio smuggled in for us with the help of Bram Fischer. This was the second one and since we were now a small compact group we could listen to it at lunch time when we were locked up and alone. We usually sat around the table with the radio turned on low and to preserve the batteries we only listened to the news. As we sat eating and commenting on the news items our warder suddenly appeared through the doorway between the dormitory and the kitchen. There was a stunned silence. I sat with my fork halfway to my mouth. Without so much as a moments hesitation Leon Levy, the President of SACTU, and inveterate negotiator, said, "Nice radio isn't it? We could always leave it for you when we go."

The warder was taken aback. He took no action but after a moment left us to our meal. Shortly afterwards I was released, so I never heard what happened. Certainly there were no charges brought as a result of our breaking the rules.

I was called into the interrogation office. It was off a circular central hall with a tall roof. I was taken into three special branch officers. One sat behind a desk and the other two stood nearby. They sat me down facing them and one of them said. "Mr. Press, Why do you want to leave?". It was so illogical and unexpected that whereas I was usually very sharp and quick I was confused into silence. Then I mumbled something like "I want to go back to my wife." There were no further questions, statements, or other illogic.

I was to be released and they agreed to phone my wife to pick me up next day. I was up early and did my packing. My books, clothes, and my overcoat. In the pocket I stuffed one of the small pressed steel basins that usually held our fat or sugar. I had to have a memento. Down one of the sleeves I inserted the walking stick that I had carved out of a prison broomstick with a small pen knife smuggled in by Willie Hepner. It had two linked snakes, Apartheid and Capitalism. The prison gates, keys, an assegai, a knobkerrie, and two prison bars. The knob of the stick was made from one of the wooden feet of an iron bed. I had burnt out a hole in the top of the broom handle and wedged the knob in. It bears the signatures of the five of us left at the time of my release, Rusty, Joe Slovo, the Rev.D.C.Thompson, Leon Levy, and myself. Well, I was ready to go. The warder came in and said my wife would be coming and did I want to wait. There was no way that I could cool my heels within the prison walls. I said good-bye and all agreed that they would soon follow me out. So there I stood outside the heavy prison gates. It was sunny but cool. I had successfully smuggled my contraband and I was no longer surrounded by walls and bars. While I was standing there looking silly a large truck drove up. In it were the African comrades returning from court. They greeted me cheerfully and I still feel the embarrassment, the strangeness of being on the outside waving to my comrades returning to the inside.

On the way out

Soon enough Sibyl arrived, she was self-conscious, happy, anxious, large in the belly, leaning backwards, and very pregnant. Estelle was born on the 14 of September 1960. Like all good males in the sixties I was at home asleep when it all happened. I saw Estelle the next morning. She was a small crumpled thing with a squashed purple green nose.

I was soon back in the Union office only to learn that, in spite of Don Mateman's efforts the Executive had only agreed to continue my employment if I took a cut in salary from the ♦60 in 1959 to ♦35 per month. We were so hard up at one time that we agreed to sell Sibyl's wedding ring. We got ♦11 for it. Sibyl had up to now worked from time to time but the arrival of our daughter made this difficult. We were loath to have a nanny because I felt the employment of others changed one's self for the worse. What could I do? It was true that I could not fully perform my duties being banned and confined to Johannesburg. I now had a wife and child. I also was not in essence an office worker or office holder, I was a scientist always curious, always experimenting. The road of least resistance lay before me. I

looked for employment in my profession as a chemical engineer.

It was not so easy. I had resigned from the South African Chemical Institute because they refused to allow a Chinese student of mine to join, she was a "non-European." During my research for my doctorate I had had a reference in Japanese. I traced a Japanese business man to the posh Carlton Hotel. He was classed as a European although they had been the enemy during the war. The Chinese had been on our side against fascism. Very strange? So I had no contacts in the academic or industrial world. I looked in the usual places and got a number of interviews. Every time I had to first write to the Special Branch asking for permission to go for an interview. Wait for the permission that they were usually quite agreeable to give me. Then the usual questions and probing. How could I account for four years of my life as a full time trade unionist? I invented a business of my Father that had gone broke. Generally the bosses were either so thick or perhaps turned a blind eye.

At about this time my father had a heart attack and after a long two months died in much distress in hospital. Schlesinger took over all the hospital expenses and Dad received the best of treatment. On reflection I am not so sure that what they did was for the best. Perhaps they were ignorant but they instituted all kinds of treatments which prolonged his life but made the lingering death longer and more unbearable I re-member him in bed having had a stroke and being non responsive to the family but suddenly smiling when we held Estelle up for him to see.

Working at my profession

I got a job as a plant chemist at the South African Pulp and Paper mills in Springs. I think they knew about my political activities but were still prepared to employ me. For a short while we lived with my mother in Jo'burg and I commuted to Springs. We tried to sell our house but this proved so difficult because of the political situation that we just gave it to the mortgage company and moved to Springs.

Financially we were much better off my salary having risen to over R160 per month. I had my father's car an Opel and all his tools. I was banned and now confined to Springs. In any event there was still a possibility for me to do some political work. I was transferred to a Communist Party group formed around Lewis Baker in Benoni. He was a long time communist lawyer who was also banned. The third member of our group was a comrade Mavuso. He lived in Springs and was active in as far as it was possible in the now banned ANC that had yet to begin the readjustment to underground activity. He was very small in stature and very lively. He was clearly well known and he told me that when necessary just to get in touch with any African taxi driver to give him a message. I once had to do this when I heard that there were to be mass raids by the Special Branch and he should be warned to clear his house of any incriminating material. I drove down to the taxi rank and went up to the first taxi in sight and said I had a message for Mr. Mavuso. The driver immediately knew whom I was referring to and was quite willing to act as messenger. Mavuso was a fish swimming amongst the people.

A fourth member joined our group. He was a mine clerk. He had gray hair and was a contact of the Party from the days of the Mineworkers strike in 1946. It was a pleasure having him in our group. Sentiment perhaps but also an echo from great struggles past.

At home I was unable to do much. My neighbour was typical. An African mineworker came round one day and asked if he could do our garden. I readily agreed since I was no good at all at growing things. I had proved this when I was in Norwood. He asked for one and six a day. I said no that was too little he must have at least half a crown. When the neighbor got to know about this he complained bitterly that I was spoiling the Kaffirs. At work the whites were inaccessible because they were politically not receptive, to put it mildly. Also because I was based in the laboratory where we had little contact with the shopfloor workers. The African workers were more political but even more difficult to contact. I do remember however the long straight road from the mill to the town. At knocking off time there would be a long line of Africans walking on the path at the side of the road, and a string of African cyclists on the tarmac on the side all dragging themselves back to the location. On the road in cars sped the stream of white workers going back to their garden suburbs. It encapsulated in a single snapshot the colour division in South Africa.

One day being driven home by one of my fellow workers who was a strong Nationalist supporter we were talking about this and that when he said how much he wanted more children but it seemed his wife could not. He wanted them because the Party had urged the Afrikaners to assure the future of the White race. I could not resist intervening. I asked him to sing the national anthem. He enthusiastically launched into the theme and got to the part where it goes..."Ons sal lewe ons sal

sterwe, ons vir jou Suid-Afrika.." (We will live , we will die for you South Africa). I stopped him and said do you know that there are places in South Africa where those words cannot be sung. He sniggered in disbelief. I said, "If you are Black and live in a location you cannot sing that." We rode on in silence.

The Party group met regularly and we had discussions on Marxism and on the party programme and policies. Our activities were however limited. Lewis and I were both banned and confined to our different towns. Mavuso and the other African comrade were subject to all the problems of the usual apartheid laws and so it was difficult for us to meet let alone act together. Whatever we did was basically illegal. Even trying to live a normal life involved us in breaking the law.

Lewis lived in Benoni with his wife and two children who were a bit older than our child Estelle. We had a car so in spite of the ban we went to visit Lewis on a Sunday to have tea, sun bathe and swim in their pool. It was good, nay essential, to have friends and chat as normal human beings. He had a nice house in quite large grounds. The living room had a deep pile red carpet with grand settee and armchairs, coffee table and ornaments, spotless and neat, the sort of room one would expect of a successful lawyer. We never sat in it. It was for visitors and thank God we were not visitors but comrades. We sat and talked and had tea in Lewis's study. A small crowded room full of papers, furniture and unrelated bibs and bobs. It was homely and relaxing. Villa Lewis's wife perhaps wished for something more akin to being the consort of a successful lawyer but was resigned to being the long suffering helpmate of a persecuted revolutionary. Lewis understood this and a modus vivendi had emerged which while fully satisfying neither party did not stand in the way of respect and love. This was a relationship not unusual amongst many couples involved in the struggle.

Religious connections

The Rev Thompson lived in Springs with his family so occasionally I went to visit them and we had interesting conversations about the struggle and family matters. He was a Methodist , an active opponent of Apartheid, and a friend of the Soviet Union. I asked him if these contrasting ideologies were not a problem. He then went into a long well thought out discussion how a belief in God was not only consistent with Marxism and Dialectics but essential to an understanding of it. He was it seemed part of a world wide group of priests who understood and developed this approach to religion and democracy. Liberation Theology was not a big thing then so perhaps this movement was one of its early strands.

So quite often I broke the law, but sometimes in the course of duty. One day the boss called me in and said that there was trouble at a mill in Ladysmith. They made a form of softboard from wood pulp. It was supposed to be white but occasionally it turned out a bright red. They had asked for the help of the chemists at our mill. We would be going down for a few days to inspect the process and decide a line of action. I was not sure that the boss knew what my legal position was. If he did then he would not be asking me to go. If he did not then I could not easily tell him without compromising my job. I decided to go and take the consequences.

It was nice to get away. I had applied to the special branch on a number of occasions for permission to go on holiday only to be refused again and again. We went down by car and put up in an hotel. The first thing that confronted me was a request to sign the visitor's book. This created another dilemma. I had thought that if I proceeded carefully nobody would know that I had left Springs but now I was being asked to supply irrefutable evidence that I had broken my ban. I signed. The problem of the colour turned out to be due to certain logs having present a strong red dye in the heartwood. The answer was clear but the solution quite expensive. Still that was not my problem. Frankly that was why I never made a good employee. I never could raise the slightest emotion about the boss and his profit. The problem was interesting the economics not my concern. We left for Springs a few days later and all my concerns about breaking my ban were for nothing. Perhaps the Special Branch was more sophisticated than I had thought. Perhaps they knew all about my trip but realised it was in the course of duty to the system and this required that they do nothing about it. Perhaps they thought I would reform given time.

I have my grave doubts that they had any compassion but they did exhibit intelligence beyond the call of duty. Sibyl, Estelle and I had settled into a rented a corner house in Fusion Road Springs. A month or two later a problem I have lived with all my married life came to light. Estelle was a developing child with no problems outside those normal to the well fed and looked after. I was not under pressure at

work and my political activity was at a minimum. Perhaps it was the reaction to this relaxed state of affairs or to the after effects of childbirth but Sibyl just stopped sleeping. For a week she never closed her eyes and slowly became a sleep walker. This was no good so I shepherded her to our doctor. He almost immediately diagnosed her problem as a mental one and made an appointment for her at a specialist in Johannesburg who I gathered had treated her before.

There was no possibility that I could apply for permission to go to Johannesburg. There was not sufficient time and I knew there would be a big delay before they even considered my request. What could they do? Arrest me. Anyway if I applied and they refused then what could I do? Well so be it. I got Sibyl and Estelle into the car and went to see the specialist.

It seemed that the specialist knew all about Sibyl and had treated her before. She suffered from schizophrenia. It was incurable. I was agitated and alarmed. My immediate response to the specialist was that I was having none of the Freud psychoanalysis nonsense, and I said so. He hastened to reassure me that the treatment was by way of drugs. Stellazine was prescribed and she was on drugs for the rest of her life. She was a bright intelligent loving wife but from that time on she was never quite with it. Without the drugs her behaviour rapidly became erratic. With them she was only half there. But that was how it was so what could I do? If one's wife has all her faculties it is not an unequal or unjust decision to separate but when one's partner is unwell, especially mentally, then decency and loyalty demand fidelity. As Marx said freedom is the recognition of necessity.

Well now that I was in Johannesburg illegally, now that I had done what I had come to do, I phoned the Special Branch and told them. As I hoped there was nothing that they could do under the circumstances. Perhaps it was because the struggle had not reached the pitch of later years. I decided to look in on some of my comrades and having found out that Joe and others were playing tennis I went to see them. It was a pleasant reunion before going back to my exile in Springs.

Technical matters

The struggle was also getting tougher. The ANC as well as the SACP were banned. All legal avenues of protest were now almost impossible. The movement was being forced to improve its underground structures and to consider embarking on the armed struggle. This decision was taken in the upper regions of the movement and we only heard about it later. It is in the nature of the beast that such decisions cannot be widely debated. For me it was no great leap in to the dark. It was clear that the opposition to Apartheid was getting restless. There were reports and rumours of violent reaction to the brutalities of the police and the state. I think my psyche is a contradictory mixture of left wing adventurism and contemplative caution and cowardice and when asked I helped where I could. This meant that technical matters became more important and since I had not only technical training but was also experienced in making things I was more in demand along these lines.

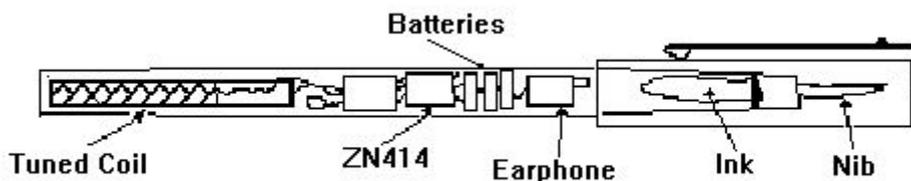
Some time before the banning when I was at an ANC conference in Lady Selborne in Pretoria. The comrades called me outside and showed me some wires that they said had just recently been strung from the telephone pole to the roof of the hall. They were rightly suspicious since there was no telephone in the hall anyway. Would I take a look. We entered the loft and with the help of a small torch made our way along the rafters to the front of the hall where the platform would be. There in the ceiling was an electronic valve with the wires coming into it. Coming away from the electronics were a further two wires that ended up in a small round disk held on to the ceiling with Plasticene. It was clearly a listening device. If I had been more experienced in the politics of publicity I would have suggested that we did nothing but immediately get in touch with the press. I pulled the microphone away from the ceiling where it was covering a small hole right over the platform. I pressed the Plasticene over the microphone blocking out the sound and retreated back to the meeting. A satisfactory reply to a rather crude Special Branch operation.

It was becoming more difficult to talk to the people so the movement started to investigate the use of more adventurous methods. The use of radio broadcasting was always a method being theorised about. The problems were not only technical but also organisational. If transmitters were developed would they be heard? If the populations have receivers, would they know where on the wave bands to listen and when? The regime knew that broadcasting was a useful method of control so they had installed a distributed sound system in Soweto. One could have a loudspeaker in the house and have piped music and news. We attempted to break into the system in the 1960's. We attached an amplifier with a tape recorder to the speaker in one house and injected some music. A comrade listened in

another part of the township. He reported good reception. It was never followed up although there was some talk of getting into the network at source with the help of sympathisers.

Later around 1970 when I was in exile in Bristol, I was asked to develop a 100MHz transmitter. The device was satisfactory up to a point but there were no tests of the range or the reception. It was difficult without assistance and with lack of enthusiasm again it fell flat. A few years later a supporter gave us a transmitter to test. It seemed a good device though a bit large and complex. Again we did not have the organisation to follow it up. Later when a request came for it to be looked into again the supporter had been lost track of. Organisational backup was always a problem. Sometimes it was the security measures that defeated us. I was asked to make a radio receiver that could be smuggled to Nelson Mandela on Robben Island. At that time they were denied all communication with the outside world even newspapers. The idea was to have the receiver in a pen and have one of the Red cross visitors get it to Nelson. It worked well. The pen was sent down to Lusaka where it was tested. The SABC came through loud and clear. Doc Dadoo was chuffed with it. Unfortunately our contact could not pass it to Nelson and the project failed.

Radio Pen for Nelson



In Jan 1990 the whole question was raised again but this time we were in a better organisational position to use such devices. I was living in East Finchley, London by now. A person in the Netherlands had made a prototype for us and I reproduced four of them for evaluation. We tested them and they had an output of about 8-9 watt. Things were easier now since Tim Jenkin, a comrade in exile with me at the time, could help. When he phoned me from Finchley Central I set the transmitter going in the flat in East Finchley, for a short time with music from a tape recorder. He phoned me back saying that the music had come through loud and clear. He then traveled further to Whetstone when we repeated the procedure. The distance was now about five miles which was quite sufficient. The transmission frequency was approximately 100MHz but was not stabilised by a Xtal oscillator. The reception could thus drift in and out of tune. We sent them to people back home who were in a much better position politically and organisationally to assess their usefulness. I understand that during the immediate period prior to the elections in 1994 it was tried in the field. Now of course Nelson not only listens to the news but broadcasts our messages over the SABC.

To return to the late 1950's I was gaining a reputation of being of use technically. Rusty had also once called on me to fix a wax stencil Gestetner duplicator used for producing illegal leaflets. It was in the cellar of a house of a sympathiser near to Rusty's house. Now in Springs, Jack Hodgson got in touch with me and asked me to make some devices that could be used to set off explosives. This was just prior to the start of the armed phase of the struggle. I still had most of my Fathers tools and so I set to work. There was the well-used device of concentrated sulphuric acid eating through a sheet of paper and then dripping onto chlorate or permanganate. I set about trying it but I was never happy with the system. It seemed so indeterminate. The acid strength was difficult to control and the paper thickness and type was critical. Electronic timing devices were not so easily available in those days and certainly the technology was not so well-known to our comrades. I made a device based on a simple kitchen timer. It was a question of gluing a rod onto the dial and onto the base so that the two touched after a set time. It was simple, inexpensive, easily made from readily obtainable everyday articles. Insert. A battery, some wires and an electric torch bulb completed the device. The doctoring of the bulb was the most difficult but I learned later that a gas lighter was substituted for the light bulb and the device became widely used with MK. I devised some other methods such as a spring-loaded sugar cube which when the sugar dissolved in water set off the charge. These more sophisticated devices never caught on.

The Special Branch still undertook raids and I was still on their list. They came for me one day at work

and took me home to see what they could find. It was shortly after I had sent off my experimental devices to Jack. I had by now learned that there was nothing one could do so the best thing was to relax. Some years earlier I had been raided. It was my first time and I was "all shook up" as the song goes. When they left having taken a series of documents and books I sought comfort and comradeship. I got into my car and drove off to the Bernsteins in Observatory. They had a large house with a swimming bath and a long drive up to the front door. I drove up through the gates alongside the hedge only to see a black car parked in front of the garage ahead. I parked and walked towards the front door. In full view through a large bay window was Rusty lying on a couch reading a book. The front door was open so I brightened up and got ready to unburden my fears and distress. There in front of me was a member of the special branch whom I immediately recognised. He was carefully going through Rusty's bookshelf. I had the presence of mind to turn on my heels and disappear. The special looked up but I was gone.

This time I stood relaxed in the yard of our house in Springs while they scabbled around but I was clean with nothing of interest. Then one of them came up to the leader of the raid and showing him a small white plastic bottle said, "Sergeant what is this?" He sniffed it and turned up his nose, "It's nothing." It was the bottle in which I had stored the sulphuric acid. But how was he to know? The raid however did my wife's health no good. Fortunately the boss did not take it amiss and it did not affect my employment.

I was now in a difficult position. My wife was not able to face the strains of an ordinary life let alone the problems of a husband involved in the struggle. I had to carry a much larger burden. Society was at the interface between the necessity for political change and the refusal of the society to accept it. It was decision time again and reason indicated that the era of my usefulness was at an end. If anger and emotion had played a larger part in my decision making processes I may not have thought of leaving South Africa. If I personally had been humiliated or beaten up, if in my or in my immediate family's history there had been a traumatic event wrought against us by the Apartheid system it may have been different. My life had not been fashioned by great swings in love and hate, beauty and horror, it had been one of even emotions and reasoned decision making. I was not so much in love with my wife as loyal to her. In loyalty to the movement I asked the party if I could leave. I had discussions with Eli Weinberg our party group's contact with the centre. He told me that my request had been discussed and agreed. He said I should not feel bad about it since it was considered the best decision under the circumstances. The departure of others had been agreed to (one I knew about was Percy Cohen). There would be others. He foresaw the time when even he perhaps would have to leave.

I began my preparations and booked our passages. The boss spoke to one of the directors of Wiggins Teape a paper concern in the UK. They in South African Pulp and Paper, had clearly found me worthy of my hire. The Myford lathe was sold for a song. I packed what tools I could and prepared for the cold in the UK by buying a warm pullover. I remember I bought it on tick and I still have to settle that account. There was an eight foot copy of Guernica by Picasso that I could not take away with me so I gave it to one of the chemists with the hope that it would arouse some political thoughts. I had a huge pile of classical 12 inch records which together with a long wall mirror I gave to Comrade Mavuso. He was so pleased because he said he at last could show his wife that he did get something out of the movement. It should assuage her complaining. In the midst of these preparations our group got a message that there was to be a leaflet distribution publicising the first MK actions on the 16/12/61. It was a week before my departure date. We had a meeting. Lewis could not help distribute, Mavuso and the other comrade were also unable to help which left me. It was decided that I could not do it alone especially so near to my departure date. That was my last Party meeting in South Africa. It prompted me to sell the Opel Cadet car that I had inherited from my father. I was sure the market would slump after the first MK explosion. This was my first and only attempt at insider trading.

My passport had been taken away from me prior to the Treason trial so I applied for it's return and this was refused. They instead gave me an exit permit which made it illegal for me to go back to South Africa. This was in February 1962. We had to travel by train from Jo'burg to Cape Town to pick up the Union Castle boat there. In Johannesburg there were a number of my friends to see us off. Don Mateman was amongst them. He had to get into the station via the "Non-European Only" entrance and then walk along the platform to join us. I was so pleased to see everyone that they must have thought I was delighted to leave. Was it a meeting or a parting? Many were to join us in exile in later years so it was perhaps but an interruption in the flow of life. It was to be over thirty years before I

returned.

 [Return to Contents](#)

2 >..... Images in Exile

Finding a new home

When we left for the United Kingdom it was full of expectations and of apprehension. I was on my own. I was a family man. Fortunately I was well educated and I had an introduction to Wiggins Teape with the prospect of a job. On the other hand I had no relations in the UK nor the address of any friends or contacts. However I had been there before so I had some idea of what to expect. I had limited funds with no prospects of getting more. I was ignorant of any social services, national health, advice bureau, or other place or person to turn to. There was no ANC branch and I knew of no Anti-Apartheid movement. Funnily enough I did not even think about the possibility of help or advice from the Communist Party in Britain. I had my health and the necessity to succeed.

We landed at Southampton and passport control was set up in the lounge of the ship. Sibyl had her passport and I went in with my South African Exit Permit. "Oh," said the man "what an interesting document. I haven't seen one of these before. Please kindly wait." Why do they do these things to people? It raised the same fears and uncertainties that were in my memory from so many police raids and arrests. What was I to do? What was going to happen? There were no alternatives? The "Please kindly wait" was not the message of a friend or a waiter in the restaurant who will bring the food in a moment, it was the precursor of doom.

Then just when the anxiety was subsiding from self exhaustion I was called and "That's all right sir." So off down the gangplank I went. At the side of the door stood my first glimpse of England, a man in a black jacket, pin striped trousers and a bowler hat. He was a small thin very white man. I immediately thought, "So that is how the representatives of the state dress here." It was all very gentlemanly and sinister at the same time. Perhaps it was mere expectations creating my own reality. Then we were off to collect the luggage. All was well organized and no problem except my tool box. It had broken open with the weight and poor packing. Again no problem they would strap it together and deliver all my stuff to a warehouse in London for collection later.

We took the coach to London. On the way our darling Estelle decided to make the biggest mess in her nappy. There I sat with the smell pervading the coach and the yellow stuff oozing out. Sibyl was only half there, but it was the better half so that was OK. There was no reaction of sympathy, help or disgust from the assembled passengers. The realization soon dawned that we were in a land of "Suit yourself as long as you don't expect me to do anything about it." It is not a bad thing in many ways. At the first and only stop, I did the business and clean and tidy we had some tea and proceeded. We ended up in a basement room of a cheap hotel in Earls Court. The hotel was still too expensive so we soon transferred to a bedsit while I started the process of trying to get a job.

This took about two months. Although my interview with Wiggins Teape went very well and they had clearly been given a very good reference by S.A.P.P.I. they only had a job in their research division that involved the physics of light sensitive coatings on paper. This was the beginnings of the era of the photocopier and Xerox machine. It fell through because I was not really a physicist. However I got a job with John Dickens's in Watford in their paper mill as a chemist. We rented a furnished flat with a garden in a house in Watford and settled in to become, I hesitate to say, a member of the working class. I was soon to find British society to be complex in a different way to that in South Africa.

Shopping was of course a necessity and there was a Co-op. This was quite new for me but clearly a good socialist thing so I joined. Next there was advertised a general meeting. So I went. In the meeting a stranger stood up and made an intervention and during it he said that he was from the Communist Party. I collared him as soon as I could and I was soon a member of the C.P.G.B. The trade union organizing scientists was the Association of Scientific Workers so I joined. Life was so simple. Choices were obvious. I was becoming a citizen.

Politics in the UK was not the politics I knew. In South Africa joining the movement meant being sucked in, becoming one of a "Band of Brothers" as Henry the fifth says. In the factory things were different. There was a canteen for the shop-floor hourly paid workers, two canteens for the white collar

hourly paid (male and female), and another for the managerial strata. I qualified for the monthly, male canteen. Here I found that many of my fellow eaters were in their own myopic view far superior to the hourly paid eaters although they earned less and were less skilled. They were clerks! I found that I was inferior to the managerial eaters. The assistant general manager was an ordinary graduate in Geography and knew nothing of the technology or of paper but he had been educated in Oxford so he was superior. It did not bother me since I always regarded myself as superior to the bosses because I was a worker not an exploiter. The funny thing was that the workers in the factory regarded me as separate from them and their inverted snobbery made it difficult to get close to them. They were highly skilled and the plant could not possibly have run without them. The machinery was old, the pipework so re-routed and re-arranged that nobody knew where a pipe went and there were no plans to assist in finding out. They however seemed lulled into an acceptance of their place in society. If they were at the bottom then they were proud of it. This was something that I had not encountered with the African workers.

I was soon transferred to the board mill in Hemel Hempstead New Town. I would have to move house again. I spoke to the boss of the possibility of getting accommodation in Hemel and he took it on board. I also spoke to the secretary of my Party branch who also said he would see what he could do. I was given a two bedroom flat in Fennycroft Road. The boss was a bit angry. It seemed that he had been embarrassed when he found out that the housing officer had been approached by the left as well as the right. Divisions between classes and groups seemed most important to the people of Britain.

The work was not too onerous. The New Town was quite pleasant. I had a car, a 1947 Rover, which I had bought for #45. It went all right but I had to carry a large can of water around with me because it was always boiling over. Our first winter in the UK, 1962, was a record one for frost and snow. One Monday I went to go to work and there was snow all about. I had seen snow before, once in Johannesburg when I was not quite into my teens. This was in itself a record because most South Africans never see snow. The other time was in 1957 at the peace conference. This was the first time I had ever driven in snow. I started the car without problems and then it just slid down the path to the road. I had absolutely no control. Only then did I realize that it was a sheet of ice. I had never heard of black ice, let alone seen it. The snow on the road stopped the car and I tentatively took control. I did not get far because at the first bend the curbside wheels disappeared into a snow bank. I tried digging, pushing, revving the engine all to no avail. We did not have a phone so I could not contact the factory. I walked back to the flat and returned with some lengths of rope. These I tied and wound around the rear tyres as I had believed snow chains were. They got me out of the drift and when the roads ahead were clearer I took then off. It was below freezing for months that year, especially one evening when we came back to the flat and the electricity and thus the under-floor heating had been cut off. I turned the gas stove on, left the oven door open and after a while we got over the worst. We went early to bed. All in all it was exciting and beautiful, especially the hoar frost on the trees and the fences. And then the white turned gray at the edges, then black and mushy, then wet and horrible. After a further thirty years I have become attuned to the fact that the British Isles are situate at a weather bifurcation where the choice between summer and winter is always less than an hour away.

I drove on my South African license that was legal for a year. The time was running out so I took my British test and failed. It seemed I used the wrong hand signals. I then carried on driving without a valid license until I took my test again this time successfully. We later sold the car for #75. This was my first and last deal in which I ever made a profit. Estelle was growing up and Sibyl seemed quite healthy and stable. We made friends through the party, one of which turned out to be a sister of Hilda Bernstein. She lived in Gade Bridge nearby. Another was a postman and his wife. They had four children of their own and fostered a few more. This seemed very strange. But then one learns that there are people who just love kids. I do too but not that much. Life was not so bad. Political activity was at a minimum, no demonstrations, marches, no public meetings, only the occasional leaflet and branch meeting. Activity connected with the struggle in South Africa was not a priority for me or generally.

At work they were always wanting the machines to go faster. I was supposed to be keen as they were. I found this very difficult but it was not a serious strain to pretend or otherwise to just keep quiet. One night I had been home from work for a couple of hours when a car came to take me back to work. Something had gone wrong with the pH of some solution or other. I corrected the problem and got back at midnight. Next day I stayed in bed a bit longer and arrived at work an hour later than

usual. The boss ticked me off, "Why are you late?" Well, I mumbled something in surprise. It reminded me of the question put to me by the special branch when they released me from jail. "Why did I want to go?" I was exasperated. This was not for me. This was not my world. What was I doing here?

I completed a course on Teaching Method in Dacorum College in Hemel. I was looking for a change.. As luck would have it one of my old professors from Wits, Malcolm Clarke, was working at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. He suggested that I applied for a post as lecturer in physical chemistry. Without ado I was offered the position. I did not have a passport so I asked for a passport from the Home Office in the UK. They refused saying that I would have to get a letter from the South Africans saying that they would not give me one. I was getting the bureaucratic run around so as time was of the essence I got an Identity Document from the Ghanaian authorities. This turned out to be an almost disastrous mistake.

Ghana

We arrived in Ghana in early 1964. I was worried about not having a passport so I wrote to the Home Office again. Then I wrote to Barbara Castle and she got the following reply to her query on my behalf.

"If Dr. Press had delayed his departure from the United Kingdom until he had received notice from the South African authorities (as he did on the 6th of January) that they were not prepared to issue him with a new passport, the Home Secretary would have been prepared to issue him with a travel document to enable him to travel. I am afraid, however, that such documents are not issued to persons living abroad."

The system in the UK was proving to be a complex variant on that in South Africa. I got down to work of teaching which was far more rewarding than working in industry.

I soon became the Secretary/Treasurer of the Senior Staff Association. All went well until a problem arose concerning the expatriate staff and the administration. A choice had to be made. In my letter of resignation from the Association I wrote to the administration.

"It has further seemed to me that certain people are construing my efforts and criticisms as destructive and as those of an expatriate with ulterior motives. Since I wish to stop all such talk or thinking I intend to resign from executive position in the Staff Association...."

I however remain a firm friend of Ghana and wish to see her progress as rapidly as possible to complete independence and self sufficiency both materially, culturally and scientifically."

I recognized quite soon that independence meant just that: Independence but not interference no matter how well intentioned. Even disinterested assistance was not easy.

At the college there were lecturers from the Soviet Union, India, Britain, exiled South Africans, and from elsewhere. The salaries they were paid varied considerably depending on odd criteria. For example the Indian lecturer, we called him Chuckles, was an expert in grasses. He had traveled the world and categorized over 72 grasses, no doubt a noble, rewarding, and boring job. He was seconded by the United Nations and got a very high salary. The Soviet lecturers some of whom were very high powered in their fields, were instructed by their government to accept only half the usual expatriate salary. Since as they said, Ghana was poor and half salaries were quite enough to live on anyway. The effect on the students was interesting. They said the Soviet professors were not very good because they were paid much smaller salaries. In some ways the Soviet lecturers were a bit ignorant. One of them, a theoretical physicist, came up to me the day after a night out asking, "Ronnie what is this `Methodism.'" He seemed quite anxious. After some discussion I realized he was not talking of some Physics phenomena or method but of the Methodist religion. He seemed a bit pained and confused to have been so ignorant.

Still there were ways of assisting. There was scope for research on local resources. Paper could be made from a local rapidly growing tropical soft wood (*Albizia Zygia* so my friend identified it). I published this research and one on "Manganese in the Chlorine Dioxide Bleaching of Kraft Pulp" (The work for this had been done at SAPPI but never been published). (4 & 5) They indicated the possibility of paper manufacture in Ghana and also got the name of the University of Cape Coast into the international journals. Because of this work I was asked to join a special group that was looking into the production of paper in Ghana. On it was an expert from Hungary.

I was all keen and as usual did not quite understand the purpose of the members of the group. I was busily putting forward ways and means of saving money and using what technical resources were available while the real purpose was to get money from various overseas agencies. Having been put right it was suggested that perhaps I would like to go to Hungary and see their paper industry where the raw material used was straw. It was agreed that I could combine it with a holiday for Sybil and Estelle. We spent a week in Dubrovnik a living museum with cobbled streets, no cars, city walls, an ancient harbour, and the shops and hotels owned and run by workers' co-operatives. Then I left the family in an hotel and went off to Hungary for a week. I had to stop over in Beograd which apart from the Hotel again being a Co-Operative, was a typical modern city. Hungary was memorable for Budapest, the castle on the hill, the dramatic peace statue, the trams, and the sweep of the river. The paper mill was of passing interest, relatively modern and efficient the main innovation being the use of straw as the raw material.

They recalled the events of 1949 almost with disbelief. The modus vivendi of their present seemed to be accepted with reluctance. The future did not beckon but was expected to come anyway. The story of one of the chemists summed it up thus. His Professor was traveling in a tram when a passenger approached him saying "Colleague, could you tell me where to get off for the University?" Now the use of the appellation "Comrade" had been discontinued after the Soviet intervention and "Colleague" was the flavour of the month. The professor answered. "Sir I do not recall seeing you at university, I am certainly not your colleague." It was like the food at the works canteen. Each day there was a large serving of a well cooked and nourishing single item meal. Each day one item and each day different in a weekly cycle. Adequate but uninspiring. I had the obligatory meeting with the sponsors of my visit TESCO Hungarian Organisation for Technical and Scientific Cooperation, and gave them a carved ebony head in thanks. I joined the family in Yugoslavia and to Ghana.

Hymie Basner whom I had first met in jail during the State of Emergency was in Accra. At his instance I wrote a long article for the Ghanaian Times, "Africa's New Scientist" (e). The All African Trade Union Federation was centered in Accra so I got in contact and sent some money in recognition of their help in the South African struggle. Students could be spoken to and they sent a petition together with a donation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the UK. However I was never a great socialite so I minimized participation in the usual social rounds. Sybil was not outgoing or the one for dinner parties or cocktails.

In a way this has been my greatest weakness. It is a great help to be able to drink in a pub, play skittles, talk about football or rugby, and generally be one of the lads. I had never been one of the crowd. I was a Jew in a Catholic school. I was never a member of a gang. I was a loner. I do not know whether to blame Freud or Pavlov but my early training did not equip me to be an organiser. I always fancied myself as a Chairman, and when the opportunity arose I made meetings go with a swing but ended up being unpopular. I always took meetings to be an organised method of reaching an agreed conclusion only to find that this was an ideal much to be sought after by the few. Each person at a meeting seems to have their very own personalised reason for speaking. When I applied the text of Wal Hannington's book, Mr. Chairman, I soon lost my job as Chair. Most of the comrades could quote passages of the Bible or of Marx but I met few who had even heard of Citrine or Hannington. I always had something to contribute but I never was a good organiser of people.

Cape Coast, the town, was in a valley next to the sea. There was nothing there of note except the usual market, a few shops, and no industry. We bought our meat at the butchers. This was a real butcher where the animal was cut up before you and you chose the piece you wanted. Fish was bought at the quayside directly from the fishermen who caught them. Pineapples and bananas were sold by the peasants who grew them But anything "civilized," such as chocolate, canned butter, pencils, paper, cups, all were imported from the age old sources overseas. This trade was largely controlled by the local Lebanese. Prices in these goods were unstable. Once the price of butter

spiraled due to a chronic shortage. When it was at its peak the butter arrived. We learned later that the whole shortage had been engineered to raise the price. The sale of local crafts such as carvings, Ashanti stools, trinkets and such like was largely controlled by traders from the northern province.

The valley was infested with malarial mosquitoes. The surrounding hill tops were relatively free of the pests. In Colonial days the white representatives of power such as the police chief, the magistrate and such, each had his residence on a hill top. Each of these residences was now occupied by a black representative of the black power. The Mayor was the chairman of the PPP, Peoples Progressive Party and the richest man in Cape Coast. Things had changed, by how much, was still a question.

Once when in the bank in Cape Coast an African woman recognized my accent and came up to me. She said she was from South Africa. We talked for a while and she said how out of place she felt. The people "were so backward." The gap between the ordinary people in Ghana and the expatriates was not merely one of colour. I was quite friendly with Kofi the carpenter. I never knew anything about his family. It never entered my head to ask. He was an excellent craftsman and could make anything of wood with the most basic of tools. His approach to money was also interesting. I asked him if he would make me a large wooden tool box that could also serve as a workbench. I would pay him whatever he wanted for the work and raw materials. The overall supervisor, formally a chief technician working at University College London, gave his permission for the use of the facilities provided Kofi did the work in his own time. For many weeks nothing eventuated. The position was that he was not prepared to work overtime. Work time was enough even if he needed the money. Ken, the supervisor, shut his eyes and I got my box and Kofi got his money and no overtime was worked.

Kofi was not very good with the pen and ink but with the chisel and plane he was tops. So when they decided that they needed a Foreman in the work shop they appointed a young man just out of school who could read and write but knew next to nothing about carpentry. It was an injustice based on crude educational qualifications, the very discrimination that education in an aspirant socialist country was supposed to eliminate. Both Ken and I were annoyed. Kofi was furious, but there was nothing any one could do.

Estelle made friends easily and there was nursery school, swimming in the sea at Birrawa beach, and a bright hot sunny climate. We traveled around to see the sights. Once on the way to Takoradi we came across a beautiful sight. The gentle blue sea, hot yellow sun, palm trees, an acetylene white fort a top a finger of land, the curve of a lagoon with a pristine bar of sand. Here was the tropical paradise of the travel brochures. We found what Gauguin failed to represent in his art. The stagnant lagoon stank.

Sibyl however gradually found the absence of stimulation wearing. She made no friends, we had a servant to do most of the chores, she did not find it easy to get about on her own and she had no hobbies. Her schizophrenia got worse until she started wandering about at night. This was dangerous. We were on the borders of the country and wild animals including poisonous snakes abounded. I discussed the problem with various friends one of whom was a Soviet professor who got me some tranquilizer but it did not help.

As an aside. At about this time I was approached by a Soviet trade representative who said they could arrange any drugs I needed for my wife, and would I give them any information of value. I was being recruited as a spy. Like the old American trade union song I was being asked the question, "Which side are you on?. Which side are you on?." I had no problem with this. I was on the side of the workers. Nothing came of it.

I was getting desperate but it was impossible and the doctor had her taken to the mental hospital in Accra. There they gave her insulin shock treatment. A week later they called me to come and pick her up to take her home. I arrived at the compound surrounded by a high safety fence. There were a large number of rooms enclosing a quadrangle. It was clean and tidy but utterly basic in its facilities. Poor kid, she looked so forlorn. She was lost in her inner self in an alien environment. It was so sad. Not only for her but for the others who were also wandering about in their other worlds. The first "lunatic asylum" I had visited was in Pretoria in the 1940's with my father when he went to fix a cine projector in the women's section. There were shrieks and cries that can still raise horrors even now. Things have slowly improved and Ghana was more civilized but the strange metaphysical rhythms were still there. Later Sibyl was in the Frenchay complex in Bristol where the other worldly-ness was less intense. Unreason always frightens me.

Perhaps disembodied cries awaken other memories. When I was quite young I was playing in the yard with a neighbor's dog. Just messing about. A piece of wire came to hand and I decided to tie the dog's front paws together. For a moment the dog did not take it amiss then it suddenly began to howl with unrestrained anxiety. I was horrified at what I had done. I was only playing? My feelings raced and my heart hammered. I untwisted the wire and the spell was snapped. The dog relaxed and became quiet. It left patterns in my mind that perhaps lay behind my reaction to cries of pain.

Clearly we had to return to the UK. I had no passport. I had to embark on a long series of letters to friends in Britain and visits to the British Consul in Ghana. On top of that the University authorities were not at all sympathetic as I had another year of my contract to go. The UK also had a problem with foreigners who they were afraid wanted to go to Britain to get treatment of the National Health Service. The Soviets were often criticized because their citizens were kept on a short leash when out of their country, but in the sort of circumstances that I was in they were far better served. I was close to deciding to ask the Hungarian authorities to let me immigrate there. However so many rallied around that eventually I was given a temporary visa to go to Britain for an interview for a job. In this Barbara Castle, Dutton the secretary of the ASCW (Association of Scientific Workers), the AAM, and so many others brought pressure to bear and we flew back to London.

London

We arrived on the 1st. of July 1965, a Wednesday, and took a bus straight to Percy Cohen in Mill Hill. After a quick meal I went with him and bought a new black suit, white shirt, a tie and shoes, took the train to Bristol, stayed the night in a pub near Temple Meads station, went to the interview at the Brunel Technical College and returned to London on Thursday with a job. We stayed in Bristol for the next 22 years.

Things were a bit different on this return to the UK. I had a job, experience and some finance in the bank. As usual the first thing to do was to get accommodation. We got some rooms in a house in Braivels Grove off Ashley Down Road, near to the college. We were subtenants to an old couple and were quite comfortable. It was to be very temporary. We were there a week when the couple had a row, split up, and gave us a notice. I was convinced it was illegal. I was sure they could not do it to us so I rang the police from whom I got no joy whatever, not even advice. I came home sure that I would find the family out on the street. Sibyl at the moment of crisis had come up trumps. She had found us temporary accommodation with a landlord who usually put up students. As it was now holiday time we could stay there. We decided to buy a house. We had some money in the bank for a deposit and it seemed the only alternative.

While in Ghana expatriates were paid in Ghanaian pounds in Ghana and a portion of the salary could be paid in sterling into a bank in the UK. We had managed fairly well in Ghana but we had had debts when we left the UK. However many of the other expatriates were short of foreign exchange. One of them approached me when he heard that we were leaving and that I had some unused Forex. A very favorable rate of exchange was agreed and I managed to accumulate a small nest egg in the UK. I still feel bad about it because it was illegal and although the laws in South Africa were there to be broken this law was not in that category. Most of this nest egg formed the £450 deposit on our house in Ashley Down road. It was your typical three up and two down terraced house on the side of a hill. It overlooked allotments and the railway way some half a mile away.

Slowly life was stabilizing. We moved into our house and bought furniture from the Co-Op. Estelle, now five years old, started school just across the road, I was lecturing at the Tech and Sibyl was settling in well. Then once again Sibyl had to go to hospital, this time Frenchay. With the help of social services I found a child minder easily enough. Estelle went off to school in the morning and then I picked her up from the child minder afterwards. Then panic. I was required to take evening classes. The child minder said that it was not possible for her to keep Estelle after five because she had to have her time for meditation and prayer. Fortunately my neighbor Mrs Wood, who I barely knew offered to help. The general support services and community co-operation were much greater than in my previous experience. Sibyl came out of hospital and with the help of the proper medication became one of the family again. I had a heart attack just before Xmas 1967. It was a very mild one and kept me off work for a number of months. We coped and made friends mostly with comrades in the Communist Party.

I now had time and the necessary support to make some improvements to the house. Over the years I

put in central heating, rewired the whole house, rebuilt the wooden back stairs in concrete, put up a car port and did all the general repairs and decorations. My dad would have been proud of me. I also made some furniture out of the wood of the boxes we had brought from Ghana. At my request Kofi had made these packing cases from mahogany. Estelle had one large room to herself upstairs, Sibyl and I had the other and the smaller room was my workshop. The large toolbox made of Odum, a Ju Ju wood, formed its centerpiece. I bought a lathe for five pounds from one of the technicians. It was not a patch on our old one but it worked. I was all tooled up for the struggle. That was to come later.

In 1970 I got the news from my sister that my Mother was dead. It seems that a lorry jack-knifed in front of the car driven by Lydia who had been seriously hurt but my mother was killed. The question of my going home for the funeral was never raised. We were not an emotional family and although we loved each other very much we never let our emotions govern us. I was on a one way visa from South Africa, we were not rich and I was working going home for a funeral seemed somehow inappropriate. Mother left her jewelry to Estelle, a diamond ring, earrings and a string of pearls. I knew mom had them but they were seldom worn. Even to this day with Estelle having a family of her own they are seldom seen let alone worn. Perhaps we are faintly embarrassed by having wealth, not that they are worth much anyway.

We also came into some money and decided that we would go on a holiday to the Soviet union. The three of us spent two weeks in August '71 visiting Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. It was a happy time. The Hermitage, the Tretyakov, the Great gate of Kiev that is always invoked by 'Pictures from an Exhibition' by Mousorsky, Palace Square where they stormed the Winter Palace, the battleship Aurora, The Kremlin, St. Basils. And when in mid-afternoon we sat on a bench in Leningrad and Estelle, exhausted fell asleep for three hours.

The Bristol Anti-Apartheid Movement

Ethel DeKeyser of the AAM office in London put me in touch with the local branch and my round of political activities began.

My first meeting of the AAM was at the house of Jane and Bill Gilchrist in South Mead. He was the convenor of shopstewards at the local aircraft factory and a member of the Communist Party. He was a skilled craftsman, a pattern maker. He was not your flamboyant leader of men but he was always there, experienced in getting the pieces to fit together. Jane was also a comrade and active in the small AAM group. She had stood for the city council and was active in the community. A few years after this meeting I became the secretary. We held meetings, marches, brought out and distributed leaflets and arranged coaches to London demonstrations. The group was small and things went slowly. The struggle in South Africa was at a low ebb after the Rivonia trials. The Bristol public however responded to the call for the boycott of Apartheid South Africa.

South Africa was playing in Bristol in a Davis cup tennis match in mid 1969 and we organized a meeting outside the tennis courts in Redland. We set up a platform with various speakers followed by a small march around the grounds. It was all quite peaceful even if we did shout slogans and make our presence heard inside the high walls where they were trying to play tennis with the racists from South Africa. There just in front of me walked Estelle who was now about 9 years old. One of your gentle, sports and democracy loving spectators poured, a fortunately now cold, cup of tea on to her. I was beginning to learn what lay beneath the smooth facade of fair play and freedom of protest.

A far bigger protest took place at the end of the same year when the Springboks played rugby at the Memorial Grounds in Horfield. It was December the 31st. It was cold with a sprinkling of snow on the grounds. We set up a platform, the back of a lorry, on Horfield common opposite the grounds. Our organization and our publicity were now quite good, even the Church around the corner in the main road had a placard denouncing Apartheid. The night before a stink bomb had been let off in the Hotel where the Springboks were staying. During the night others set off fire alarms and rang the players on the internal hotel phones. The day of the match we had a big crowd of some two hundred standing on the grass under the trees. Amongst others Bill Nicholas spoke from the Trades Union Council and I from the AAM. Then we marched off down the main Gloucester Road towards the shops in Horfield. Then back up the hill. One of the protesters wanted us to sit in the main road thus blocking it but we dissuaded him. Then we marched around the grounds. While we were busy one of our supporters, a local teacher, got onto the rugby ground and scattered tacks on the playing field. He was arrested but the whole effort got headline publicity for the protest against Apartheid.

From this high point the membership decreased to an all-time low. There was little news of any activity in South Africa. The movement was dormant recovering from its battering. In the UK we did not have any kernel around which the British people could be mobilised in protest. It was however essential that the AAM be kept alive because I knew that the problem of Apartheid would not go away. Protest and support would be essential and the Bristol AAM must survive to organise it. I remember a general members meeting held in the Transport and General Hall in Victoria Street. They had kindly given us the use of one of their small meeting rooms. I was there early and waited, and waited. One young lady supporter turned up. We sat there for a few minutes offering each other comfort and agreed to have the A.G.M. again the next year.

The Soweto events of 1976 shattered the silence and the backwash hit the AAM. Things began to liven up and I became more involved directly with the ANC and SACTU in London. I willingly gave up the secretaryship of the Bristol AAM and Hedly Bashforth took over. I of course continued to participate on the committee and in the general activities. The Bristol branch of the AAM remained very active and was one of the largest. Gerrard Omasta-Milson became the secretary. I used to help with the regular Soweto Walks at the home of Bevis and Jackie in Priddy nearby.

Academic Life

College work was fortunately never really trying. Academic progress, or status was never a problem. Teaching is a very satisfying job. Students come in, unsure of themselves, uncertain of what they know and wary of the jungle around them. In some little measure they leave having recognized some of the landmarks and at least knowing where the levers and buttons are. They may not press the right ones but they now have the courage to try. I remember one particular student by name of Bond. (For me remembering a student's name was indeed an honour.) He came on a chemical technicians course. He was a rather tubby chap with dark hair. Not particularly memorable but just got on with the work. I never paid any special attention to him except perhaps to recognize that he was trying. After few years he left the college with a City and Guilds certificate. Sibyl and I were walking down Gloucester Road. It was quiet with little traffic so it must have been a Sunday. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a figure running across the road towards me. I suddenly recognized Mr. Bond. He was more grown up, more a citizen and less a slave. He said he wanted to thank me for all I had done for him and how I had helped. It was a very pleasurable moment. That is why I remembered his name.

Work also brought challenges. The college was a technical college and therefore doing research was not even a minor expectation on the part of the authorities. I determined to do some because it added that extra interest and I could stand out a bit in the crowd. Dennis Hardcastle and I published a paper on, believe it or not, "Some Physico-Chemical Properties of Ellagic Acid". The then new principal lecturer was a pushy irritating character whose intelligence was difficult to discern. He was always boasting about this and that and his having a book published. Well, if he could, so could any idiot, so could I. My problem was not the science but the English. One of the lecturers went through the script with me line by line smoothing out the rough corners. The book "The Chemical Electron" published in 1969, was dedicated "To the Grandchildren of Oom Gert, Their universe will be much bigger." It was translated into Italian and Japanese. (I found out later that the little bugger had never written a book himself anyway. He was merely the editor.) A short paper in the Journal of Chemical Education followed. In 1976 my last published research effort was "Observations on the Foxing of Paper" (6,7,8 & 9) which concerned the reason why brown spots appear in old books. The excitement of the struggle was beckoning. The call of Academia receded.

One did a job to the best of one's ability and deserved a reward commensurate with it. This had been my father's favorite slogan, "A fair days pay for a fair days work." The dispute came over what was fair. So work was also about trade unions and since I was a member of the Communist Party about socialism. The ASCW had become ASTMS. I retained my membership for a year or so but carried a paralleled membership with the ATTI the teachers trade union. Later when the ASTMS lost their representation of the technicians in the college I remained a member of the ATTI later to become NATFHE. This involved the usual meetings, both of the college and the region. I was also appointed as a representative to the Bristol Trades union Council and became an executive committee member. In these positions on and off I contributed to the trade union struggles in Bristol over the years from my arrival to when I retired in 1987.

I even got a showing on television. The anti-racist movement in Bristol organised a counter march to the National Front. We were quite canny about this in that we did not confront them but followed them

on both sides of the street, through the heart of town and to the "private" hall where they held a meeting. We distributed leaflets, carried placards, shouted slogans and generally destroyed their message to the Bristol public. They could not retaliate since we were perfectly peaceful citizens going about our lawful business of walking on the pavement and talking to our friends the public. The police had very little to do until the march came to their meeting place down near Temple Meads. There the police formed a line and kept the opposition out. We were by far a bigger number than them by now. They had lost the day. Our supporters milled about in the street outside and a number of us climbed onto a garage roof at the side. Standing there overlooking the assembled crowd I suddenly felt like doing the Lenin act. I had seen the pictures of him on the armored car addressing the masses in St. Petersburg. Why not me? I stood and started a meeting. It was great but I had not taken into account that I had been shouting for over an hour and my voice was almost gone. Still for a brief few minutes it was just like in the books. I was captured by the television and went on air. For a brief moment I was the center of the vortex of Bristol Anti-fascist life.

During these years there was a strike of the lecturers only for a day but a strike nonetheless. We stood on a picket line outside the gates and watched while many of the staff went past. It was very peaceful with not a police officer in sight. Other activities were attendance at one or two national conferences, supporting other workers on strike, and raising the trade union and liberation struggle in South Africa whenever appropriate. Money was collected, leaflets and pamphlets distributed, friendships made and momentous accumulated. I have a letter specially distributed to the Trade Council Executive by the post office workers during the post office workers strike, a Stewards armband and two certificates conferring life membership on me. The two life memberships of the Bristol Trades Union Council, indicates a case of collective memory loss.

Rocks hidden under the water

It was early summer in 1976 it was the time of the Soweto events. As was my wont, I was playing around with ways of concealing things from the apartheid regime. I was by then a member of a subcommittee set up by the South African Communist Party. Its job was to provide technical assistance for the African National Congress. Being a scientist, an engineer and more important still one who loves to potter about making things, I was chuffed to be asked to join the Party's group of technical "subversives." Before this, I had been working freelance so to speak.

A muddled phone call summoned me to London to talk with Jack Hodgson and Aziz Pahad my fellow sub-committee members. The movement was developing a plan to get some hardware (military equipment) into South Africa. Two Mkontho we Siswe units were established in the country and spurred by the Soweto events they were ready for operations. We had some discussions, sitting in the sun on a park bench off Holloway Road. Children were playing, mothers were shopping and we were based thousands of miles from the action. Jack and Aziz explained the bare outlines of the plan to me but as it was later to turn out, not my full role in it. At that stage all they needed was a way to camouflage TNT, detonators, fuses, and hand grenades. Would I think about it?

I find planning without discussion very difficult, so the two Ronnies, Ronnie Kasrils and myself, got together. We decided that we needed a well dressed tourist on holiday to South Africa. Such an upper crust Englishman would naturally shop at Fortnum and Mason and take a gift of fancy food for some great white chief in Johannesburg.

Picture the two of us buying hampers of luxury food in this shopping citadel of the wealthy. Pat♦, canned grouse, whole yellow peaches in brandy syrup and other canned goodies. It was a revelation to me how the rich lived. It was a shock how much we had to pay. I remember that we paid over ♦50 which was a hell of a lot of money in those days. Ronnie answered my anxiety. In the context of the total costs of the operation, these delicacies played a minor part. All the same it felt strange walking down Oxford Street with a hamper. It was just as well nobody from the press or the ultra-left saw us. We laughed at the imagined headline. "White Communists live a life of luxury."

I returned to Bristol with the two hampers. Since I only needed one of the hampers and the empty cans My wife Sybil, our 16 year old daughter Estelle and I were in a position to stuff ourselves silly. The food was a perk of the job but frankly the pate was too rich, the grouse unpalatable and we only enjoyed the peaches.

Having achieved what I wanted I now had the equipment to make the dummy containers. I had opened the grouse cans in different ways. With the first, I cut out the bottom without using a tin opener

so that the rim and the label were undisturbed. The other I got into by cutting around the middle with a pair of tin-snips. After careful cleaning, the rim of the first can was ground and cut off, leaving a sharp edge. I cut the bottom of the second can so that the bottom, the rim and half an inch of the side remained. The wall was frilled and after some careful adjustment it fitted into the first can with just the rim and the bottom showing. It looked as if the can had never been opened. All that was necessary was to fill the interior so that it weighed approximately the same as when filled with grouse. It should also make a similar noise when shaken. I treated the other can in a similar manner.

For the detonators I decided to go up market technically speaking. I carefully emptied a large, pressurised shaving cream dispenser. The bottom of the can was treated much the same way as the grouse can. The domed button part of the top was cut away on a lathe. A small anti-perspirant sample was fed in from the bottom, filling the hole with a new dome and button. Glued and painted, it appeared as if nothing had been altered. Now the tricky part was to remove the anti-perspirant and replace it with shaver foam. The new can was then hollow to receive the detonators and delivered enough foam for one or two shaves.

I traveled back up to London. Aziz asked if I would help collect the hardware, put it into the cans and pass it on to the courier. My problem has always been my love of science and puzzle-solving is stronger than my common sense and I do like being part of the movement. Such decent people with a logical and reasonable cause make up the movement. So I said I would act as the courier, opting for danger.

The plan was that I would go to Mogadishu in Somalia. Comrade Masondo would meet me there. The then Socialist government had agreed to supply us with whatever we needed. I would pack the equipment and take it to Nairobi. Another courier would collect it and go on to South Africa.

Aziz arranged a meeting on the platform of a central line underground station where I would get a sight of S, the courier to whom I would hand over in Nairobi. He was British. (I still do not know his name.)

It all sounded exciting and it was a welcome break from teaching at a technical college. I had a friend, Philip Biggs, who printed letter-headed paper for me. It was purportedly the letter- head of a 'Standing Conference on South African Refugee Education' , based at a fictitious address in Lusaka. Using it I wrote myself a letter seeking my assistance for a few weeks and signed it with an unintelligible signature. In the letter, I asked the college for leave of absence. Such requests had become almost a ritual. Since I was on the executive committee of the South African Congress of Trade Unions I had to attend meetings in Lusaka from time to time. I got the impression that my immediate superiors did not really mind as long as they could sell my reasons to the bureaucrats to whom they were answerable. In so many ways the sympathy for the struggle of the African people had become part of the psychology of the ordinary Brit. It was heart warming.

With cans stuffed with tools, glue, and other necessities, I secured the bottoms with Blu Tack and packed them back in the hamper amongst the straw. The so-called hamper was in reality a posh cardboard box tied with high quality string. I became the tourist with my shaving gear, my British passport, shorts and a British Airways ticket to Nairobi via Mogadishu.

It was Sunday afternoon on the 22nd of August at the small dusty airport in Mogadishu when I ran into trouble. The immigration official took one look at my passport and I could see the disbelief and suspicion in their eyes. I carried a British passport that said I was born in South Africa. " Sorry you must take the next plane back to the UK" one of them said. `Where was Masondo ?' I asked myself. He was supposed to meet me here. I decided to explain that I was member of the ANC. Their eyes became even wider with disbelief. "Who is this mad Englishman?" I thought I heard them say. "Next plane back", they insisted. I did not know what to do. I could not let the mission fail. It depended on me getting the material packed and taken to Nairobi. Fortunately the comrades had given me the name of the general who was our contact in the Somali army. Reluctantly I gave his name and asked the passport officers to check with him. This did not create much interest but they agreed to follow it up all the same. About an hour later, a young man in casual short-sleeved shirt and flannels arrived. It was all very informal now.

Into customs and they opened the hamper and asked me what was in it and to take out a can. Out came the can of grouse. To my horror the bottom had come apart and the contents were in imminent danger of falling out. As it rose out of the straw the bottom gaped open with strands of Blu Tack

merely stopping the bottom from falling off completely. My heart sank. Just then the customs man said it was all right. Apparently satisfied. I quickly plunged the can back into the hamper.

Off to town with the shirt-sleeved young man driving a very ordinary car. He took me into a quiet sunny pleasant office, with not a uniform in sight. A half an hour later, he drove me through streets reminiscent of many a small African town to a neat, sparsely furnished bungalow in a high walled compound. By now it was late, but I had passed an important hurdle, my prospects were not clear but the Somali's knew who I was and what I had to do. I do not remember much until next morning when to my relief comrade Masondo walked in, a big muscular man, whom I remembered vaguely but who clearly knew me. I gave a sigh of relief. Masondo apologised, explaining that he had been delayed for some reason. The young man who had taken me through passport and customs revealed he was a Special Branch officer, that we were now in a military compound.

It was now Monday. Masondo and I discussed the next steps and what we could possibly get into the containers I had brought with me. My knowledge of explosives, hand grenades, TNT and such like was purely theoretical so I left the decisions to Masondo. He decided we could pack two hand grenades, TNT, detonators, fuse and blasting cord into the containers I had brought. After a meal in the canteen, he went off to arrange the supply of the hardware.

We worked all next day and ended with a set of cans ready for gluing. At home I has used large "C" clamps to hold them shut while the glue hardened but they had been too large to bring with me. The ill-kempt Somalian garden, or more aptly desert, had plenty of large boulders. We decided to hold the cans closed by putting a bolder on the top of each. Comrade Masondo, carried the rocks from the garden. I used Araldite to glue the bottoms in. While Masondo placed the boulders on top, I crawled on my hands and knees, wiping away the excess glue. Satisfied we went to bed that night with the living room populated with large stones perched on top of cans of grouse, pat♦ and peaches. It looked like an exhibition at the Tate Gallery.

Next day my comrade was feeling apprehensive and his shoulders ached. He was sure he had malaria. When I suggested that he had not done manual work for such a long time he perked up and laughed. As the task had gone so well he decided that I should make a false bottom for his suitcase and pack a handgun and cartridges. This needed a few things from town, so off we went. Masondo also wanted a power supply unit for his portable radio and I wanted a towel. Drying myself with a handkerchief after the nightly shower was not satisfactory. It was my own fault for forgetting one. We obtained the power supply from a ramshackle shop stocked with all sorts of second-hand electrical bits and pieces. It was not part of the operational plan or budget, and neither was the handgun. However I am always uneasy arguing with my leaders especially when I am not sure of my ground. The going price for a small hand towel was seven pounds, so I continued with the handkerchief. Anyway it was not so bad because the climate was warm and dry. It was not much of a shopping zone but I bought a necklace and a small carved head. After all, I was a tourist.

Nairobi

Wednesday was spent making a false bottom to M's suitcase and concealing the gun and cartridges. The next day I set off on the short flight to Nairobi with my hamper of hand grenades, TNT, and foam-shave surrounded by detonators. I left M with the false-bottomed suitcase and in all the years since have seldom seen or heard of him. There were always so many loose ends and unfinished stories.

There is something psychologically peculiar about a branded package. When it is to all outward appearances a tin of pate, it becomes a tin of pate irrespective of what is inside. At Nairobi customs there was no problem at all. They did not even open the hamper. It was perfectly normal for a UK visitor to bring one in to his relations. They just asked for the payment of import duty. I had brought the receipt with me and I remember it cost the movement ♦10 odd in tax. The Taxi driver recommended a suitable hotel and drove me to it.

I decided that the hamper might be recognised at the airport when in a few days' time it left for South Africa. I went to town to get some rope or binding which would at least modify its superficial looks. On the way I crossed a stretch of grassland before the town where a young fellow accosted me. He was very much in earnest and I was a soft target. We sat on the grass in the sun. In front of us was a row of small Indian shops and behind them a backdrop of large buildings including one tall, completely out of place, skyscraper called the Kenyatta Tower. On a small lake people were messing about in

boats. The youth spun me a long tale. Schooling was not free but university education was. He raised money by carrying goods for merchants from the market to the shops. If only he could afford a handcart he could carry more goods and then he could employ somebody. Then he could go to university. The final thrust of his argument was that as he was not a Kikuyu he had little chance anyway. I gave him a few pounds for the lecture and hurried on. I felt bad about that since I had long ago decided that throwing the snowballs of charity at the fires of capital would not put them out. The contradiction between my humanity and my reason still bothers me whenever a beggar accosts me.

At a small shop I bought a long leather belt, just the thing to create a different look for the hamper.

Next day was Saturday, the day for me to hand over the hamper to the man who was going to take it into South Africa. At midday I entered the main post office with the hamper, the new leather belt around it. The post office was small and unsophisticated, with bare wooden shelves for the customers to fill in their various forms. I trotted in and put the hamper under the writing counter and made out as if I was filling in a long form. The time was as arranged and I suddenly became aware of the presence of S. There was no sign of recognition. I left with the form in hand and the hamper under the counter for S to pick up.

Well, things were out of my hands now. I had a few days to relax and see the tourist sights. My first expedition was to a Masai village. The tour operators took us to a farmstead. A White madam lived in the usual single-storied house with a wide veranda set in a well-kept garden. In the yard were the inevitable kia's (one room living quarters) housing the servants. These servants gave us tea while the white madam collected our money and handed us a small printed folder.

This explained that we were at Mayer's Ranch. 'It consists of some 6,000 acres.' The literature explained. 'The indigenous Masai live on the ranch by special arrangement with Mr. Mayer'. It went on to tell the visitor that 'Masai are remarkably egalitarian, there is no social stratification and no form of organised leadership. All Masai are equal - and all Masai are better than anyone else.' The irony of the text was clearly lost on the Mayers and most of the visitors.

We were then led off to a few Masai huts where they laid on a show for us. To be fair to the madam, she allowed them to sell trinkets to the tourists and to keep the proceeds. I bought a folded and decorated 12 centimeter length of leather which was used as an ear adornment. I had to keep up the appearance of being a tourist.

What with the young man who would become a transport tycoon, and the white madam and the socialist Masai, Kenya had changed. Concurrently the 'socialist' prehistory of the Masai, the recent colonial past and the raw capitalist present lay before me. It somehow remained much the same as before liberation when I had visited it on an ANC mission in 1957. Somewhere in this strange new mixture lay a lesson for the future South Africa.

The next day I went to see some traditional dancing and music organised by a governmental cultural committee. It was a controlled release of traditional talent. Next day I flew back to London with a running stomach but a good feeling.

Back to normal

I settled down again to the job of lecturing. Attending Bristol Trades Union Council meetings, trying to revive the local Anti-Apartheid branch and going up to London for the technical committee, SACTU, and the ANC. All routine stuff, but in the midst of it all at least I received some news. S had delivered the hardware via Jan Smuts Airport to one of the underground groups. The other group, it seemed, could not be contacted. Later still, I saw a report by an officer of the South African security branch about these clever terrorists who smuggled detonators into the country hidden in shaving cream cans. I had mixed feelings about such reports. On the one hand I was proud of having done something. On the other hand, it meant that the police had harassed and perhaps murdered some brave comrade to obtain the information.

One day in the early 1980s I bumped into S, giving out leaflets at a peace demonstration. We recognised each other immediately but equally stopped short of showing it. It was our secret. Again in 1990 Tim introduced me to him as a person who held a bank account in London for operation Vula.

Among my mementos are a small carved head, a Masai earring, a small metal tag with the figure 2 cut out. This came off a detonator. Kenya has not changed much. Somalia is a tragedy.

The Communists

In conjunction with and parallel to my time in the trade union movement in Bristol I played an active part in the local Communist Party both at branch and district level. I came from a different school of struggle. For me the case was simple. The workers were exploited by the bosses and socialism was the answer. In the course of the struggle against exploitation I gradually realized that things were more complex. The situation in the UK had its specifics. For example I found that in party circles and in the labour movement generally there were complaints and protests against the education system. More money should be spent. Equipment and accommodation were poor. The class sizes were too large. Coming from South Africa most of these assessments were ridiculous. Slowly I began to realize that these were the problems of the people as they saw them. There was also some truth in their assessments because they were made in relationship to the schools of the upper crust in the UK not to the majority of the world's people. The underlying truth was the same although the form and extent of differentiation were very different. I could relate to both but it did cause difficulties.

I renewed my membership of the Communist Party soon after my settling into the house in Ashley Down Road. I quickly became active in the Party and was variously branch Secretary, Treasurer, and delegate to various conferences both District and National. Jack Evans a teacher lived nearby. Bill and Shiela Williams lived around the corner and Brian and Betty Underwood who lived in Knowle with their two girls who were about Estelle's age. We all became firm friends. Brian was an electrician as my father and Bill was a lecturer at a technical college. Shiela managed a big family and Betty worked as an assistant, later a medical secretary in a hospital.

One of the customs of my head of department was to invite new members of staff to his house for tea. He wanted to bridge the natural divide between himself and his staff. It was quite nice but as usual I was uncomfortable in a posh house with the boss trying to be nice to the family and me. I had of course to invite him back. I could not be a pig. So he and his wife duly visited us. Our dear Estelle decided in her un-inhibited wisdom to bring out the picture album. There on the second page was a picture of her under the communist party banner. "Are you a communist?" asked Dr Green. "Yes" says I. "Are you a member?" He asked as if being a communist was all right but actually being a member was really beyond the pale. After this he never tried to get close again. I am sure this incident made waves far into the future.

One of my early tasks at college was to teach inorganic chemistry to chemical technicians. Many of them worked at Rio Tinto Zinc that had a big plant in Avonmouth near Bristol. One section was a smelter producing lead and zinc from ore mined in Australia and elsewhere. The other section was mainly concerned with the production of fluorocarbons. The problems of the workers at the plant were often raised at the Trades Council. They complained of the low wages and were told that they could not be paid better because the smelter was not making much profit. Their union found out that the miners of the zinc ore in Australia also complained of their low wages and got the same reply. The trick it seems was that the ore from the Australian mine was sold by RTZ to RTZ on the high seas. RTZ made no money at mine or the smelter only on sale of the ore. There were two party members working at the complex, one in the smelter and another in the chemicals division. My daughter Estelle later also worked there. Another problem was that there was considerable pollution both within the plants and up wind from them.

My ASTMS branch sent a resolution to the Trades Council supporting a public inquiry into the pollution. Little was done. In the mill where the ore was ground up dust was heavy so they took down one wall to let more air in and the dust out. There was a ventilation system that was supposed to wash the dust from the air but it became clogged and was disconnected to allow work to continue. The workers went on strike because of the levels of lead poisoning were higher than the so called accepted levels. The bosses agreed and put the workers off work when their blood levels rose and replaced them with others. This meant that the workers lost bonuses and overtime. A compromise was reached where the "acceptable" safety levels were raised.

In town there was a lead shot tower. Molten lead was dropped down a tower. The droplets reached the bottom as small round pellets used in shot gun cartridges. The workers who had heard of the problems of their colleagues in Avonmouth complained to the Health and Safety Inspector. It was agreed that the lead levels were dangerous so an extract fan was installed and the lead exhausted from inside the work area of the tower and blown out onto the citizenry outside.

Naturally I became involved with the whole question. The Communist Party was developing a Science Bulletin, and they asked me to write an article for them that I did. In it I railed against the Medical Officer of Health, the management of RTZ, the Science Research Council for being unable to find money to investigate the problem, one of the trade unions for putting jobs ahead of pollution, and one of the technical directors who was proud of being a reader of the party news paper the Morning Star but rendered no help to the Party in this matter. His wife was a prominent party member.

I submitted that the party organization did not rally all its forces to mobilize action against the lead pollution. In February of 1973 I was summoned to appear before the District Secretariat. I should have been thanked and perhaps asked to be more circumspect in future. Instead I was censured for attacking in print a party comrade and her husband, neither of whose names I had mentioned in the article. The fact that I had made a public stand in print, in the Trades Council and at work against RTZ its pollution was it seemed, of little significance.

[Photo of me speaking on the Downs](#)

In Bristol there was a traditional place for public meetings. The Downs opposite the water tower were to Bristol what Speaker's Corner was to London. Brian, Jack, Denver and I use to regularly set up a platform and speak about this and that. I usually spoke about Apartheid and against Racism in Britain. There was seldom any trouble but quite a few hecklers and know all's. I remember one time Brian was speaking and one of the ultra revolutionary pseudo- intellectuals started quoting Marx to prove that Brian was wrong. Without hesitation Brian quoted Lenin on Page 207, line 21, of the Collected Works published by Progress Books Moscow. This quotation contradicted the heckler and instantly silenced him. After the meeting I asked Brian how on earth he knew that particular quotation. "Invented it," said Brian, "he couldn't know that. He will never remember to look it up anyway." I got to quite enjoying the meetings which on occasions were quite big. They were nothing like those in South Africa. They did not have the spirit, the vitality or the crowd response.

Well one day in the summer the circus came to town. It was being set up on the Downs. We were holding our regular meeting when some roustabouts came over. They were real toughs but amongst them was a black fellow so I for one felt reassured that they would give no trouble. Well, I was wrong. It mattered not that I spoke against racism. I was a communist and they were having none of it. They started pushing us about and getting nasty. It was not worth carrying on and we closed early. We issued an urgent appeal to the District Committee of the Party to help us defend free speech. To no avail. The matter was reported in the local press but even this did not rouse the party to defend us against the ruffians. After a few weeks of this we decided that without support there was no point in carrying on. All sorts of reasons were given why it was not possible, why the meetings were unessential, why it was better to put one's energies elsewhere and so on. Really it was because Brian, Jack, Denver and I were no part of the inner circle.

All organizations seem to develop a group of associated individuals who resent anyone else rocking the boat except them. I had never experienced this so clearly until then. The storms I was used to were more violent and vital and I never noticed this phenomenon that was hidden from me in the smoke of battle in South Africa.

Underlying my treatment in this episode was the fact that many in the local, and national leadership of the British party were blaming the imperfections and mistakes of the USSR for their own lack of success in the UK. From my point of view I could only see that without the USSR fascism would not have been defeated in Europe and could not be defeated in South Africa. In my acceptance of the underlying pattern of capitalist exploitation I oversimplified my assessment of the players in the contest. The Soviet Union was the bastion of socialism. The USA was the bastion of capital. My fellow communists in the UK did not always see it like that. It was also a certain reluctance to accept the challenges facing them in their own back yard.

Scribblings

I had always taken an interest in theoretical discussions. My first venture into print had been in South Africa with the article in Liberation. In exile I wrote on Marxism and Science, The Environment, Socialist Democracy, and on a variety of subjects from trade unions, safety, star wars, to genocide and the environment (f to k), I contributed to a book edited by my friend Mervin Bennun, "*Computer Judges and Judgments*" (10),

These were generally published in various British and later South African Party journals. Re- reading

them today reveals a naivety and vigor that is both embarrassing and satisfying at the same time. The scribblings do not strike me as being nonsense but are minor contributions to the great debate. They also show how my thinking was moulded by the environment of the times they were written in. The earlier ones mirror the convictions of the movement. Socialism and the path to it were clear and inevitable. Living in the UK unveiled some of the complications missed in the view presented by South African society. Later, things like the environment, resources, the balance between centralism and democracy, had to be taken into account. In South Africa the question "Exactly what is Democracy" was seldom discussed because 'Democracy' was clearly the opposite of Apartheid. Then the great swirl of history rose upon itself and crashed down upon the socialist experiment of the USSR. The arrow of time did not fly in a trajectory governed by the laws of Newton. Its path was more a natural ordering of disorder. Linear models gave way to the non-linear. The stages in the evolution of society were governed more by strange attractors than a simple point to point. The natural laws that underline this evolution are just more complex than we had anticipated. Change it must and change it will. Either I was not so utterly sure of myself as expressed in my early writings or perhaps my scientific training was strong enough for me to accept that theory must be modified to follow the facts.

In retrospect the Soviet events were quite consistent with Chaos theory, strange attractors and the butterfly wing of history as I wrote in an article "*New Tools for Marxists*" (r),

 [Return to Contents](#)

3 >..... Recycled Images

The call of my Political Roots

The pent up energy opposed to Apartheid became more easily visible with the strike wave of the early 1970's. In it's turn this created a stronger focus for my political activities. The ANC, the Party, and SACTU had established their presence in London. The ANC with offices in Rathbone Street, the Party in Goodge Street. John Gaetsewe asked me to come to see him in London. He was the Secretary of SACTU. He rented the bottom floor of a house in Camden from an English sympathizer. It had three rooms the smallest of which he had as a SACTU office. John was always hospitable and we either had food at the flat or went out to a Greek cafe nearby. On this occasion we had a bite at the flat and he asked me if I would address a meeting on behalf of SACTU. I said fine but as I had no position in SACTU how should I present myself. He said well perhaps as a member. My look must have triggered something because then he said I should say I was a member of the NEC. Now in South Africa I had never been a member of the NEC nor even of a local committee. "No, no, that's all right". he said. So there I was elevated nem con to the highest body of the organization to which so many years ago I had served tea.

Many years later I learned that John was high up in the Party and they had discussed the resuscitation of SACTU after the strikes and had suggested that I be recruited to help.

SACTU activity became intimately linked with meetings. Workers Unity Editorial board meetings, NEC meetings, Office meetings, meetings with the AAM, meetings with this one and that one, plenty of meetings. At some meetings I was the star attraction and at others I was a fill in or a decoration making up the numbers. At others I felt distinctly uncomfortable. Like the time I was billed to speak at a meeting with all the big guns of the movement. We were in an adjoining room chatting and I felt very uncomfortable. I remarked to Alfred Ndzo that it was ironic that amidst all these dignitaries I a "white Dr." was to represent the black workers !

However this happened many times. There were meetings in the UK, in Africa, in Europe, and once in New York at the United Nations. My credentials were seldom challenged but once in West Berlin some one from the crowd shouted that they did not want a white man to speak for the African workers. I replied that if the Movement in South Africa was fighting racism and was composed of all the people irrespective of colour. I represented the movement and my colour was irrelevant. I visited some forty towns in the UK and some thirty five countries. This involved travel by coach, train, car, airplane, hovercraft, and some times on foot, but I avoided that as far as possible. Once on a tour in Scotland I was led on a dash on foot from one office block to office block. My angina was playing up but there was little I could do without causing problems so I just had to grin and bare it. There was usually little time to see the sights on such visits and all one saw was the airport, passport control,

customs, the hotel, the meeting place and then back to London.

Customs and passport control was always a drag with so much hanging about and waiting. If I was on an official visit and there was a government or ANC representative then one was treated with respect and courtesy. This was not always clear. In Lusaka I was always of two minds. I could, and sometimes did, go through as a British subject. This sometimes led to problems because my passport said that I was born in South Africa. Being white this raised suspicions on the part of the Zambian passport control because of the boycott. I usually declared that I was ANC and was herded through to the special cases room. There, unless you were on their list you had trouble. Much discussions took place followed by waiting and sitting about. The SACTU or ANC representative usually appeared and all was clarity and light. On other occasions one was just part of the apprehensive, confused, disorientated mass of humanity. Once on a trip via Moscow to Lusaka for a SACTU NEC Zola and I had to spend the night in transit at the Aeroflot hotel in Moscow. (We usually went via Moscow not for political reasons but merely because it was cheaper.) I had some electronics for MK in my luggage. It could have been confused with the mechanism for a bomb. There was no trouble on the way into Moscow. On the way out there was a long queue at the outward customs check. They were opening all the suitcases and giving them a thorough search. I became concerned but I could not tell Zola why because what I was doing was supposed to be to say the least, confidential. We slowly got closer to the head of the queue. The last one before us was a smart Russian lady. The customs man on going through her luggage found a large bundle of rouble notes. I could not understand all the talk but I gathered that they were disputing the legality. We hung about waiting and Zola was getting angry while I was getting more worried. The customs man realised we were foreigners and waved us past. I never tried to hear the outcome of the dispute.

On another occasion we were traveling from Dar-es-Salaam back to the UK using Alitalia. Ahead of us was a large group of Italian tourists. Very volatile and vocal. They were putting their luggage through the baggage check as a group and were all just about finished when the airline totted up the weights and concluded that they as a group were over weight and would have to pay baggage excess. Divided amongst them it would be very little. A heated row developed. Some protested most strongly. They were not overweight. Why should they pay? Others said it was only a little so it was better to spread the costs. Meanwhile we and about a dozen other passengers waited in the steaming heat. Eventually the concord broke down and all the luggage was brought back and weighed individually. Another endless weighing took place. Most of the Italians were satisfied. They were under weight or marginally above. Nothing to charge extra for. However one couple were vastly over weight and were clearly the cause of all the disputation. They had a massive excess to pay. Justice and fare play had won as had Alitalia who reaped a far higher excess baggage charge. Now a more reasonable solution would have been for a combined baggage check with the lower total excess charge being paid by the one couple over weight. Being greedy had cost them dearly. Perhaps it was the heat but lack of organisation cost. And we the innocent bystanders were delayed by nearly an hour.

With all this traveling in Africa I have never seen the Victoria Falls or visited a game reserve. This is partly my own fault. It seemed wrong for me, because I had the money, to go on a tourist trip when we were in the middle of a struggle for freedom. I did however do my best to visit art galleries and museums whenever I had the chance. The attendances at meetings varied from thousands in Trafalgar square, to one or two in a dusty yard. Some meetings lasted over a week and others merely an hour or less. I slept on the sofa in Jack and Rica's flat in London, in B.B.'s children's room in Lusaka (where I was offered braised steak for breakfast), on the floor in Eli and Violets front room in Dar making it Xmas for the mosquitoes. Perhaps the most sumptuous accommodation was at John Gaetsewe's friend, a civil servant in Lusaka. There Eric Mtshali and I shared the guest house in the gardens fitted with all mod cons. The meetings were held in posh five star hotels, Dacha's, in schools, in cellars, in bedrooms, bars, park benches, with snow on the ground and in tropical heat. Some were highly secret and others were held with as much publicity as possible. Compared to Oliver Tambo and the like, I was but an amateur at the art of meetings.

Tying it all together in Luanda & Dar

My first SACTU NEC meeting was to be held in Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, but it proved to be a bit more complicated than that. Guided by Jack Hodgson I had learnt how to make a false bottom for a suitcase. One of the problems was that the false bottom should not be flat, as many suitcases are

rounded. This problem was solved by using the bottom of the suitcase, covered with a layer of Clingfilm, as a former for the manufacture of the shaped fiber glass base. This was later assisted by using plastic padding inside the case to round the inner corners of the base.

After much trial and error it was found that it was easier to merely cut the base out of an exactly similar suitcase (by cutting the stitching) and using this as the inner base. It was obviously the same shape and size as the actual suitcase base and inside it looked and felt the same. It was also in effect cheaper and easier although two suitcases had to be bought. The type of suitcase had to be carefully chosen some were more difficult to modify than others. It was also found that suitcases with the fancy cloth linings were easier to use since the same lining could be used after the false bottom had been placed in the suitcase. This avoided the problems with finding suitable lining paper and the task of neatly lining the case. Such cases are more expensive but still but a fraction of the total cost of operations where they were used.

The system was extensively used and some of the stories are quite exciting. For example Ray Simons well known by all authorities was given a suitcase to take to Harare. When she arrived at customs she realized that the suitcase contained some hardware in a false bottom. It was obviously very heavy especially for a venerable old lady like her. Customs would surely detect this. Fortunately she saw somebody she knew and they took it off her and through the customs. It was a matter of not having carefully planned the operation and having made a careless surveillance of the terrain. But I get ahead of myself.

At the time of my visit to Luanda on the way to the SACTU NEC the paper lining was stripped from the inside. The goods to be smuggled were affixed to the real bottom and the glass fiber glued inside covering the contents. The inside was then recovered with suitcase paper. It was not difficult. Provided that a neat job was performed and the false bottom was not too big a proportion of the depth, South African customs seldom discovered it.

SACTU was a trade union organization, Jack was acting on behalf of the Party, the comrades in Luanda were members of MK, the whole operation was under the umbrella of the ANC. In other countries, under different circumstances one could foresee contradictions, demarcation disputes, problems and tensions. There were none, only the difficulties associated with doing a job. An air ticket was arranged for me from London to Moscow, and from there by Aeroflot to Luanda. My luggage was all packed into a couple of suitable suitcases with a supply of resin, Fiberglas, suitcase paper, wallpaper paste, tools, glue, a few of the NEC documents and as an afterthought my personal effects, ticket and British passport. The passport problem had rumbled on until 1968. Till then I was classed as an alien (It sounds like from outer space) I was given British citizenship. Of course we were less alien than black aliens but I still had to report to the police and get permission each year to stay in Britain. After 1968 I suddenly was different. I was British.

Just as I was about to leave Bristol I got a message that they wanted some special medicated cream and would I bring it. The cream was in London at Jack Hodgson's. Fortunately my British comrade Jack Evans was in London at a meeting and could get it from him. I phoned the two Jacks and arranged a transfer of the cream. Time was short but it was just possible that I could meet Jack Evans' train from London to Bristol on the platform in Reading. I had to get to Heathrow and as usual the easiest way for me was by train to Reading and then the coach. Jack and I arranged what trains we could take to meet in Reading on the platform. I dashed from the arrivals platform to the departure platform and positioned myself where the last coach of Jack's train would stop. Of course as his train came into the station I saw Jack leaning out of the window of the front carriage. I made a mad dash from the back to the front and just retrieved the medication before the train pulled out with him on board to Bristol.

The flight was uneventful if tedious. Luanda airport was a mess in a permanent process of being tidied up. The Congress people were special guests of the government and so I was met and taken through customs bypassing all the formalities. From there to a posh hotel in the middle of the city were Joe Slovo outlined the tasks ahead. The precious medication was delivered. It seemed that it was a cream which one of the comrades needed because when he shaved he came out in a rash. At the time I was a bit annoyed. All that dashing about because someone wanted to shave. Later when I calmed down and when I met and appreciated the work the comrade was doing I was pleased I had gone to all that trouble..

On Sunday Joe took me over the road to a apartment block to an iron grill behind which were the

comrades I was to work with. The iron grill had been installed by the rich to keep out the poor. Now we were using it to keep our comrades safe from Apartheid agents. They were young people recently come from South Africa after the Soweto events. One of the young fellows had been a bodybuilder and had a remarkable physique. All were keen and anxious to get down to work. There were a few women amongst them but they slept elsewhere. The lads slept on mattresses on the bare floors and I don't remember any other furniture. Food was out of cans, mainly fish from the Soviet Union, with rice and cold drinks or tea. At lunch time and when we were finished for the day we chatted and I spoke to them of the trade unions and the workers struggle.

We soon got down to work. I brought over my suitcases and the resin, glass fiber and the rest. It did not take the comrades long to pick up the techniques. The women comrades were especially good at the job. They were neat and tidy, fastidious and paid more attention to the results than the men. Soon we were ready for more suitcases. There were a number of comrades around so their luggage and mine was nationalized when suitable. Then we ran out of resin and Fiberglas. I visited a cardboard factory that was in operation. It was one of the relics which had not been wrecked or removed by the Portuguese colonialists. I went down to visit it with one of the comrades and we obtained sheets of thick rather poorly made cardboard which however was a quite suitable substitute for the more elegant Fiberglas.

It was now midweek and we had all these half finished suitcases waiting for the hardware to pack into them. There seemed to be some hold up in the supply of AK 47's detonator cord and the like. One evening after the usual fish supper. (It seemed it was always fish because no other supplies were available in the newly liberated Angola.) Joe asked me if I would like to sleep with the comrades across the road. I was not quite sure what the question was all about so I remained silent. He gave a sort of shrug and a smile and then suggested that I share a room with John from SWAPO. He was a really nice fellow and we got on famously. Unfortunately he was a captive of the demon drink. I once succumbed to his requests to accompany him to the bar but the drinks were far too expensive.

Meanwhile since things were slack I went with Joe to a newly acquired property on the high ground overlooking the sea. Round and about were other ambassadorial properties. It had belonged to the South African embassy but the new government had given it to the ANC for it's use. The one next door was, if I remember right, Italian, but it seemed they were unhappy with the change in ownership. There I met some of the women comrades from the "school of concealment's". They were playing Monopoly recently received from overseas sympathizers. Joe Modise, and others were living there as well, so it was a nice reunion discussing how to get things into South Africa. There was talk of the Benguela railway, of bags of coffee beans and other plans which in the course of history came to nothing.

The hardware arrived and we got down to work filling the suitcases. There were problems especially because of the length of the AK47's. They were not easily dismantled but we managed to get one or two packed. Then came an urgent request together with a suitcase. Please pack some material into it. This we did. It was all quite exciting and full of expectation and progress. The material was hardly packed when the comrade was ready to go to Swaziland. The glue was still wet when he threw in his clothes and left. The stuff was delivered safely. The first of many successes.

The time was approaching when I must go to Dar. I needed something to keep my few things in. Would it be OK if I bought a new suitcase? So off I went on a shopping expedition. Luanda had been and will be again a beautiful city. Photo (31 & 32) The Portuguese had style. The streets were laid out with palm lined walks around the lagoon. Statues of great navigators or rather the plinths where they had once stood were placed in eye catching positions. All very nice. On the way I saw a strange sight in a main street lined with posh buildings. A pencil thin horizontal jet of pure water ejected itself from the seam between two sheets of marble. It performed a perfect arc coming from the impossible and disappearing. Real life outwits surrealism hands down. But no suitcases. Eventually I found one in a back street but it was so expensive that it was ridiculous. So I ended up with a grass basket tied with string. Real high class luggage to be proud of. On the Sunday before my departure Joe took me swimming in the Atlantic next to the lagoon. Bright sun, cool water, friendly company, one of those irrational silences in the cacophony of life. A week after arriving in Luanda I was off to join the NEC.

I had to change planes at Lusaka which gave me some five hours free so I decided to visit Ray and Jack Simons and pay my respects. I had not seen her since the time of my Secretaryship of the Textile workers. It was a bit of a hassle getting through passport control, trying and failing to get

through on the phone, and hiring a taxi. I arrived and decided wisely not to dismiss the driver. Her house in Lusaka was in large grounds, with quite a few outbuildings and all sorts of fruit trees. I strode up to the door where a large five foot wooden elephant sculpture stood on the verandah. Jack answered the doorbell and when I asked if Ray was in he gruffly said no and although he did not shut the door in my face he certainly indicated that I was being a nuisance. What to do but, about turn and back to the airport.

It is funny how some people whom one tries to respect and hold in high regard just do not match up. Perhaps it was because I never had the opportunity do have discussions with him and our interactions were mediated by others. For example I wrote a number of small pamphlets for SACTU (l, m, & n) . I was told much later that the two on organising trade unions in South Africa had been severely criticized by Jack. I never heard what the criticisms were nor had an opportunity to answer them. He rocked my boat and I will never know if I have rocked his.

When I arrived in Dar-es-Salaam it was late afternoon and there was nobody to meet me. I had no phone numbers or contacts so I decided to book into a hotel and worry about it the next day. The hotel was very basic but clean and the people friendly. After breakfast it was easy enough to contact the ANC which was well known and respected. I was taken to the meeting. It was sweltering hot, humid and breezeless. The sun was high in the cloudless tropical sky. The streets and buildings were painted in bright primary colors. The comrades were sitting in a crowded room clearly exhausted. The bright white teeth flashed in the gloom as my eyes slowly adjusted to the shadows. So many comrades that I had last seen in South Africa. Faces that reshaped themselves in my memory. I had arrived very late. They were just concluding the business but welcome! welcome!

Talking to the people

The strength of the movement rested not on guns detonators and explosives but on the understanding of the masses. On the understanding of how these dangerous tools of revolt had to be used with wisdom, skill, and reluctance.

When I had first joined the movement in the early 1950's communicating and exchanging ideas with ones comrades and with the ordinary people was relatively easy. There was our newspaper, New Age, leaflets, meetings, letters and phone calls. Exchanges were restricted but possible. Those with the desire for exclusivity power and wealth already knew the value of communications. Without communications there can be no democracy there can be no power for the people. Further the control and exclusive access to communications is the path to power for the few. Slowly the Nationalists tightened their grip on all the media, all forms of information exchange, all avenues which could free the creative power of ideas of freedom, of democracy. The banning of all the political organisations opposed to the charade of white exclusivity was a step in this process.

With the banning of the ANC and its allies the leadership determined to rebuild the lines of communication with the masses. In those early days underground working was unknown territory for the movement and it had much to learn.

The distribution of leaflets still took place. The technology of distribution was unsophisticated. We hung them on hooks outside factory gates, and threw them out of the windows of high buildings. We pushed leaflets under doors at the dead of night. Such routine methods although effective lacked the edge of surprise and spectacle. To break into the mass media meant to score a victory over the state's censorship and to let the world know about it. Our propaganda methods would have come of age. A long time would pass before this happened.

Painting of slogans on walls was quite exciting and very effective. Having done the job it was appropriate not to return to the scene of the crime but for me the prospect of photographing our handiwork was very attractive. As I came to photograph one example of the calligraphers art two street sweepers insisted that they be in the picture. It was nice to be in tune with at least a small representative sample of the masses. The work of a small group of comrades could compete with the hoardings advertising cigarettes and whisky. We found that crude bitumen was best because it was difficult to remove. The tar acids eat into the stonework and even when attacked with solvents the words of the slogan were still visible.

Balloons

It was sometime in 1959 that Jack Hodgson asked me to help with the filling of balloons with gas. The

idea was to make some large polythene balloons about one cubic meter, fill them with hydrogen and suspend an ANC flag from them in various townships. I advised him that although hydrogen could be made from readily available chemicals it was extremely dangerous. Helium would have been safer but one could not obtain it in any quantity without the regime finding out about it. Coal gas was a possibility since it was more easily available. It was highly flammable and not as buoyant but it would work.

We assembled in the front lounge of Mick Harmel's in Orchards Johannesburg. Amongst the armchairs and coffee tables we made giant balloons out of polythene sheeting stuck together with Sellotape and tied down with strings. We fed the gas from Mick's gas fire through a rubber hose into the balloons that all but filled the room. The windows were open but the curtains were drawn and the balloons threatened to burst or rip. It was really ridiculous and dangerous. We bundled the enormous highly inflammable balloons into a panel van. It set off with its explosive load. I understood from Kathie (Ahmed Kathrada) that he launched one from the roof of Colvad House. Others went skyward in Soweto. They mostly broke their moorings and were only a partial success. Never again was it tried.

Public address systems.

Some 10 years later I was living in Bristol in the United Kingdom. Jack Hodgson who was also now in exile in London approached me to develop a loudspeaker system. "It would be exciting", he said, "for our leaders to speak to people."

When I was a teenager I had made my own radio and amplifier system so I knew where to start. Clive Sinclair was selling small audio amplifier modules for the home constructor. (He was later to become famous for his do it your self calculators and home computers.) The flat modules measured five, by eight, centimeters. They were quite crude with poor sound quality. The power output was about 20 watts. At this time tape recorders were quite large and expensive. Sony had not yet produced the Walkman but a portable tape player was available. I fitted the amplifier into the tape player. This operated normally and could be smuggled into South Africa as a present. However when the back was opened it revealed a small plug and when replaced the amplifier module came into operation. The attachment of a large external speaker and some large batteries turned the weak hand held tape player into a public address system.

There had to be a delayed action system so that the operatives could get away before the police arrived. The system is shown in. The modified cassette ran for five minutes. Then a conducting strip spliced into the tape shorted out two metal pins. This turned on a relay that then started the amplifier. The recorded message boomed out.

It proved very successful in the field. The underground used them several times in the 1970's. Leaflet bombs accompanied the speakers. The following is a press report.

"Leaflets from the banned African National Congress were distributed in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth on Friday.

In Cape Town, a tape recorder also broadcast ANC slogans from the roof at the entrance of the railway station.

At 5.38 p.m. an ex-Rhodesian police officer who was driving down Strand Street extension saw a crowd of about 50 nonwhites standing outside the station entrance' the paper reported.

Through the closed windows of his car he heard a penetrating voice over a loud speaker speaking in an African language. 'I've seen excited crowds in my time, and this was one of them. I double-parked my car and called the railway police' he said.

'On a ledge above the station entrance I found a paper carrier bag through which ran a chain attached to something inside and locked to a pole on the ledge. '

'The railway police looked in the bag and told me there was a tape recorder inside. They had to cut the chain to remove it.'

It proved to me the value of rather minor events. Technical devices at the appropriate time can contribute significantly to the arousal of the masses. The ANC was reportedly dead. The broadcasts and leaflet bombs created a sensation. Their effect created an impression of organisation far in excess of actuality. A Bucket Bomb was used at that time. It required considerable skill to make the device and it was large and cumbersome.

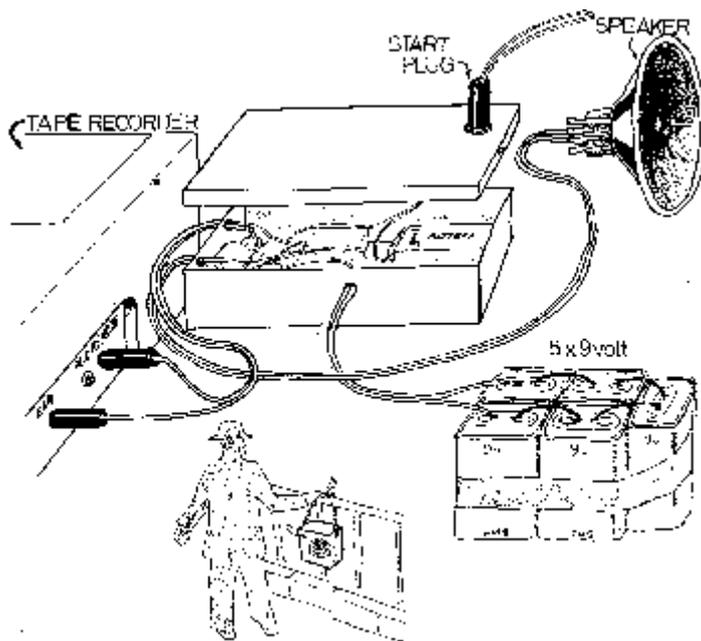
Many years later I attended the funeral of the late Moses Mabida in Maphuto. There a comrade Sue Rabkin told me that she had been the one who had used both the bucket bombs and the loudspeaker system so successfully. She had not known of my efforts nor me of hers. I had however heard of her exploits and of her arrest and imprisonment. Both of us had successfully contributed to the struggle, each in our own way. At the end of the day however it is the operative on the ground who contributes most, and suffers the heaviest consequences.

Later I also learned that in the early 1960's, J.S. and his comrades set up the first loudspeaker system. They assembled a conventional tape recorder, amplifier, and loudspeaker in a car. They parked it where the people congregated and a timing device set it off allowing the operatives to escape. Nationally the impact was however small. The main problem was that the equipment used was very bulky. It was also a terribly expensive way to do it since the car and all the equipment became police property.

About 1978/9 the internal propaganda comrade Peter Mayebuye reordered 14 and I made these to a new design. This time the amplifier, similar to the Sinclair but more powerful and of better quality was put in a box with a timing device. A small box about six by four by two inches had to be smuggled in. The tape recorder (the Walkman had now become a common item amongst the young), speaker, and batteries were added in S.A.. The cassette had no modifications made to it. Thus the tape could be recorded anywhere without special preparation. An instruction sheet, was sent off with each gadget. I never heard if they were used or not.

In 1984/5 Lusaka ordered a further twenty. This implied that the movement had used the previous batch. These new ones were of a more advanced design with a 60-watt amplifier module.

The finished system to which the speaker, the Walkman and batteries had to be added.



The rocket leaflet distributor that failed

I think it was Jack Hodgson who suggested that a rocket could carry leaflets aloft and drop them on an unsuspecting population. His question was, "How could it be done." Jack was always full of such ideas but did not have the technical background to accomplish it. So I felt obliged to get down to developing the apparatus.

A rocket clearly required a propellant. So the first thing to do was to try to make gunpowder. This proved more difficult than I had imagined. The books were clear and precise on the matter and it was easy to obtain the components. Flowers of Sulphur, one of the constituents, is used by gardeners to suppresses fungi on plants. The local chemist understood this and sold it to me without even a query in his voice. Charcoal was easy to make. Make a bonfire in the garden and collect the charred wood. The main problem was the Potassium Nitrate. It seemed quite reasonable to plunder the chemistry department stores for a quantity of nitrate, after all we were fighting a just cause against an illegal regime. I am a law-abiding citizen, logic and a necessity require it. I always stop at a red traffic light. If a law is unreasonable that is another question. I am not sure how one justifies the breaking of the law in the country of exile in my case Britain, to restore the rule of common justice in another, South Africa. However the ability of the human brain to self-program is immense so I set out to 'get' the nitrate.

The making of the gunpowder was easier said than done. The grinding was a lifetime job and the product was nothing like the factory produced material. In any event I managed to produce a workable product. However, this was only the first step to the making of a rocket. How many leaflets could the rocket engine lift? I bought a set of scales and set up an experiment in the bath. The rocket engine sat on one side, the weights sat on the other. I lit the gunpowder and stood back. I had hoped I could measure, in a crude way, the power of my rocket engine. All I produced were clouds of smoke and a dirty bath. It did not take a long time for me to abandon the experiment. Jack as usual was right. "Never make something you can buy" It is always better to buy a commercial product. It has been developed, tested, and successful enough to be worth selling. The home inventor cannot compete. I still do not agree with him but he had a point.

Then something prompted me to remember that the boating fraternity used rocket distress flares. These were easily obtainable at the local boating shop. I bought two pretending that they were a birthday present.

The next thing to do was to see what this rocker flare was all about. I motored out into the countryside. It was a dry, sunny day and very pleasant. The problem, as always in Britain, is to find somewhere where there are no people. Well I was lucky and after driving around for an hour or so I found a lonely spot. Tall trees in their new summer foliage lined the narrow lane contrasting with the darker green fields that lay on its flanks. It was early Sunday morning. Even the birds had gone to church. I left the engine running and jumped out. Hold the rocket flare and pull the string. It seemed simple enough. Whoosh!! It soared off at what seemed a hundred miles an hour, trailing fire and smoke. Off across the nearby field it sped at the height of a man. In my anxiety to avoid it going straight up I had held it close to the horizontal. Fortunately the shock did not cause me to freeze but it did cause me to drive off at speed. I was terrified that I might have killed someone. I never saw if the red parachute flare opened or not. It simply disappeared into the distance away from the sun.

Well, it worked a treat. Jack was right. Now I had a working engine to propel the leaflets skyward.

I had to find out how it worked. In the spare bedroom, where I had all my tools, I took the second flare to pieces. The outer cardboard tube in which the flare rested had a draw string. The flare was about forty centimeters long. It had the rocket engine in the bottom and a compartment at the top that held the parachute. From the parachute dangled a cylinder about five centimeters in diameter and six centimeters in length. This was the part that burned with the bright red light. Between the engine and the compartment that held the flare proper was a small hole. When the rocket fuel was finished, a small charge drove the parachute out. With hindsight I must have been mad to potter about with such dangerously inflammable materials while my daughter was doing her homework next door and the wife was cooking and smoking downstairs. She was always smoking.

It was immediately obvious that the parachute compartment was too small to carry an adequate quantity of leaflets. After some thought, I arranged the leaflets in a spiral around the outside of the parachute compartment. A can held them in place. The cylinder of wood in its turn held the can in place. Blowing the can clear would release the leaflets.

I went to bed tired but satisfied.

At the weekend, on the Sunday, I decided it was safe to try it out. Our house on Ashley Down Road stood on the brow of a hill. There was a long, sloping garden at the back. Beyond was a lane and beyond that again was a derelict tennis court overgrown with bracken and weeds. It overlooked allotments that flanked a railway cutting. There were houses beyond but far enough away not to be in the firing line. Dusk was falling and most people were at home watching telly. It was sufficiently dark for my activities to go unnoticed. I hoped that the flames from the rocket exhaust would not be too obvious in the half light.

The launcher with blank paper 'leaflets' was set up among the scattered bricks. I pulled the igniter string and off it went. It arched into the sky and rose about twenty meters. There was a noticeable flash. The can shot off and the leaflets scattered like rain on the vegetables in the allotments. Here was perfection at last, just what Jack had asked for.

After discussions we agreed that I purchase five rocket flares and get them to London with full instructions. Obtaining the five rocket flares presented no difficulty as there were many ships chandlers in the West Country and they encouraged the sale of safety equipment. On my next trip to London I duly delivered them to Jack.

Three weeks later I received an urgent call to come up to London. At their flat in Eton Hall, Chalk Farm, I found Jack busy at the dining room table with bits of gray plastic and glue. His wife Rica was proud of that table but it availed her naught when she discouraged its use as a work bench. He was making a toy rocket set to be used as a cover to smuggle the leaflet launchers into South Africa. "There was a problem," said Jack. He and Ronnie Kasrils had tried the gadget out just as I had directed but it had not worked. "Impossible," I said. "Well tomorrow we will try it again," Jack replied.

We had a few drinks, and after eating supper, the three of us chatted about the struggle and the latest gossip and news. I slept in the lounge and early next morning we drove to a small wood not far from his flat. A thing one would not normally expect to find in the middle of a metropolis. It was damp with a slight mist on the ground. The water droplets tumbled on to our heads and clothes as we walked between the trees and pushed our way through the undergrowth. The launcher was exactly as I had tried it at home in Bristol. Everything seemed as it should be. We set it up, stood back and pulled the ignition string. The demon rose off the ground, tilted over, and came straight at us. Before we had time to duck, it veered off between the trees and disappeared. I saw a man walking his dog where the rocket had gone and we decided it was time to scarp.

"Well, we can't succeed every time", I said. Jack took it in good spirit and forgave me almost instantly. "Ronnie", he said, "A long time ago, I learned that it is a law of nature. It always works until you have to show it to another comrade."

A trip to the GDR

We had been using leaflet bombs for sometime and they were very successful. Joe Slovo, J.S. as he was generally known, however was always looking for better and more spectacular methods. He had witnessed a demonstration in East Germany of a leaflet thrower that the underground Communist party had used against the Nazis during the war. It had been very impressive. Would I go to Germany and learn how it was done? He asked. I would be away for a week or so. "When?" I asked. "Let you know" he said. "Make it during my holidays." I said. I was a lecturer at a Polytechnic so although I had long holidays it was difficult to get off work during term time. It was early 1974.

Just when I had forgotten all about it, Jack summoned me to London to receive instructions on the trip. The comrades in the G.D.R. needed a passport photograph of myself. That was no problem. On this trip I would have to buy the ticket and go to East Berlin under my own steam. That meant more work. I was scheduled to arrive in West Berlin on the first of April. This was not during my holidays and I would have to make yet another excuse to get off work. However the prospect of the trip and of doing something useful and constructive was more important than working for a living.

J.S. then outlined how I would rendezvous with the comrades in East Germany. I would fly to West Berlin and make my way through Checkpoint Charlie. I was to go to a caf(in East Berlin called The Cubana. A comrade called Swartzberg would meet me. The comrades would take over from there. Nothing was to be written down and nothing taken with me other than the usual tourist luggage.

It made me tingle. It was just like the spy stories I loved to read. I kept repeating to myself "There is a

black mountain in Cuba". This would help me remember. I can never remember names. "There is a black mountain in Cuba." Today, I still remember I had to meet Swartzberg at the Cafe Cubana.

I booked a flight with Lunn Poly and paid for the ticket, hoping I would get the money back. The plane, BE616, left from Heathrow at 10.30 am and I arrived at Tegel Airport in West Berlin at 12.15. The flight was uneventful and customs and passport control treated me as a tourist. Then I took a bus to town after getting a map from the information desk. The weather was fine. West Berlin was much like any large town in the west. It was brash, crowded, - loud in colour, sound, and smell. According to the map the best route to Checkpoint Charlie was down the Bismarck Strasse, via Strasse des 17 Juni to the Unter Den Linden. The street was broad and lined with trees and grass verges. As I walked along, I began to sense that the traffic was getting very thin. Out of the corner of my eye on the opposite side of the road I saw a lone parked car. A young fellow was sitting in it and as my eye caught his he became all flustered and embarrassed. I can only guess what he was doing but I had the feeling that I had interrupted something indecent. My pace quickened. In front of me was a large ruined building with blackened columns. A tall diamond-mesh fence confronted me.

Realising that I had taken the direct but incorrect route, I followed the fence round to the south. A pleasant stroll led me through a grassed clearing with the occasional tree. Time was passing and I began to get anxious. At last I came to the famous checkpoint. The passport check was unusual because it was so easy. The impression from television and the newspapers was that to see East Berlin you had to climb some steps, and look over the wall into a land of dread. It was really not like that. As a British tourist I asked for a visa, paid few pounds and passed through without any trouble. I also had to exchange some sterling for G.D.R. marks to spend while in East Berlin. In this way the G.D.R. was assured that some hard currency bypassed the black market.

All I could see were ordinary people with clean streets and few cars. I walked up Friedrich Strasse, crossed Leipziger Strasse, and off to find the Cafe. A middle-aged man appeared in my path. He seemed surprised, and a little startled. Why? I do not know. It was Comrade Swartzberg. He recognised me from my photograph.

Before long I was in the back of an estate car driving in the countryside with three other comrades. Swartzberg had introduced me with my consent as, Singh. I do not remember the names of the two middle-aged comrades. One was past his prime and getting fat, and laid back. The other was fitter and more in earnest. Both were clearly experienced and knowledgeable. I remember the name of the third one. He was called Christopher. He was about twenty years old, thin, with blond hair. He was the understudy and deferred to the two older comrades but there was a certain questioning and uncertainty in his attitude. We stopped in a layby and they asked me to get in the back and to lie down in a sleeping bag. They covered me completely and I could see nothing. It was, I presumed part of their security measures. We drove off and I mused to myself while the car went I knew not where.

We had arrived. Some scrappy grass and a few tall trees struggled without success to enliven the surroundings. On one side of the track was a bunker dug into the side of a small hill. This was to be our home for the next week. There were two rooms, the first a sitting room with chairs and a table. The second room served as a bedroom. It was quite cosy with built in ventilation and all amenities. On the other side was a large open space, barren and uncultivated. I could see no houses or people. Next to the track just opposite the bunker was a small pit. This comprised the test site for the mortars.

With hindsight, I suppose my work mates back in Bristol would have been shocked. There was Dr. Press, senior lecturer in chemistry and a pillar of society consorting with the dastardly Stasi. I still remember them as decent people, professionals teaching me how to fight the apartheid system. One of them liked his five star Bulgarian brandy. Christopher was a young man trying hard to learn. The last of the trio seemed just ordinary. It is hard to remember them as part of a terrible repressive system. We ate and slept together in the bunker, chatted and joked and exchanged stories. We were working for a better world. They remembered the war against fascism and the terrible toll it took of humankind.

The German communist party managed to survive throughout the war. Small cells continued to operate. They wanted me to know how it was possible that under war conditions and highly organised repression, they still communicated with each other and the public. The older comrade told the story of how for example a comrade was a member of a football team. As such, he could travel from time to time. Messages were written in invisible ink on the bladder of a football. Each message was in code. They then inflated the bladder in the ball. At the appropriate place and time the comrades exchanged

footballs. If the Gestapo suspected that the ball held a message they would have to deflate it and extract the bladder. They would see nothing unless they developed the secret ink. Even then they could not decipher the message. Our level of security was considerably lower.

There were many such stories but Germany under the Nazis was a very different place to South Africa under the Nationalists. We too were subject to repression but our people were educationally, technically and financially a disadvantaged majority. I marveled at the level of sophistication and expertise of the Communists under the Nazis. I invented reasons for our lack of them. I was here to learn from the professionals.

I spent most of the week learning to produce the mortar, which could throw leaflets into the air.

A small charge was prepared with a short length of fuse that led through a hole in the center bottom of a can. It was the first time I had seen and handled commercial gunpowder. It was not a powder at all but came as pellets. These were black, shiny and in assorted shapes, from the size of a pea to the size of a broad bean. On top of this charge lay a small cardboard disc. We glued a tube to one end of a length of cloth. This was twenty centimeters wide and sixty long. Old newspapers cut to size simulated the leaflets. These were spread along the cloth. The whole was wound in a spiral with the tube at the center. The spiral then fitted snugly into and on top of the cardboard. This was the mortar 'bomb'. The fuse sticking out of the bottom of the can fed through a hole in another disc of cardboard or felt. This would slip into the mortar and lie between the can and the main charge.

The mortar itself consisted of a length of metal stove pipe about twelve centimeters in diameter and sixty centimeters long. A disc of wood, securely fixed, sealed one end. The detonator wires fed through a small hole just above it. The detonator fitted into a small plastic bag filled with gunpowder and secured with Elastoplast. It seemed to me that Sellotape would be easier but they said it was scarce in the GDR. At the time this seemed very strange that in a developed society a simple consumer product like Sellotape could be scarce.

The can with the leaflets made a snug fit in the mortar tube. Its fuse rested on the propellant charge in the mortar bottom.

In operation, the whole apparatus was buried in the ground with a light covering of dirt to camouflage it. A timing device set the detonator off. With a thump, the can flew forty meters into the air. The initial charge ignited the fuse for the secondary charge in the can. It exploded at the apogee of its flight. The spiral of cloth spun the leaflets into a wide arc and they descended high in the air like enormous flakes of snow.

I get ahead of myself. It took much repetitive, painstaking work before I had this spectacular success. They obliged me to make dozens of leaflet bombs and quite a few mortars before I satisfied the comrades that I knew what I was doing. It got so wearing that I started complaining and joking about tearing up newspapers and manufacturing wooden discs. They also insisted that I collect all the bits of paper scattered by the bombs. They took the opportunity to photograph the various stages in the manufacture of the mortar. Somewhere in the records of the Stasi are photographs of my hands cutting wooden disks and tearing up newspapers. I mention this just in case in the new order in Germany there is some confusion over this.

We also discussed different mixtures that could be used instead of gunpowder. Our problem in South Africa was that because of apartheid, the main force for change, the African people, did not have access to guns or explosives. The apartheid regime did not trust black people. However, I told them of a mixture developed, by Cape Town activists that used easily obtainable chemicals. We tried it and they were most impressed. At least information passed both ways this time. The great advantage was that I was so relaxed. There was no hassle about being overheard. I could let charges off without any worries. Facilities were basic and adequate. Time and expertise were in plentiful supply.

They explained how the comrades had made and used the mortars during the war. The manufacture was divided into separate operations. A different person did each task:- preparing the cans, lengths of stove pipe, and wooden disks, writing the text, doing the printing, and so on.

They only knew about and did that particular task. Two groups performed the really dangerous tasks, those that assembled the mortars and those that planted them. Even with this high security one group was caught and killed. It seems the Gestapo plotted on a map where and when each leaflet bomb went off. They gradually built up a picture of the probable location of the center of operations. They

cordoned off a whole district and made a thorough search of all the houses. The Gestapo arrested the comrades and they were tortured to death.

Similarities and differences spun through my mind but one thing was for sure the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa had a lot to learn and a hard road to travel. In the wildest flights of our imaginations we did not guess what really lay ahead of us.

The job was done but before we left the bunker I had to make notes. Accordingly they should have been in invisible ink, code, and concealed. They let me off having them in secret ink. But I wrote them in code and hid the spill of paper in a felt tip pen. Then off we went, but not to East Berlin. The comrades however insisted that it be called 'Berlin Hauptstadt de D.D.R.'. Again, I had to travel lying down in the back of the estate car completely covered by a sleeping bag. At the same layby the comrades let me out and we traveled on in comfort.

Swartzberg asked if it would be all right if I met the Mayor of Berlin for a supper before I left. I was not keen as I am not really a social animal. I suddenly got the feeling that the comrades thought I was going into the underground in South Africa and they were protecting my anonymity. Was I a fraud? I was merely a technician not an operative. This was getting out of hand. There was little I could do, so I duly met Madam Mayor. It was a pleasant dinner. They were very ordinary working class people with a sincere desire to help. I have as a duty to the movement met with lords and millionaires since then. I had dined with the upper echelons of the business world before. In the past I always feel out of place in their company. In Berlin that night I felt comfortable.

It was time to go back to Bristol. First I had to return to West Berlin. This time I went by S-Bahn to Friedrichstrasse. Comrade Swartzberg followed me at a distance until I had passed into customs. Again there was no trouble. The only thing that niggled was that I never got to spend my East German marks and I could not change them back into Sterling.

In Bristol I returned to lecturing at the Polytechnic. The only evidence of my visit to the GDR was the spill of paper with the coded instructions on how to make leaflet mortars. In the quiet of my workshop I dug it out of the felt tipped pen. The black ink of the felt tip had broken through the plastic in which I had enclosed the paper and obliterated half the message. Just as well I did not need it.

Passing on the techniques

It was a few months later that Jack asked me to pass on the skill of producing leaflet launchers on to Victor. He came to Bristol and for security reasons stayed in a local hotel. He came to the house over the weekend to see how it was done. Together we attempted to make a leaflet mortar. We did not have gunpowder or the constituents to make the South African mixture. We decided to use chlorate and sugar. I had not tried it before. All I knew was that if there was too much sugar it acted as an incendiary and if too little it changed from an ordinary explosive to a dangerous high explosive. The latter would shatter the mortar. The problem was that we had no time or facility to test for the correct percentage. I made up the mixture as I thought best.

We drove out into the Somerset countryside and, finding a lane with a ditch at the side, planted the device set the timer and drove off. Time dragged past. Nothing happened. It was wrong to return to the seat of the crime, but we decided at least to drive past. As we approached the lane I saw flames rising from the ditch. We drove on. Apparently the mixture had too much sugar.

The comrade had to go back to London that day. So that was that. I never had enough time or facilities to do a thorough job. This was always the problem. We had no secure base. We had no time. As politicians we were tops but as far as the use of technology was concerned we were amateurs.

Success at last

I soon realised that the whole system was too complicated. For our purposes we needed a simple, no-nonsense device that anybody could make after a few lessons. The mortar was spectacular but in all honesty it was unnecessary. That would have to go. The leaflet bomb was still too complex. The use of the cloth spiral was not essential. In our conditions in South Africa the main thing was to deliver the leaflets without being caught. A small explosion was useful since it drew the attention of passers by.

The minimum requirement was a can, a charge, a detonator, the leaflets and a timer.

Assembly skills, availability of components, and how to smuggle the items into South Africa all needed

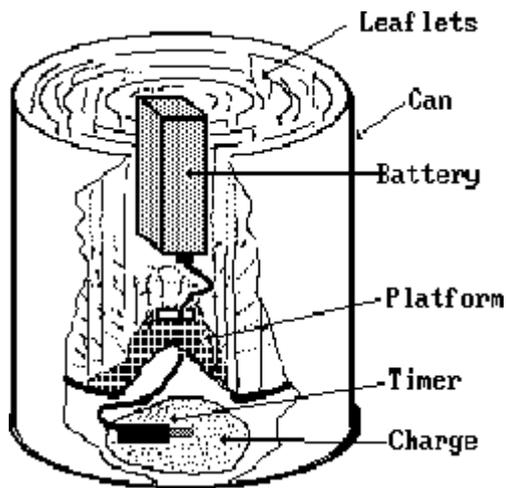
to be considered.

The most difficult item to make was the timer mechanism. I would probably have to do this in Bristol. Detonators were available to Mkonto we Siswe, the African National Congress military wing in Luanda. This complicated the supply lines. I worked on the problem and ended with a small mechanism based on an NE1043 timer (set for a fixed ten minutes). This was a development from previous device of which I had supplied some 200 to MK. A photographic flash bulb replaced the detonator. The whole measured one centimeter square by three centimeters long. Attaching a PP9 battery started the ten minute delay.

The chemical components of the charge were regular household items. White households would have access to them but this excluded most of our activists. I thus decided to make up a three-compartment sachet. Each compartment would hold one chemical required and all that would be needed was to open the sachet and mix them.

The sachet and the timer mechanism would have to be smuggled into the country.

The finished leaflet bomb



60 Years

The South African Communist Party was to be celebrating its birthday and it seemed that there had been a bout of socialist competition between the London and the Lusaka comrades of the Party. I am not sure of the details but the London side was to arrange a leaflet distribution in South Africa. Aziz and Doc did all the organising and arranging and I was asked to teach the technicalities to the operatives. Two brave British lads were going to do the job. Their story was that they were going down to look for work as computer programmers since they were fed up with their jobs in the rescue services in the UK. They were bright intelligent and good with their hands so the teaching was easy. They learnt to make the leaflet bombs from the bottom up, the electronics, the propellant mixture, the container and assembly. Fortunately we had sufficient time and facilities and with such good pupils everything looked extremely hopeful.

They had a very successful trip and the SACP 60th. anniversary leaflets were propelled into the South African skies by British Communists. One of many true acts of international solidarity.

New Pupils

I was asked to train two comrades, a married couple. They were long standing friends of mine. Neither were trained technicians and this should prove if the system was simple enough for general use.

We only had an afternoon for the whole assignment. The facilities were the dining room of a friend's first floor flat in a London suburb. Our workbench was the table. Lace curtains hung on the only window that looked out into a side street. There may have been prying eyes but we had no option but to disregard them.

I let them do most of the work. The system had been so simplified that it did not take long. The only tools needed were a can opener, a pair of scissors and a sharp knife. As so often, I found that the wife Hilly was much better than the husband Pregs. Within a few hours, we had a working model. Now, I believed, it was only possible to go our various ways and hope that it would work in the field.

"No" said Pregs. " We must try it."

"No way." I said "It will go off with a bang. We'll wake the neighbours."

My protestations had no effect.

Remembering my trip to the GDR I said, " The bloody leaflets will go all over the place."

"Not if we only use a small charge." Said Pregs.

Much against my better judgment I agreed. Then we argued about how much explosive to use. With much trepidation on my part and much excited expectation on his we prepared the experiment. Hilly kept silent, watching the children play.

We set the leaflet bomb on the table, attached the battery and hoped for the best. The bang was loud enough to attract the attention of the whole neighbourhood. The leaflets flew about the room. Thick smoke obscured the pictures on the wall. The smell of sulphur filled the air. We started to cough. Pregs sauntered over to the window, opened it, and stood there trying to wave the smoke into the street. I thought of fire engines being called by the neighbours. Fortunately Londoners seldom take any notice of what is happening around them. We closed the window and tidied up.

"Too much Garam Masala." Said Pregs who was a dab hand at making a good curry.

Unfortunately we could not quite clear up everything, because there in the ceiling was a neat half-moon hole. I never found out what Pregs told his friend the owner of the flat.

That did not matter. We were elated. The system worked.

Pregs and Hilly disappeared into Africa. Others followed them. Reports came that the underground was using the system. Time and again I went down south to Lusaka or Maphuto and I got requests from various underground operatives for various items. The movement was full of structures and this was sometimes quite a problem. Occasionally I passed these requests on to the leadership. Sometimes they were quite sharp in their replies. Clearly they could not satisfy every request and bypassing structures created problems. I learned not to act without the approval of the relevant structures. So I told the comrades that there was no problem with my making more of the various gadgets but they had to get the permission and the money.

By the late 1980's we had eventually perfected our propaganda methods. By then the mass movement had grown and expanded to such an extent that our devices were no longer useful. When the ANC was unbanned, what was the use of leaflet bombs and loudspeakers?

Interpersonal skills

Organizations are the interconnections of individuals. SACTU in the twenty or so years it operated in exile was of a size where the individuals were too few and interconnections some times became tense. I often did not understand these tensions and differences. In a different context and years after the last NEC on the Internet I wrote in reply to Lisa Rogers.

```
From owner-marxism@jefferson.village.virginia.edu
Tue May 30 07:38:24 1995
Date: Tue, 30 May 95 07:11:14 BST
From: Ron Press <anclondon@gn.apc.org>
To: marxism@jefferson.village.virginia.edu
Subject: philosophy/science
Sender: owner-marxism@jefferson.village.virginia.edu
Reply-To: marxism@jefferson.village.virginia.edu
```

Hello

```
From: Lisa Rogers
EQDOMAIN.EQWQ.LROGERS@email.state.ut.us
```

A proposition therefore: perhaps science is, in fact, not characterized by consistency at all, but by inconsistency. It seems to me that philosophy is the effort to create consistency throughout human thought, whereas science seeks only to embrace , as precisely as possible, the immediate and definably external, and create consistent relations there

.....

Although I have no serious disagreement with the above statement I do not think either philosophy or science are always either consistent or inconsistent.

I would suggest a better way to look at it is as follows. One is in an art gallery. There is a picture on the wall. The philosopher stands back and tries to get the overall view. The scientist gets closer and closer to the canvass and views the detail.

It is the same picture for both, and both have an incomplete picture. The picture raises emotions in both but they are different emotions. For the philosopher the detail gets in the way. For the scientist the detail is the picture.

Both are right and both are wrong.

Ron Press.

SACTU was the picture and the details were the individuals. I came from a different cultural, economic, emotional and educational background. It would never be possible to understand the subtle tensions that arose.

One day after the hurly burly of serious debate a group of us were discussing men and women. Eric Mtshali said that a man was not a man unless he had slept with many women. This proved his manhood. I disagreed. If a vote had been taken I would have been the only one against with perhaps one abstention.

On another occasion Moses Mabhida and I were discussing another aspect of the same subject. I said that my father had told me never to sleep with a girl friend on the grass. Bring her home and treat her with respect. When Estelle matured and started going out with boys I remembered my father's words and tried never to interfere. It was her life and she was old enough. It was her home as well as mine. Moses strongly disagreed. To sleep with a woman in your father's house was to defile it. For him it was very wrong. There was no bridging this gap. Nor was it necessary to do so.

Cultural differences were sometimes a distinct advantage. When we traveled to and from Lusaka the African comrades generally did not like caviar at all. I grew to appreciate it's fishy tang and on one occasion I gathered together four helpings on the plane. On other occasions they were a just awkward. In the early days of travel I used to take a bottle of duty free down with me for the comrades. On my measure of reasonableness was there too much drinking anyway. Then the next year the bottle became a point of departure for favourable reactions. To whom did one give the bottle? There was only one solution, no duty free alcohol. That annoyed everyone equally. Of course one cannot be ridged and I often took a bottle together with the obligatory cigarettes for Sybil back with me to London. The cigarettes were bad for her lungs but good for her psychology. The alcohol just got stored so I cut down on that as well. I did however slowly gather together a collection of wood carvings which were of course duty free.

The Ron-Zola Axis

But there were other gaps which it was essential to narrow and to if possible eliminate. Archie Sibeko was in the treason trial with me but he had lived in Cape Town. I never worked with him until both he and I were on the NEC. He left South Africa, joined MK and become a commander. Because he was

a hard man he got the nick name Zola Zembe, which meant iron ax as I understand. Zola had been active in the Railway Workers Union and been a member of the Party. Both he and I were later resident in the UK and so we became close. We often traveled together to NEC meetings in Africa, we served together on committees and gained experience of trade unionism in the UK. He worked in an engineering factory for a time. He had a son from South Africa studying in the USSR. He lived in Manchester with his wife Joyce, a doctor.

It was after a meeting in Dar when the question of a treasurer for SACTU had been raised. We were constantly losing treasurers because we were particularly strict on money matters. We all had the experience of petty expropriations by penurious trade union organizers back home. It was inevitable in their necessity to survive. But here in exile it was unnecessary as all the comrades minimal needs were looked after by the ANC. Zola had been proposed. I personally was very much in favor because I had a high regard for his honesty and integrity. We were just sitting down to supper in a local hotel when in conversation I said that the Treasurer must reside at headquarters. Zola exploded. "It is all right for you whites but you want to separate me from my wife." I was stunned. It was so unusual for any apparently racist statements to be made at any time. I protested that it was not that at all it was a matter of reason and good management. Once again reason had let me down. As he pointed out to me at a later date he had meant to point out that by and large the white comrades had their wives with them but the African comrades did not. I had interpreted it differently. The next day Zola was duly elected and it was agreed that he would operate from the UK but would come down to Africa as necessary. A collective form of reason had prevailed and Zola made a good Treasurer.

) Zola, Solly and Me often traveled together. In Moscow on the way to an NEC meeting, just prior to May day we got friendly with a workman hanging up flags. He obliged us by taking our picture. On May Day we were in Maphuto. Early in the morning all the ANC comrades assembled in a square ready for the parade. It started to rain. It continued to rain. The rain was warm and wet. We waited. The day was steamy but the rain made it bearable. None of us had any raincoats or umbrellas and there was no shelter. First my shirt got soaked. Then my trousers hung limp and heavy with water. Never before or since have I been soaked to the skin, underpants and all. But it was fun. We eventually marched in the rain past the Presidential stand and got a mighty cheer. It was fun being part of the movement, black and white together. Then we stood watching the rest of the groups march past. A drummer beat a wild tattoo on a piece of corrugated iron. The rhythm of the drummer, the beat of the rain and of our spirits created an atmosphere of hope and good humour.

The next day Zola and I went to the NEC meeting. I began to have my say on practically every item on the agenda. I was clearly being carried away by my own importance. It was very hot and the meeting was being held in the yard of the MK house. A trestle table was set up in the open under some shade provided by a few trees. My feet had begun to swell in the heat and everyone was becoming exhausted. It seemed that I was getting swollen headed as well but did not realise it. After the break for lunch Moses Mabhida called me to sit next to him. He said he wanted me to assist him. I soon realized that he was exercising a gentle form of control. I eventually appreciated this act although at the time I was a bit put out. Zola also corrected me along these lines from time to time but in a much more direct manner.

At this same meeting the question of the farm was raised. By now it was evening and some lights had been strung up attached to the trees and the washing line. They flickered from time to time and a comrade fiddled with the bare wires to improve the electrical contact. I was amazed at the unconcerned manner in dealing with 240 volts. When does irresponsibility differ from inventive leadership? Some years earlier John Gaetsewe had called me to his flat in London and suggested that SACTU buy a property in Botswana. We could establish a cafe and then the truck drivers who plied the route to South Africa could use it as stopping off point. In this way it would become a center where we could infiltrate material, pass messages and perhaps personnel into South Africa. It sounded like a good idea and I agreed that it would have my support. He would set up a holding company called Northern Properties and Dan Tloome would be one of the directors. I asked how it would be financed but John said he would handle that. It was a top secret project and I was to say nothing to anybody about it.

The next time he discussed it he presented me with the outline of the property he had purchased and showed me a map. It was very large, more a township with over a dozen houses. It far exceeded the idea of a small cafe. It had belonged to some mining company and had been used to house senior

staff. I started to question his judgment in this regard. He said no to worry it would turn out all right and he was getting the money from donors. There seemed to be little talk about the establishment of the Cafe. I was merely a passenger in the project and sworn to silence.

Later John G. confessed he had a some problems. The project needed a manager. There were questions of water, maintenance, collecting rents from the tenants and he was having difficulty in paying the mortgage. There was no talk of the underground purpose of the project. My suggestion was that as the place was so big we should sell half. I queried the whole thing. I felt that J G was getting restive with me and my approach. The next I heard was that he had borrowed money from the bank and anticipated that what with further donations and the rent collected by a new more honest manager the money problems would be covered. Now it was all money and management and no politics or underground organisation. Again I complained but the only result was that I never got called upon again to discuss the matter. Being a disciplined comrade I never discussed it with anyone but the secret was becoming known. Zola, BB, Eric and others hinted at the "Farm", and Turner-esque picture began to emerge. Rumor and dark figures of thousands of Pule were hinted at.

At the Maphuto meeting it came to a head. At the NEC the farm was mentioned for the first time. BB in particular, always one with a good nose for the smell of money, demanded explanations. Zola wanted to know that there was no money going astray but did not want all the details of purpose and operational use. I held my peace. John G. sat quietly building up steam. Then he exploded with a quiet threat of dire consequences. Clearly the virus had escaped. Moses the Chair at this stage suggested an adjournment. Cleverly it was put back into the test tube by the appointment of a commission of inquiry chaired by Moses. I could continue to hold to my silence.

All the commission ever reported was that the project was genuine and under control. The report while satisfying no one did stop any further discussions. Then John resigned as general secretary and retired to Botswana. The "Farm" became a hidden variable, beloved by the practitioners of quantum mechanics and other esoteric arts. The bank was paid. There was no underground operations ever reported to the NEC, even after liberation. John died. SACTU claimed the farm from the estate. John's wife died. The claim became less sustainable. Time, the great obscurer, is ever less likely to tell the true tale. Who succeeded, who failed, was it all planned? Was it revolving around a epicenter far removed from SACTU? I for one would like answers but then I am pleased JG stopped me early on from asking too many questions. I regret I kept my promise of silence because I am sure Zola for one would have helped me to adopt a better position on the question of SACTU's Farm.

Zola and I had our differences and it was clear to me that he was not always happy with me. I think one of the problems was that I was reincorporated into the Party on a formal basis and became a member of an underground unit. As far as I know Zola was not. In many respects I began to respect his approach to many questions. For example one comrade was accused of being a police spy. The ANC security had arrested him and he had been removed to Luanda. Zola was angry because he said that SACTU was an organization in it's own right. They had no justification for taking such decisions without even telling us let alone consulting us. I was much more compliant. I did not know any of the facts. How could I even consider the question. I was in fact avoiding an unpleasantness. He was right, I was wrong. To my credit I did support him in the NEC and we agreed to protest to the ANC security. The poor fellow may or may not have been guilty. There were certainly some strange aspects to his behavior. Nothing was ever proved one way or the other and he later came to study in the UK and was a member of the ANC branch.

On another occasion John Nkadimeng was accused of stealing a large sum of rands. The problem arose when a comrade from South Africa was instructed to take some money home with him. There was a mix-up about the source for the funds and where it was destined. As with so many of these sorts of problems some were so intent on proving John's guilt that the facts did not matter. Others were extremely keen to make sure that if there was any blood spattered about none of it would be theirs. In my understanding John had not been entirely clear as to where the money was going but he had handed it over and had in no way stolen any of it. Zola was even clearer he realised that it was not a question of John being a thief but of John not taking the proper administrative steps and ensuring that proper accounting was done. At the next NEC the comrade who had taken the money home, confirmed that he had received it from John and confirmed to whom it had gone. What had been done was all in order but what had been recorded was not. Personalisation of the episode had not helped clarify the issue. Largely due to people like Zola injustices were often avoided.

Later in 1987 I decided to take early retirement from my teaching post in the Polytechnic. The policy of NATFHE my Trade Union was against all redundancies but when I told them that I was going to work full time in London for SACTU they agreed. It was all in a good cause. I bought a flat in East Finchley from Ray Harmel, the widow of Mick and came to work for SACTU. I had discussed it with Zola who was in charge of the office now in Flowers Mews Archway, London. The staff variously consisted of Ilva MacKay, Mark Sweet, Molly Marcus, and volunteers. I was never a one for taking orders and often queried his decisions. One day it got really heavy and he angrily said that I was after his job, that I had been put there for that purpose, that I was educated and he was not. This was not true and I made it clear that as far as knowing about the trade unions at home and understanding the African workers I could not even compete. There was no truth that I was after his job. We settled down to working together. He was the boss but I was no yes man.

A few years later a number of young white comrades had joined SACTU and were present in Lusaka for a "national" conference. There must have been about 50 activists gathered from the different countries where SACTU comrades were scattered in exile. I summed up my understanding of the problems of whites in SACTU as follows. It was very satisfying that young white comrades were joining in the trade union struggle. It was easy for whites to assume a position of superiority. Apartheid was our historic experience. We had the education, we were skilled in the use of words, we could unjustifiably assume a leadership role. On the other hand we could try to be subservient and docile. This was relatively easy but we could not then make as full a contribution as we should. What was very difficult but essential was to be neither superior nor inferior, but equal.

At the end of 1992 Sibyl asked me to take her out for a drive. This was a form of relaxation for her which I quite enjoyed especially when I was not busy. We often went on holidays that involved driving from place to place just looking at the scenery, the great houses and castles. Except for cigarettes she was a very undemanding wife. We drove out to Barnet and Arkley and then home for a cup of tea. I went into the bedroom to take my coat off and she took hers off in the small lobby of the flat and thumped down in the doorway. She went blue and then seemed to recover. She said "Oh Ron" and went silent. It was much more than that short string of letters suggest. It voiced a cry of pain and an expectation that I would be able to help. It encompassed the years of our life together as her eyes flickered recognition. I touched her forehead. Her colour returned. I remember thinking that perhaps it was a stroke and the best thing to do was not to disturb her. I phoned for an ambulance. This was at the time of the ambulance strike in London. I waited over half an hour and phoned again. I berated them and they promised someone would come. Eventually a quarter of an hour later two soldiers arrived. I don't know why but my first remark was "How do you like being scabs?" They were taken aback. Then they recovered and started attending to Sibyl but it was too late, she was dead. They were only young lads I felt sorry for them in the end.

There followed calling the doctor and then the police came. They asked me all sorts of questions which was a bit off putting. I suppose they had to do so in these circumstances but it was anything but helpful. I felt that I was being accused of something. We had always said that when we died we wanted our remains to be sent to a medical school to help the students in their studies. But it seemed in cases of sudden death this was not possible because an autopsy had to be done.

Sybil's death aroused a set of contradictory feelings for me. On the one hand I was pleased that she had died before me. I was haunted by a fear that I would die first and she would be left as a serious problem for my daughter and her family. Although Estelle loved her mother she did give the impression that Sybil had been a burden for her. I am sure that one of the reasons Estelle married relatively young was because living at home had its trials. Schizophrenia is not an easy illness to live with especially for a young girl who needs a mother to discuss things with. For me Sybil was both a good companion and a wife but also a burden. All the usual decisions in a family were my responsibility. She was unable to discuss problems and I felt that to do so usually distressed her so I avoided it as much as possible. But she was loyal loving and very gentle and kind when in one of her more rational modes. She bore my political activities without a murmur of objection and I always felt she was on our side. The ANC helped arrange the funeral without any religious ceremonies. Zola came to me after the funeral and said that he could see that I was managing. This was a comfort and an encouragement. We have been so long in the struggle together that we have submerged the divisions that could have kept us apart.

Tagging along with John

Another comrade that I was friendly with was John Nkadimeng. I mention him because he taught me the importance of being close to the people especially in their time of need. In the late 1950's we gave out leaflets together in the anti-pass campaign but shortly thereafter I went to Springs and we did not meet again until I became active in SACTU in exile. Our friendship was uncomplicated. I used to stay over with his family in Lusaka. It was very homely and relaxing, playing with his grandson floating boats down the gutter, talking to David his son, visiting his married daughter and her family, clearing the table after a meal, watching tele and talking. John once said that during one visit his wife had said to him " If only all whites were like him we would be all right." It was a great compliment. Joe Modise and his family lived next door so I used to pop over from time to time to discuss Communications with Jackie, and admire her baby daughter.

John took me round and about. We visited this one and that about this and that problem. It seldom concerned me but it was a good thing because I began to acquire an understanding of the lives of the people. Many a times he took me to funerals and wakes. He always told me to just tag along and say nothing. This was good advice because I knew so little about the customs or niceties of the cultures. I believe however that my presence was appreciated. One major funeral was when an NEC meeting was scheduled for Lusaka in March 1986. When we arrived from London we were told that Moses Mabidha the General Secretary of the Communist Party had died and his funeral was being held in Maputo. A goodly crowd assembled at the airport in Lusaka where a special plane had been chartered to take us to the funeral. There we stood and milled about for quite some time. There seemed to be arguments about security and the suggestion that we would all be photographed. For some it seemed that it was wrong because it could compromise those in exile by exposing them. For the government it seemed important so that they could be sure of who went and who returned. Eventually it was agreed and we were photographed and flew down.

The funeral was a big affair with all the big guns being present. It started with a lying in state in the town hall where together with others we stood and paid our respects. Then we drove to the cemetery in a convoy of cars as for a state occasion. For the small fry it was merely a matter of being well behaved and solemn. The cemetery was an old colonial one with some large mausoleums. Moses was buried in a special plot with all the honors and dedications. One of which was that he would return to a free South Africa. Personally I could never understand this. When you are alive you are treated as a human being. Sometimes insulted, seldom praised, often criticized, but looking back often appreciated and loved. Only your immediate friends and relations ever care if you have enough to eat or if you have a roof over your head. When you are dead and are in fact so much kitchen waste, you become larger than life. You must be buried in an expensive coffin, with a marble tombstone, and be returned thousands of miles to be buried with your ancestors. And nothing ill is said about you. It is as if reality is buried with you and hypocrisy remains alive. In these thoughts I am probably in a minority of one. But at least, when I am no more, those who remember me please note.

At such times two quotes seem appropriate,

From *Oedipus Rex*,

"Therefore wait to see life's ending ere thou count one mortal blest:
Wait till free from pain and sorrow he has gained his final rest."

From *Ozymandias*, by Shelly

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look upon my works ye Mighty, and despair'

Nothing beside remains. Round and decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far and away.

None the less the funeral was dignified. Afterwards we all went to a large covered area where rows of heavily laden tables groaned under fried prawns, snacks, drinks, and goodies of all sorts. On such occasions I always wondered about those whose leaders we were and who had nothing to eat. Then back to Lusaka only to overhear on the plane some of the MK cadres saying how they had been frustrated because they had thought that this was an ideal opportunity to have smuggled some cadres into Mozambique for return to South Africa. They had apparently been prevented from doing so by the representative of the ANC in Maphuto who objected on diplomatic grounds. One of the myriad of unresolved differences of opinion.

But funerals are not my only memories of John. When in 1991 I returned for my first meeting of the NEC back home I met John in Shell House. A few of us were sitting in his posh office when his lunch was brought in. He immediately invited us to share it with him. It was just natural for him. For me this put him above so many others.

Then there was...

There was Eric Mtshali, Vanguard, Phyllis, BB, Baba Steve, Ilva, John Gaetsewe, William Kanyile, Mark Shope, Kay, Eli, Norusha, Martin Sere, Mcebese, Thozamile Botha, Thozamile Makheta, old man Khumalo and others. William Kanyile was murdered in the Apartheid raid on Matola in Mozambique. Photo (48) Matola Residence. We often had disagreements and misunderstandings. There were problems associated with relationships to trade union organizations at home and abroad. Most of us were, for example, convinced that we were affiliated to the WFTU but there was considerable pressure from circles around the ICFTU to get us to deny this. This would, it was said, give us a greater chance of assistance from trade unions in the western ambit. I remember once at an international gathering in Italy having serious discussions with one of the leaders in the ICFTU during the Fatti's and Moni's strike by the Food and Canning Workers Union. They said they could not help us because we were affiliated to the WFTU. I said that I could not see the problem after all it was a justifiable strike of workers under extreme oppression. What did it matter if someone else was also their friend. Surely the cause was more important than international differences. He did not agree and no direct help was forthcoming.

On other occasions there were more serious problems to solve such as our relationship with a group which eventually took the name of the Marxist Tendency of the ANC.

Under the leadership of John Gaetsewe the SACTU newspaper 'Workers Unity' was restarted just after the Soweto events of 1976. An editorial board was set up with John G, Gill Marcus, myself, David Hemson, Paula Ensor, and Rob Peterson. Our method of working was for articles, news items, statements, NEC reports and so on to be commissioned, written and submitted to the board where we would discuss, modify, comment, and finally agree to their publication. We never had an editor as such but more an organizing editor who had to work within the decisions of the board. No red pen for him.

The paper was produced and printed in the UK and distributed quite broadly world wide. Its main target was the workers in South Africa, where it was banned. The target was unfortunately thousands of miles away and we had limited success. However all went well for a couple of years. Then tensions began to mount. Rob, Paula, and David, began to steer the editorial policy towards a more "revolutionary" line. They were influenced by Militant, a British left movement, which adopted a more insular, self-righteous, combative line. This was out of keeping with the way of working of the Congress Movement. SACTU was not a Communist front. It was a militant non racial trade union movement, in an alliance with the ANC and the SACP. We had no political aspirations outside of this alliance. This was not good enough for the group. John Gaetsewe had asked Rob to draft a statement for SACTU on the political situation and the tasks facing the workers in South Africa, it was produced under the title "Looking Forward". When it became more generally available it became more and more clear that the document was out of line with alliance thinking.

Rob and the others issued an ultimatum to SACTU in London, they would work for SACTU if they could adopt the general policy line as represented in the pamphlet. We had always worked by

consensus. The NEC seldom if ever took a vote even on the most contentious matters. We argued it out until exhausted or the minority felt that they had had a fair crack of the whip and nothing would be gained by pursuing the discussions any further. The ultimatum and the pamphlet were discussed at the NEC. There was no way that we would even consider an ultimatum. The pamphlet was withdrawn an not representative of SACTU policy. Rob and Co left SACTU and pursued their political ambitions elsewhere.

Janet

Janet Love came to work at the SACTU office at about this time. She was young and restless not like a bumble bee more like a humming bird. She had clearly learnt her politics in the "student school for arguments" but her innate good qualities took command in the long run. The offices were up two flights of stairs and along a corridor above a warehouse. Sunny, quite big, and they overlooked a canal. I remember that it was decided that a computer would be a useful tool. I had been using one at work and was sold on the idea. We bought a Commodore Pet with the usual word processor program and a dot matrix printer. SACTU often lead the movement and in this we were the first. It was almost a disaster. Janet grew to hate the very sight of the machine. After a month she was prepared to give up. Then the tide turned. She got the hang of it and slowly discovered more and more of the good points of computing, until she was converted and became a high priest.

Later when she joined the SACTU office in Lusaka she went down with the then state of the art IBM PC. My abiding memory of her there was in the cool after a long meeting of the NEC sitting under an avocado pear tree. Opposite sat Moses Mabhida in earnest conversation. The young white revolutionary debating with and imbibing the experience of age. She then disappeared. Comrades would ask, "What happened to Janet?", implying that perhaps she had deserted the cause. Then I saw her about a year or so later. She never offered to say where she had been. Then she disappeared for many years. I thought, oh well so it goes. Then her name appeared in some of the Vula communications as someone who should be recruited to helping operation Vula. Her computer skills would be useful for communications and she was there in South Africa under an assumed personality. She became one of the operatives and did a good job not only in comms but in many other ways. From time to time I met her in London.

So life is a process, a flux where one never knows where what you put in will come out.

Me and the SACP

Many thought and said in print and in public that SACTU was Communist. There were certainly Communists in SACTU but there was no party line. I never got any instructions from the party concerning SACTU. There were occasional statements of a general political nature but they never got down to details. Then in 1983 I was asked to come to an extended Politburo meeting which was to be held in Moscow. I was contacted by Brian and directed to see a Mr. V at the Soviet embassy. He met me in one of the embassy houses and arranged all the details like a visa and tickets.

By now flying back and forth was almost second nature but this had an added bit to it. I had never attended a meeting of the leadership of the party and although I had a pretty good idea of whom I may meet it was all new to me. I was met at the airport and ushered for the first time to the VIP lounge. Passport and luggage formalities were handled for me while I sat chatting and drinking coffee. As usual my passport was not stamped and the visa was a separate document. This was done deliberately for my protection. It would serve no good purpose for my passport to proclaim that I had visited Moscow. Not when the cold war was at it's height and particularly when I was part of the Anti-Apartheid movement. Then off in an official car to a Moscow suburb. It was May and quite mild with spring well under way. We arrived at large steel gates with a sentry post, then up a long driveway under green trees past outbuildings to a large double story house. I found some of the comrades already there and I shared a ground floor room with Martin Sere. It was all very pleasant. Quiet, graveled garden paths, good food in a separate lounge, all mod cons and comrades for company.

We were left to ourselves and did not see our hosts except for lunch and once when they took some of us to a polyclinic. I was walking in the grounds with Moses when the conversation came round to health matters. He was going to be taken for a checkup. At the time I was suffering from angina and it was worrying me. I plucked up courage and asked if it would be all right if I went along. They agreed that it would be a good idea and arrangements were made. We were taken to a nearby complex which was a cross between a doctors surgery and a hospital. It was all quite efficient and one was

guided from room to room where tests were done questions asked and measurements taken. Their diagnosis was as I already knew but they did prescribe and give me a supply of a drug called "systac". It was evidently a slow release dinitroglycerine tablet made in Yugoslavia. I was quite amused because I would be returning from the USSR to the West with a supply of a dangerous high explosive.

We returned to our deliberations. At no time were our hosts present nor did they in anyway participate. I never expected them to. But it gave the lie to the propaganda so prevalent in the West. I also do not remember any discussions which took decisions which had to be adhered to. It was more a meeting to encourage and coordinate our efforts rather than to lay down a line for SACTU. Unlike the meetings of the Trade Union Advisory Committees of the British Party that I had attended in the past which assumed a much stiffer adherence to decided positions.

One evening after supper Ray Simons asked me to have a chat and a drink in her room. I went upstairs to see her and was immediately struck by the large rather more up market atmosphere. I remarked on the television set and the luxury. I said that it seemed that some were more equal than others. She was taken aback. But then I never found out if Ray had developed a sense of humour. It was however indicative that the Soviets felt the need for a hierarchy. It seemed out of place.

Late that night after we had completed our agenda Joe asked me if I had a short wave radio. We were gathered on the steps outside the house and he tuned into the SABC news bulletin. It was not clear but when turned up loud clear enough to decipher the news. He was excited and intent. A large car bomb had exploded outside the Pretoria offices of the intelligence section of the South African Air Force. He beamed and exuded satisfaction at a job well done. He was at the time in charge of special operations which of course had nothing to do with SACTU but everything to do with the struggle against Apartheid.

The next day the PB met on it's own. I was however called in. The Secretary Moses congratulated me on the success of the Pretoria operation in that I had made the remote control ignition device. It was all very formal and serious. I said that congratulations were not in order. Thanks and respect lay with the comrades in the field. I had done very little. Moses, Ray and others were taken aback. Only Dan. Tloome immediately understood what I meant and accepted my approach. Still it was nice to be recognized. I was, however, right. We did not know it at the time but the comrades who set the device off were too close to the bomb and lost their lives.

The next time the Party discussed SACTU was some years later in Lusaka when an enlarged PB meeting was again held. This time there were many more comrades present. The main item on the agenda was the future of SACTU in the light of the establishment of a single major trade union center in South Africa, COSATU. Should SACTU continue or should it dissolve? The two congresses had established links and there were few political, organizational or other differences. There were other problems mainly of the spheres of influence, and personal power that could sometimes loom larger than their innate importance. This was the first time that I knew who on the NEC was a party member and who was not. Membership had been kept strictly secret. Some of course I suspected, some I knew because of other party activities but many I knew for the first time. While the discussions proceeded various points of view and differences of approach emerged. This was quite natural and healthy. Memories also crowded in of SACTU NEC meetings where these same comrades had interminable arguments on important policy matters. They were all members of the same communist party. Just as I had had no party directives on so many issues so indeed they had not. In SACTU we acted as communists but not as puppets of the center.

It revealed to me an important aspect of "party work" in other organizations. On really major issues party members would generally think alike and it was not necessary to have a party line handed down from the top. Contentious issues and matters of tactics were left to the comrades to sort out for themselves in the discussions in SACTU itself. I now realized that since party comrades often adopted opposite sides on the NEC divisions between the "party" and the "others" never emerged.

During one of the tea breaks Joe Slovo and I went for a walk in the garden and sat down in a rondavel out of the sun. He said that he thought the value of SACTU was now past. But it was clear that most of the comrades did not think so, so perhaps it should be left at that for the moment. I had been advocating the dissolution of SACTU both for political reasons and I suppose because I did not have a personal stake in it continuing. Many of the comrades had positions in SACTU and with these came certain advantages such as an office to go to, a job to do and the satisfaction that came with these. In Lusaka I suppose it also meant certain privileges that went with the job such as access to transport for

one. The discussion on whether SACTU should dissolve was wide ranging and came out on the side of supporting the continuation of SACTU for the time being. My contribution to the discussion was that although I was in support of the dissolution of SACTU. One should consider the matter as one would consider the wearing of a new pair of shoes, new shoes tend to pinch and need to be got used to, old shoes are comfortable. Perhaps we should not yet throw away the old ones. For what was supposed to be a Stalinist Party according to so many in the British Party the SA party was quite open and free with it's decision making.

There was at least another meeting of the SACTU party comrades but this was a very weak affair with nothing to fix it in the memory.

From the early 80s I began to attend Party Unit meetings in London. This meant attending meetings of about 10 comrades every so often where we discussed the usual party matters. There were documents, statements, circulars, and so on but most active work was done by comrades in other structures and because of the problems with security these were seldom discussed. We also had a sort of election system where we chose our district committee. This was technically difficult since we did not know who were or were not party members except by chance or if they were members of our group. Still we were asked to submit names and then the district would be chosen from those names who were in the majority and who were in fact party members. It was strange because we never knew the results except in as much as one of the chosen were members of our unit. Still it was the best that could be done under the circumstances. Of course we paid subscriptions.

I once represented the party at a meeting of the World Peace Council in Moscow, having been asked by Doc. Dadoo. It was a very big affair with hundreds of delegates. I was part of the higher echelon and as such met and ate with the leaders of the other delegations. There were some very good people there especially amongst the Americans. The Minister from what is now called Shri Lanka was there and on one occasion produced a rather nice painted and carved mask which he gave to me. It seemed he had earlier given similar items to others. I thanked him and during the conversation asked about how the conditions of the tea workers had improved. This raised some nods of approval but embarrassed him. I was not a diplomat. I was really out of my league. These people had the experience of dozens of peace meetings and conferences behind them. The western press was at the time using the question of dissidents in the Soviet Union as a cold war tool. This was taken up by some of the delegates and although relevant in a minor way was not an issue that should be allowed to disrupt the real issue of Peace. One of the Slovo daughters was a delegate. In chatting to her she was all excited about seeking out and talking to one of these dissidents. I tried to dissuade her asking what purpose would be served. She was however all hyped up. My well meant shower of cold water acted as a catalyst to the fire of her passions so I turned it off and left her to her devices.

At the end of the proceedings I found an electric samovar as a parting gift in my hotel room.. I thanked the interpreter but asked if it was not a bit excessive. She returned and said that it was a gift from the Trade Unions and all the delegates had been given one. From these uncomfortable heights I returned to my accustomed normality.

In the early 90s when the Party emerged from the underground the unit structure was closed and we became one United Kingdom Branch. The membership of this branch consisted of those left in the UK and who wished to continue their membership. One would have thought that people would have been proud of their contribution to the struggle as Communists and that now that the dangers of membership were largely removed they would continue in the easier climate. Some quite prominent members denied that they had ever been members. They were content to have the companionship and solidarity of their comrades when it suited them. Now when they thought that being publicly known as a Communist might damage their careers they left the party. The party has left it to their consciences so I will do likewise. We are now a small group of comrades left in the UK for various reasons such as family, age and health. We regard ourselves as a Party group rather than a branch and do what we can to assist the Party at home.

Academic life.

Parallel to this political activity I continued to earn a living. I remember saying at one SACTU meeting that I was the only worker on the NEC. All the rest were full time functionaries of one sort or another. Meanwhile my work environment had changed. I had been employed in the Bristol Technical college as an inorganic chemist. It was not my first love but a job has to be done. There was however a

laboratory in the grounds of the college which as part of the chemistry department was concerned with chemical industry. The College of Advanced Technology which shared the College site in Ashley Down moved to Bath and became a University. The laboratory which occupied a prefab in the grounds was left by them to the Tech. It was used by the chemical technicians courses. I was keen to get involved since the apparatus was of a larger scale and semi-industrial and I slowly began to do more courses involving the "Chemical Plant Laboratory." Then the GRIC (Graduate of the Royal Institute of Chemistry) course required that the students have some Chemical Engineering content to their studies and I had my chance to indulge myself when I was given the subject.

In their infinite wisdom it was decided to establish the Bristol Polytechnic. The staff and the courses were split along the lines of advanced and non advanced courses. Education like so many institutions is subject to contradictions. Nothing moves or is accomplished in the world without the actions of a worker's hand guided by a worker's brain. It is necessary, inevitable, that groups are formed some of whom are happier working more with their heads than their hands and others who are more satisfied by physical than mental activity. There develops an arrogance that mental ability is superior to operational skill. It has always been my belief that the division between the two is a false one. No matter how hard I have tried and how long I have thought about it I have never been able to run a marathon. I have marveled at the skills of the pattern maker who like Bill Gilchrist could shape a piece of metal to within a hundredth of a millimeter. Equally awesome is the ability of the mathematician like my Polytechnic colleague Chris Philipidis to manipulate Hilbert Space equations. But both have been my friends, both have seen the welfare of mankind to be held back by divisions between the manual and mental workers fostered by the selfish, the arrogant and the ignorant. When I decided to return to the UK from Ghana I consciously decided against applying for a post in a university since I had a greater affinity to practical working people than the theorizing of intellectuals. So when I was asked where I would like to work, in the Tech. or the Poly. I answered in accord with my theoretical position, that I would be happy teaching in either.

In practice the staff was split not along the lines of qualifications or ability but of expedience and favor. I was placed in the Tech. I realized that I was in effect being taken advantage of. Others with less ability and lower qualifications were being put into the Poly. The rules of the game were not based on my theories of the equality of mental and physical labour but on whose face fitted. On their criteria I was being put down. It was their world and I decided to adopt their criteria and object. My objection was accepted and I ended up in the Poly. I must have had a strong case. By whose rules do you play the game? Where is the boundary between principle and expediency? It is never simple at the personal level. I was certainly happier in the Poly than I would have been in the Tech but perhaps I was being less than thoroughly logical.

There followed many years of great satisfaction. I developed student experiments, designed and together with the technicians made the rigs and constructed the equipment. The Poly decided to construct a new Unit Operations Laboratory on the Site in Coldharbour Lane just outside Bristol. Together with Jim the technician, and the architects we agreed the layout and construction of the new laboratory. The Jim made models of the equipment and we constructed a model layout of the new labs. We moved and bought new equipment and established the whole section. It was a job well done. According to the accepted terminology I should have written that I built the laboratory.

I was invited to a peace meeting in Greece in 1986. In the plenary session they were going on about Greece being the birth place of democracy and how in ancient times they had built a great civilization, the Acropolis, the temple of Poseidon, the various shrine and cities. In my contribution I welcomed their invitation and support for the struggle of the South African people and of how they themselves in recent times had struggled against fascism. I was naughty however when in my speech I pointed out that the great cities and buildings had not been built by their architects and philosophers but by the slaves who did all the work, that the great democracy of Greece was based on slavery.

Well I can genuinely say that together, we set up, built, commissioned and in many cases designed the equipment in the laboratory. First experiment sheets were duplicated for the students and eventually a booklet produced. This proved especially useful when we started a Food Technology course with Seal Hayne in Somerset and I was given the engineering principals side of the course. In all these efforts the various technicians especially, Jasper Morrison, were an essential part of the team. There was and I suppose still is a false division between lecturers and technicians. I only became interested in and developed the use of computers in the control of the equipment in the

laboratory due to the interest in the subject by Jim who asked me to order a computer so that he could get to know something about computing. This was way back in the early 1980's before the first PC's had hit the High streets. It was a small affair with a simple number keyboard and a LED output screen. We soon replaced it with a Commodore Pet with a whole 16K memory and 'basic programming language' built into the system. Eventually we coupled it to the heat exchanger and used the computer as a temperature controller. Certainly we were not the first to do this sort of thing but we were the first to do it in the department.

The hierarchy of education is interesting because from the outside many people think it is democratic, logical and run by level headed highly intelligent intellectuals. This is just not true. Once I attended a set of seminars on quantum mechanics of molecules and chemical bonds. A number of the big names were there and gave lectures. People who had had books published and theories named after them. One of them gave a lecture on covalent bonding and said how they had used this new bigger and better computer to calculate some energy levels and so on. The next professor took over and said how he had done this and that much more complex calculation using a piece of paper and a slide rule. In the midst of all the high powered intellectual talent lurked childish point scoring.

Then there was the time when the boss Dr Green announced that there were some Principal Lecturer posts available and those who thought they deserved promotion should apply. I duly applied as did a number of others. We were interviewed and two were given promotion. I was called in and told that I really deserved promotion but there were not sufficient vacancies, I would certainly have been eligible had there been another position available. About a month later the unforeseen happened, another post was notified. I went into the boss and said that in view of his statements of a month ago, and in view of the fact that nothing significant had changed since I was turned down last time I assumed that the new position would be mine. "Oh no, no," Said Dr. Green, "it did not work like that". I did not get the post. Hypocrisy, lies, cheating, favoritism and the power struggle rules just as strongly in academic circles as it does in industry. The only difference is the pretense that the academics are above that sort of thing.

But there were good people at the college. By default I became the union representative of the science department in the college branch of NATFHE, the lecturers union. It was not particularly revolutionary or onerous but it did mean that from time to time I pointed out the undemocratic nature of the system. Every one got to know me as the Communist but it seemed that it was in spite of being a Communist that they respected me. There was one lecturer who was a confirmed Tory, and a member of the territorial army. He had very different views from mine. but we got on quite well because he like me believed in fair play.. At the farewell gathering when I left for London I was asked to say the usual farewell after the speech from Dr. Green the Head of Department. I said how much I had enjoyed working there and that I was looking forward to a different life in London. I thanked Dr. Green (I always refused to call him Trevour although he expected that. I never wanted to get close to my boss.) I thanked him for all that he had done and said that I realized that he was not a free agent but had to do things he did not always agree with. I had begun to learn the art of diplomacy although I never mastered it. The art of sincere ambiguity which cuts through all the crap, as the Americans say, but does so with the sterile scalpel.

Technical matters

It is difficult to relate some things to particular times and places because they evolve. Before, during, and after the time I was at the poly I was busy trying to develop various devices of use on the less diplomatic side of the struggle against Apartheid. For example the radio control of an explosive device. These sort of things were the stock in trade of other liberation movements and naturally our leading comrades wanted to have them in our armory.

The idea was to be able to control the timing of the explosion. This requires a line of sight of the target where the device was waiting and the timing could be in theory perfect , i.e. just as the target came within range of the planted bomb. It required that the radio receiver which controlled the detonation be coded to prevent interference and premature ignition. The device must be planted and the transmitter must be powerful enough to set it off from a safe distance.

The first device I made was based on a radio transmitter and a receiver with latter tuned to the TX frequency. A tone was transmitted for a short period followed by a set delay and a further tone. The receiver was set to respond to this simple sequence. It worked intermittently but the main problem

was that it could go off arbitrarily. I remember to my embarrassment when attempting to demonstrate the device to a comrade who had come to Bristol for instruction in the use of the various devices we had developed. The "Bomb" consisted of the receiver with a relay and a lamp to indicate when it went off. The transmitter needed only the depression of the fire switch. We were walking down Ashley Down Road to demonstrate the system when I noticed that the "Bomb" had already gone off. Back to the drawing board.

Then the new digital encoded radio controlled model aircraft TX/RX systems became available and they were tried. The transmitter had two joy sticks which each moved in two directions. The radio signals from the TX moved the rudder, elevators, ailerons and power in the model airplane or other devices in say a model boat. The idea was to have the joy-sticks replaced with set points. The receiving relays were set so that when the TX was turned on the fingers of the four relays all set micro-switches in the on position. The device was bulky especially the receiver. This time I tested the device much more extensively including one time when I set off a "Bomb" held by a comrade at Archway roundabout from the transmitter held on the Archway bridge over a half a kilometer away. It was sufficiently promising to be tried down south prior to being used in South Africa. They asked for a few more sets to be made and sent down where they were used successfully in several areas. One operation in particular was successful where some army trucks were attacked. Unfortunately, as with so many military operations, some civilians were injured. It made the front pages of the press with emphasis on the civilian casualties. The resultant political effects meant that the movement decided to hold back the future use of the device. It had however demonstrated the growing power of the movement.

After these experiences I was told that a greater range was needed so experimentation continued. The next idea was similar but the range did not seem to be sufficient. A Linear amplifier was added to the transmitter but without the promised increase in range or reliability.

I am not sure that the main advantage of the device was fully appreciated, i.e. the possibility of exact timing using line of sight to see that the target is within range of the bomb.

About this time the possible use of walkie-talkies became apparent. I found that there were amateur handheld radio TX/RX's which could be used with a DTMF tone pad to call another similar handheld set at the same frequency. It was made by a firm called IQD. I got a pair and tried them out. The system worked fine. I was sure it could be modified to set off an explosive device.

At the same time we had been told that somebody on the continent had devices which were successfully being used for the same purpose. I was sent over in 1987 together with an Indian comrade to get the know how. The contact was not made and we returned home. I remember staying in this posh hotel worrying about the price of the rooms. We even phoned a contact but he was away and very cautious. Later I learned that he in fact was the contact but had not been informed of how and where to meet us.

Another comrade went over and this time made successful contact. She came back with plans for a system much as I had thought of independently. It was however a single tone device. The two handhelds were set to a particular frequency and a tone sent and picked up, and then decoded with a Phase Locked Loop (PLL) circuit. An XR2213 chip was used with a simple 714 op amp notch filter preceding it. The system worked well but had certain problems. The PLL had to be narrow to prevent interference, but narrow PLL would drift and not operate properly.

It was decided to change the audio transmissions to DTMF (this is the system used on modern touch-tone telephones). This was in line with my previous thoughts. The problem seemed to be that a two-number code would be too complex in the field, but a single number could lead to triggering by interference from other DTMF devices. After experiment it was found that if the oscillator frequency of the crystals controlling the transmitted and received DTMF were slightly changed, then the system still worked. With the modification however some numbers using the standard crystal on the transmitter still triggered some numbers on the modified receiver. Provided these numbers were not used then only our modified transmitted DTMF would trigger the remaining numbers of our modified receivers. We made about 12 of them and sent them down. We know that at least one was successfully used in the field as the media reported that a radio transmitter had been found after an explosion. Later, while in Lusaka for a SACTU meeting, some of the big chiefs asked to see me. We discussed various matters and I was asked to make 50 of the devices. I pointed out that this would cost some 10,000 pounds. The chiefs appeared to dismiss the cost as of no importance at all so I left it at that. Next day

I spoke to the one of the chiefs again and we agreed that if the money was forthcoming then I should get on with it, but not otherwise. Liberation came first.

From a scientific point of view it is interesting to note that the historic evolution of the radio controlled bomb as used by liberation movements in different countries developed along very similar lines and stages. Personally I think that the use of a two or three-digit DTMF signal would be better and safer but it would be more complex for the operatives and that always has to be a major consideration. I remember one incident in Lusaka when testing and demonstrating the device. We were parked on an open road and I was sitting in the car with some MK comrades. Another comrade walked into the distance signaling from time to time if the receiver indicator light went on when it received my signal. He eventually disappeared into the distance over the hill. It was working really well. A car suddenly stopped and a man came over to us and asked what we were doing. I tried to hide the transmitter under the seat while the comrades showed their ANC passes. I showed him my passport. He seemed satisfied. Later we learned that he was from the air-force security and had checked on our credentials. Seeing a white man in Lusaka had made him suspicious, since there were South African spies operating in Zambia. It was good to know that we were amongst friends.

More on hiding things.

The question of secret writing, of coding and concealed messages has clearly been a constant problem in the movement. From time to time I was called upon to get various chemicals from work which was generally easy but sometimes they had to be bought but being a "Dr." made even this easy. I remember Vitamin C, Zinc Oxide, Dithizone and others. For example a walking stick was hollowed out on the lathe at home and Silver Nitrate secreted in it, and similarly with a wooden sculpture.

From time to time comrades asked for places to hide their papers, records and later computer disks. Aziz was always moving and always needed a new hiding hole. One was behind a small fancy ornament frame which was affixed to a partition wall in his girlfriend's flat in Constantine Road. The cut in the hollow partition was made so that it was covered by the frame. The frame, fitted with hidden recessed hinges, made the door to the hole. Next time it was behind a light fitting in the kitchen ceiling in Leighton Road, where I fitted bookshelves and fused all the lights by drilling into an electric cable. In Anson Road it was fixing a secret drawer fitted by Jack Hodgson in Stephanie Sachs's flat. I also made a hollow Formica top for her fridge. For myself in Park Gate and Tim in Camden Road it was false ceilings to cupboards, hollows behind partition walls, hollows under baths, and double bottoms in drawers.

In the late 1980's a Tory rightwinger started a scare campaign about military links between the ANC and the IRA. I had in my possession at the time a number of devices used for our military campaign which, if they had been found in my possession, would have given credence to this campaign. I got in touch with others by phone and suggested that we hide securely whatever we had in our possession.

I got in touch with 'J' in Bristol using a public phone and asked him to assist me in a project. Without hesitation he said come over and we will see what can be done. I took the next train with a briefcase of electronics worth nearly a thousand pounds. I cannot be sure that I was not followed but all seemed normal when I arrived at his 'Granny' flat in Horfield. 'J' had a small self-contained flatlet attached to his daughter's house. I immediately started to explain the purpose of my visit but he stopped me in my tracks and said he did not want to know what was in the briefcase and would take it and put it somewhere safe. Together we went up into the loft of the main house. It was a bit unusual in as much as it was not separated off as is normal but accessed by a set of stairs and clearly used from time to time by the members of his daughter's family, including the children. At the apex of the roof space was a water tank and 'J' stashed the briefcase away at the side in the dark. A good lunch set me up for the return to London, well satisfied with another act of unselfish solidarity.

The scare had long passed by when I received an agitated call from 'J'. His voice was apologetic and he asked me to visit him urgently. It seemed that his daughter had been pottering about in the loft making it tidy when she came across the briefcase. She thought it strange and when she opened it and saw the electronic gear she decided that her son had been stealing and that she had found the hidden goods. She promptly got rid of them. 'J' never told me if his grandson had been unjustly punished. He was extremely sorry and offered to pay for the loss. I assured him that it was just one of those unforeseeable things for which no one was responsible and about which nothing could be done.

As with the squirrel some of the nuts get lost.

Student Surpasses Teacher

Other than the use of secret inks the movement used number codes which were cumbersome. I was now becoming familiar with computers which in their turn were emerging into the public domain.

I thought that the movement could simply type out messages on a computer, it in turn would change the letters into ASCII code, add a random number, and bingo a coded message. The message could be saved on cassette tape and the tape sent into the country where it could be decoded.

There were a number of things wrong with the system but the concept was basically correct and, as history proved, quite workable. I bought a small computer and started the learning process.

About this time Tim Jenkin came onto the scene and together we worked to develop the successful system used in operations Vula and the subsequent Eugene in the 1990s.

To outline the steps in the process.

The idea of saving to tape was accepted, this was the way the popular home computers worked at that time. The question of random numbers just being added was not. I thought that it was too simplistic and anyway numbers generated by computer were not genuinely random. So we went for a system where a book code (page, line) was used instead. Using an Oric home computer I developed a program for typing in the message, followed by the book code. The latter was typed in twice with an error checking system. It worked but was cumbersome.

About this time I wrote a memorandum about the use of computers. Perhaps it was too much ahead for its time or too fanciful but I never heard much about it. I must say that I did get the encouragement to press ahead with our experiments.

Tim bought an Oric computer and started to take up programming. From then on we worked as a team with ideas being developed in tandem and coming out of discussions. It would be impossible to say who contributed this or that but certainly the team work brought results. The other factor was that the movement itself had the desire to develop the underground but the organizational form which would allow it to happen had not yet been set up. With the President's project, Vula, the key was found and our ideas for communication got the full backing it deserved. I think we can say that we as a team fulfilled the faith that was placed in us.

We bought two Commodore 64s. Tim developed a program for the coding which was menu based and much easier to use. (Tim bought a Sinclair QL computer and was and was very proud of its abilities.)

The next step was that the whole question of the use of the telephone line via a modem for the transmission of data became part of the public domain. We bought modems and first logged on to Telecom Gold and later Prestel and Microlink. We started sending coded messages to each other between Bristol and London.

Parallel with these developments arose the idea of using DTMF to send numbers. This was a logical development from the use of DTMF with handhelds for the radio controlled devices. The addition of a simple decoder and a led display meant that DTMF could be recorded and then decoded on receipt of the cassette tape. This went further when we realized that DTMF could be sent over the telephone.

We thus had a system where we could manually send numbers over the telephone and by radio. We disguised a calculator to send DTMF and the decoder was secreted in a Duracel PP9 container. We made quite a few of these and similar devices but they never became popular. They were simple and effective but still required manual coding and decoding. Often we think we are the originators of an idea or a process only to find later that others have done the same thing. So it was with this system. There was a report of the arrest of a Soviet spy who had in his possession a device for receiving numbers from his base in the USSR. Is it not that we all drink from the same vast pool of knowledge and thus find similar ways to quench our thirst.

One thing led to another and we found a device which was used to interface a computer to a telephone line to dial DTMF. A technician at the Polytechnic made an interface using this device which could be programmed by the Commodore 64 to send DTMF at about 20 numbers per second down a telephone line. He did this because he supported our struggle for democracy, and was but

one example of the many who helped us. We now had a computer coding and decoding system which sent the messages over the telephone network. We found that the message could be coded recorded on tape and then transmitted from a public phone box and received and decoded at the other end.

We experimented between Bristol and London and even between Tanzania and London. I was down for an NEC meeting at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom School so I took a tape of computer generated DTMF down with me. After much cajoling and pleading I managed to get a phone call through to London. There was no direct dialing and I had to go through the School and the local international telephone operators on the one and only line available. Having got through I played the tape amid all the interference and noise. The ANC telephone operator never commented on these strange going on but I wondered what he thought. There were problems. It was slow and on occasions the numbers would double between transmission and receipt.

The system was demonstrated to Jackie the ANC communications chief but it was too complex and not user friendly. The organization was not capable at that stage of using the system. They did ask for the simpler tone pads and decoders. As far as we know they were never used. They were found later in a box in Lusaka and were cannibalized to make other devices.

The Commodore was now old hat and the new PC boom has taken off. The computer was now recognized as a word processor. The leadership began to take a much greater interest and started saying that a system should use an RS232 port since then PC's could be used. Our friendly technician made the DTMF device with a new chip which worked off an RS232. This was never used although it worked. The use of FSK and modems took over .

Meanwhile we began to question the use of book code. It seemed that the use of random numbers was much simpler except we had to be assured that the numbers were random. Tim who now began an analysis of the random number generation. He generated numbers with the computer and then re-randomized them manually. This improved matters. Then it was suggested that the book code did have its advantages and perhaps documents on disk could be used instead of books. This led to the thought that ordinary computer program could be used instead of a book to supply a string for the encoding.

After much thought it was decided instead that it would be better to generate random numbers and then add programs to them to make the sequence even more unpredictable. This led to the use of a Disk code where there were two disks one which held numbers to encode with and the other which held numbers to decode with. These are used when highest security is necessary. A book code is used for other messages. I had studied statistics at university so together we wrote a program which analyzed the randomness of the numbers on the code disk. I supplied the statistics and Tim tidied up the computer code and user friendliness.

Tim takes the lead

The system was still designed to operate with tape recorders recording DTMF, or saving ASCII onto tape like saving a program. The big breakthrough came when Tim proved that a modem could have its output recorded on a tape and then played back. The computer through another modem would accept it. The number of errors was acceptable at 300 Baud, and an error checking program would trap these. Of course the error checking could not be done by involving any sort of re-transmission since the system was one way at a time. This was in fact very good for the Lusaka-London connection where there is a severe echo on the line which prevents computer to computer links over ordinary telephone lines. I had tried logging onto Microlink from the SACTU office in Lusaka. The problem had been that one could log on after a number of attempts but the connection would break down before any work could be done. The connection requires a two way transmission of data and the echo interrupted this. A system was then set up where a message was encoded, taped via an acoustic modem such as a Sendata, the tape was taken to a public phone booth and the remote number phoned and the tape played to an answering machine, the message was then fed from the answering machine through a modem to the computer

It was set up between Lusaka and London and between London and South Africa sometime in 1988. It worked well and contributed a great deal to building the underground. I was working full-time for SACTU and had to negotiate a day a week off for other duties without Zola knowing what it was all about. So much did the work increase that I left the SACTU office and joined the technical team full time in about June /July 1989. We tried to increase the speed of transmission by attempting to get a

modem to work without having to error check with the remote modem. We even made a modem without much success. The basic problem was that the comrades in SA could not access an ordinary phone.

We then began work on the possibility of using a Psion Organiser as the computer with an acoustic coupler which was then small enough to use in a telephone box. This proved very difficult but Tim cracked it, only to find that it did not work with all phone boxes. However the easing of the situation back home and the development of the under-ground meant that access to ordinary phones became possible. We changed to the use of computers, a Toshiba T1000 with a 1200 baud modem and the accessing of Microlink via Saponet. Now long documents and messages could be easily sent to and from the UK from SA.

It was the general wisdom in Lusaka that it is impossible to send computer stuff from Lusaka to London or anywhere else. We even checked with the experts in London who said it was impossible. We had been doing it for about a year with the answering machine system but we had been unsuccessful with MicroLink. When I was down for a SACTU NEC meeting towards the end of 1989 we tried ML again but it was no good. However, from a Toshiba in Lusaka to a Toshiba in London it was successful. It depended to some extent on the communications program but Procomm worked at 1200 baud. Now we had a much advanced system with a Tosh in London acting in Host mode. The message was encoded. Then it was sent via a modem and an acoustic coupler to a mobile phone. The phone was logged onto Compuserve and the message left in the e-mail box. Receiving a message was done in the reverse order. At the South African end a similar system was used but normally with an ordinary phone. We in London had one mobile phone but we now needed another one. We did not want to use our home telephones for the sending of the FSK messages and the other mobile phone was already over worked. We thought this would make it more difficult for the Apartheid regime. In order to get another phone, the phone companies wanted a name and an address which would defeat the object of using a mobile phone, So we bought a company in the name of British sympathizers. The company could then buy the phone and do other things like running a bank account and purchase things that we needed. It was quite fun having a cheque book in the name of an imaginary company secretary, paying accounts, selling things to imaginary customers, banking the proceeds, issuing receipts, and getting over the difficulties of keeping the accountant satisfied with the operations. At last I had become a capitalist.

London did not act only as a information transfer center but we advanced and started sending long documents back home. This included a complete issue of the AC No 121 and two issues of Umsebenzi. I set them up with Ventura including the masthead and pictures (done with a scanner) compressed and encoded them and sent via ML to SA. There they printed Umsebenzi from plates made from the transmitted codes. We also digitised three booklets on secret work and personal safety. We were indeed getting the act together. London also assisted in other matters. I remember been given £50,000.00 in used notes and taking them in a plastic carrier to an international money dealer in Clerkenwell. He was very pleasant and arranged the deal. He naturally asked me my name. The only name that came to mind was Mr. Green after my old boss. We heard that the money had been received all right. This sort of exercise was repeated from time to time with other banks. Then I was sent back to the dealer in Clerkenwell. Fortunately my memory for names did not fail me as it usually did and I told the receptionist that Mr Green had an appointment to bank some money. He immediately recognized Mr. Green.

The number of messages and tasks allotted us increased and a young comrade, Andy Kasrils, joined us. As a nerve center we obtained a good feel of the extent and success of the underground operations. Underground Comrades like Mac Maharaj, Ronnie Kasrils, and others we only knew as aliases, did a great job. When we first got notification that Ronnie had gone underground we were in some difficulty. Should we let his son know? We decided not. Thus we had to ensure that Andy never saw his father mentioned other than by his alias. Some of the messages were really heavy. They spoke of the supply of armaments or of the location of Dead Letter Boxes. They induced immediate re-transmission of the message as if this would somehow commit the message to oblivion. We hinted to each other about them so as to dismiss them from our memories. It was like coming upon people making love. The attraction and the embarrassment fight each other in your conscience. Political issues arose and were discussed between the leaders of the ANC in Lusaka and the leaders of the Trade Unions in the country. We even had a mail service for the exiled wives of comrades who had returned into the underground. At least one such wife got the impression we were the Royal Mail, and

she was royalty. We squirmed and forgave her. There were occasional alarms when we thought we had been rumbled by the Specials but as far as we know we never were.

I must make mention of my continuing trips to Lusaka for NEC meetings because this enabled me to get in touch with and become the firm favorite of the Dutch comrades who kept that end of the communications going. I got to know Mary very well. She had come into the fight for a better world because when she was quite young she felt oppressed as a woman. She was hardworking and suffered the isolation and the keeping of secrets cheerfully. She made our struggle hers without receiving due praise and thanks. Just as the heavens are mostly blackness so she was one of the myriad of unseen who allow the stars to shine.

We had to keep a list of names with their aliases alongside. Then good practice demanded that the aliases be changed so we had another column of aliases. The problem was that some of the comrades forgot theirs, or other comrade's aliases had changed. When from time to time we met one of them Then it became even more complex because they changed the aliases again. We pointed out the anarchy arising and we got back the message that it was being attended to. It never was because events overtook us with the exposure of operation Vula. This was not due to the communications side and we were at least pleased about that. It taught us a number of lessons though. Book codes were all very well but if your operative was caught then all messages previously recorded by the enemy were subject to decoding. We were loose on security especially the storage of past messages on disk in SA where the enemy could get them in raids.

We then instituted a new coding program with 4 levels of security. 1) a book code for political short life unimportant messages. 2) for messages where we had normally used a book code but this time we used short strings of random numbers on disk as the book code. This was then automatically wiped on sending and receipt. Thus there was no possibility of decoding after the event or capture by the enemy. There was no "book". 3) was similar to 2) but with a longer string giving greater security and 4) was like the old disk code with a one to one coding of every character and no algorithm.

Messages by Radio

We had long been keen on and encouraged to get a radio transmission method going. We had done this using our tape coder technique sending the coded messages directly via a 144 MHz FM link and capturing them on the fly. This worked quite well but was too tricky for general release. It was demonstrated but was too complex. Parallel to our efforts the communications comrades had been trying to do the same thing in Lusaka. They had problems far greater than ours. The use of technology to solve particular problems cannot be separated from the technological level of the general environment.

When I was in Ghana I had bought an emission spectrophotometer for the Physical Chemistry laboratory. I had made out the order for all the things I could think were necessary for it's operation. It arrived and was set up but we needed some hydrogen for the burner. Now in the UK this had been a routine requirement like ordering a pint of milk or a loaf of bread. Not so in Ghana. The hydrogen had to be ordered from Britain. There were problems of budgets, of forex, of time, of delivery dates and a whole lot of other difficulties.

So it was for the Lusaka comrades. They had to convince Jackie Modise head of communications, She had to convince the various male dominated committees. But then the problems began. There were no amateur radio shops in Lusaka. Modems, let alone Packet Modems were buried deep in the future as far as Lusaka's society was concerned. Computers were a rarity. Electric power was not available in the outlying regions where the Communications for security reasons had their residence. They had to run off car batteries. They had no technical experts with whom they could discuss the problems. They even had the difficulty of insects making a home in their computers and ants seeking sugar grains once dropped into their keyboard. But most difficult of all they had the problem of bringing the culture of a movement based on law and humanities graduates, labourers and the semi skilled into the technological age.

For us in the UK it was much easier. The Ham Radio fraternity was into the transmission of FSK signals. The Technical College had a department of radio communications but it was staffed by ex-naval and army officers. Although the NATFHE Rep. was a good guy and sympathetic I knew that they would be very reluctant to help the liberation movement. They would also constitute a security risk which was not worth while. Just before I left Bristol in 1987 I asked for help from a comrade in the

ASTMS for assistance. He arranged for a member of their trade union who was sympathetic to come round to the house and demonstrate how it worked. I had been given a Yeasu Transceiver which had been bought by the movement for another project. I had a module which plugged into the Commodore 64 and this comrade hooked them all together and demonstrated how the airwaves were full of the transmission of ASCII characters. There the matter lay until Tim with his innate enthusiasm brought it to the fore again in the early 1990s.

The Ham amateur scene is highly sophisticated and a bit esoteric. They are very jealous of their status and police who use their amateur bands. To get a license one has to sit examinations and learn the Morse code or so we were told. This was not for us so we set the system up and two friends were left with the job of experimentation. I believe they had licenses. In any event the system worked very well. A schedule of random frequencies in the 100 MHz range was arranged so that on any day at a particular time as scheduled a particular frequency would be used. If that frequency was not clear then five minutes later the next scheduled frequency would be used. Then without any voice transmission encoded messages could be exchanged. It worked well. Then we discovered the packet system. With this a receiver could be left on and messages dropped into the memory at any time and decoded at will. The system worked not only from base stations but from handheld portable TX/RX as well. The system was ideal for use in the field.

With so many of these systems it required more than technology. It requires desire, determination and the driving force of need. It is also in the nature of the beast that just when the technology is ready, when the organizational structure is in place, and it is all systems go, the need often disappears.

"To each birth its blood" as Wally Serote wrote, but when the baby is born, the midwife's assistant is redundant.

 [Return to Contents](#)

4 >.....Coda

Time Changes Gear - History Changes Focus

Over the next few years it was all change. Walter, Nelson, and many others were released. The movement was un-banned and a great re-arrangement took place. I was caught up in the whirlpool and my freedom of choice was sorely taxed. Would I find myself in South Africa or in the UK. A job as an education officer for the NUM in SA was on offer but at that time indemnity was not automatic and there was still work to do in the UK. I more or less decided that I would go south, I bought a small lathe, exchanged the large Singer sewing machine for a smaller portable one, put my flat up for sale and was almost into packing. Then when I was in the process of taking the plunge the Vula operation, now called Eugene, decided that it still needed an operative in the UK. The choice was between Tim and I. Tim was young and keen to go home and suffered far less from inertia. I offered to stay in London. Again choices were made but by whom is still a mystery. The London end of Eugene was now in my hands, but it was more like the end of Eugene was in my hands. There was little or nothing to do. The main actors were fast leaving the underground stage without even saying good-bye. The rockets took off into the stratosphere leaving us with the smoke, and a smell of burning sulphur.

Then SACTU decided to hold a "final" NEC in South Africa and I went down on a visit. In all my travels I had used over a dozen different airlines but had last used South African Airways in 1957. I had just got on board and was settling down when a stewardess came up to me and handed me a message from the South African Communist Party. For over forty years the passing of a message to or from the SACP was a criminal offense and here was the official government carrier doing it for us. Going back through passport control in South Africa raised no problems. My sister picked me up at Jan Smuts airport. I met some ancient cousins and a few nieces. Blood may be thicker than water but theirs somehow still contained incompatible "White South African" anti-black-bodies. The only things I recognized in Johannesburg was the topography and the street names. It was over thirty years since I had been "home" and it was no longer home. Then I was mugged.

On the way to the hotel in Hillbrow from Shell House I decided to walk up Hospital Hill. I passed the taxi rank and walked over the railway bridge. I carried a bag over my left shoulder with a book for Reoben Ruff and a few papers from the ANC and SACTU. I had my left hand in my trouser pocket

where I had my wallet. There were lots of people around and on my left there was a barber on the pavement cutting hair. Suddenly two young men coming from behind grabbed me by both hands one on either side. They were well dressed and very polite. The one on my right said, "don't scream". I heard a click and saw a knife pointed at my lower ribs. I got the impression that he did not want me to scream because he did not really want to use the knife because it would be messy. My mind went blank. It was as if an iron curtain had come down on thought. I distinctly remember a blackness. The one on my left said in a quite voice "Give me your wallet". The curtain lifted and I slowly withdrew my wallet from my pocket. The one on my left followed my every movement. He grabbed my wallet and slipped the shoulder bag off my shoulder. I regained sufficient composure to shout, "There is nothing in the bag." Then I saw them disappearing down a side path. I was left standing feeling confused, helpless and alone. The barber and his clients saw it all happening and seemed as stunned as me. For a half minute I just stood. Then I walked on up the hill. There was a fifty Rand note, a credit card and little else in the wallet.

The next morning I got up early and went straight to the Bank to report the loss of the credit card. I walked along the road passed the white and black bodies sleeping in the shop doorways. Three black youths appeared just in front of me. One had an orange jacket with a hood like the boxers train in. They saw me and seemed to murmur amongst themselves. The hooded one then slipped across the road. It seemed to me they were plotting to ambush me. I held back, my nerves were on edge. Would all black youngsters raise the spectre of danger. But I was sure they were hunting me. But I don't want to be hunted I just want to be. They realized, or so I thought, that I would not be an easy touch and walked on. In the bank it seemed that my story was quite normal. This was Hillbrow. For me this was not life. I was too old for this. Me and my Angina could live together much happier in a quieter climate.

Perhaps "Home" is not a place. Perhaps home is an atmosphere, an environment, a sentimental attachment, relations, friends, a myriad of reflections that makes the mind and the body feel comfortable and secure. What are roots? Are they patterns of the collective extended family memory. If they are, my roots reach back in time to eastern Europe and extend in space to encompass half the globe. Perhaps because of this I have no roots, but like some climbing plant I get my nourishment from the air. I did not feel at all comfortable in Johannesburg. I chose the easy option to stay in the UK, near my immediate family and wearing old shoes.

Vula and it's successor Eugene evaporated in the heat of the sun of mass action and the mysterious moonlight of intricate talks. Those of us left in London found ourselves in an oxbow lake, cut off and historical. We became a supplier of finance, a subsidiary and finally a corner of a foreign field. The ANC office needed volunteers and it gave me something to keep me in mischief. I helped Nad with "Press and Information", (q) and generally kept the computers in working order. I helped with the Votes for Freedom campaign in which we collected over a million pounds for the ANC election fund. I also learned that collecting money for a "Charity" is more a business and a science than an art or an emotion. I never liked it much but it was necessary to be successful. Things changed so much that I, a Communist, was given a pass as an observer to the Conservative Party Conference, Brighton 1992. I remembered the lagoon in Ghana and never observed.

The leaders of the liberation struggle have occupied the cold rarefied atmosphere of the mountain peaks. I am much happier in the foot hills and valleys and I cannot see myself in Parliament or Provincial Council. Perhaps I am closer to the sediments in the delta. The peaks are but the sediments of years past pushed into prominence by unseen forces deep beneath the earth's mantle. On our shoulders or on our backs they stand. It depends on how well they do their job.

Voting for the Re-Creation

The voting in April 1994 for South Africa's future involved the exiles and I was given the option of where I would like to act as an ANC observer. I chose Jersey. Why Jersey? Well I had never been there, but why indeed? When I arrived I booked into a small cheap hotel in St. Helier and wandered around until I found the States Building where the voting would be held. I phoned a Stella Perkins, an Anti-Apartheid supporter on the books in London and next morning early, voting got under way. Then I knew why Jersey. The man in charge, appointed by the High Commission in London was a right bastard. He was a vicious anti-trade union exploiter. Clearly he had been active in the sanctions busting era and was working to preserve the smell if not the substance of his outpost of the disappearing apartheid kingdom. At the polling station I found my friend Mervyn as the "unbiased" observer, Stella as the international observer and the pretty Pirret Grobler from the High Commission.

What was so pleasing was that polling station manager was so arrogant, so sure of his own importance and so clearly un-likeable that all of us in the end ganged up against him. Pirret, Mervyn and I, the three South Africans, ended up having a celebratory drink together.

Nearly 200 voted of which I am sure at least two were for the ANC, and the rest for the Nationalists. But we won anyway.

Mendi was the Chief representative of the ANC in London. He is now the High Commissioner of South Africa. Ronnie Press was for a brief period the administrator in his office in London. For those who knew me I am a memory with memories.

In 1955 in *Liberation* I wrote.

"The struggle is not of black against white, but of justice against tyranny, peace and friendship against war and hate. The Freedom Charter against Apartheid. The Congress of Democrats shall inherit the leadership of European South Africans. Although the majority of anti-Nationalists, anti-fascists, may not now, nor in the near future, see their way clear to stand with us, and may, when the final struggle draws close, stand aside in apathy, born of individualism: when freedom is won, when democracy is achieved, we shall inherit the leadership of white South Africans and show them the way mapped out by the Congress movement and the Freedom Charter."

Future History is unpredictable but I didn't do a bad job, either in the prediction business or in moving it forward.

In my lifetime the process of change in South Africa has been from fragmentation to recombination. From the pursuit of individual prejudice to common objectives. The trade unions were divided with the majority, the Africans, mostly excluded. The government represented the Whites and the political opposition was composed of different Congresses representing different 'racial' groups. The different philosophical threads were represented by separate organisations. The Trade Unions, the Communists, the African Nationalists, recognised their differences as much as they felt the common cause. Slowly we progressed. The Congress of the People summoned into its embrace all those who opposed racism. The ANC opened its heart to all humans. The Alliance bound them together. The CODESA talks demonstrated that we were after all one species. The election set the seal on a unitary South Africa. Will the future confirm this trend?. Will the Reconstruction and Development Program be the basis for the Government of National Unity to build a new society which will eliminate the final division, the exploitation of the majority by the minority?.

We spoke of power to the people, never of power to the leaders. SACTU's slogan "Organise or Starve", meant for those who organised, "Organise and Starve". The Congress of the People invited all the people and their organisations, including the Nationalist Party, to draw up the Freedom Charter. Let us not forget our roots. The role of government is not to govern but to ensure the framework which will allow the people to govern.

That is where I came in.

Publications - Science

- 1) Journal of the South African Chemical Institute, 1952, V (1), 31-43, With Murray, K.A.
- 2) Journal of the South African Chemical Institute, 1952, V (1), 45-54, With Murray, K.A.
- 3) Journal of the South African Chemical Institute, 1953, VI (2), 17-21, With Murray, K.A.
- 4) Journal of Applied Chemistry, 1964, 14, 240-244
- 5) T.A.P.P.I. , 1965, 48 (8), 464-466
- 6) J. Appl. Chem. , 1969, 19, 247-251., With Hardcastle D.
- 7) Journal of Chemical Education, 1970.
- 8) Int. Biodetn. Bull., 1976, 12 (1), 27-30.
- 9) The Chemical Electron, Longmans, 1969
- 10) Law , Computer Science, and Artificial Intelligence, Editors, Narayanan

Ajit &
Bennun M. Ablex, 1991, 62-72

Publications - Politics

- a) Liberation Dec.15,1955
- b)New Age Oct, 17, 1957
June 14, 1956
- c)Textile Unity Oct, 1958
- d)Fighting Talk 13 (8), 1959.
- e)Ghanaian Times April 23, 1964
- f)Marxism Today July 1969
- g)Marxism Today April 1975
- h)Marxism Today Sept 1976
- i)in Workers Unity 1978-1982
- j)African Communist 47. 1971
52, 1973
57, 1974
72, 1978
81, 1980 (Labour)
103, 1985 (Dr. Reed)
102, 1990 (Dr. Reed)
112, 1988 (Dr. Reed)
- k)Sechaba Aug, 1979
Dec, 1980
May, 1984
May, 1989
- l)SACTU Basebetsi Mekoting 1976
- m)SACTU The South African Worker's Struggle,1980
- n)SACTU Two underground organising pamphlets, 1980's:
How to Organise
What is a Trade Union,
- o)U.N Center Against Apartheid, April 1980
- p)I.C.T.U Third World Committee, 13/14 April 1984
- q)ANC London Info Disk (Maps, graphs, statements. (On Floppy Disk) 1992,
- r)Forum Marxism, Science and Philosophy, 4. 1994

 [Return to Contents](#)