

D.P. Ja.

J.F. Mm.

D.P. I don't know. On another level I'm still very concerned about the middle class influence of TIC members and especially TIC members and also alot of NIC members and their middle class conservative influence they have, for example, at public meetings they would interpret the Freedom Charter in a very conservative manner right. They wouldn't talk about nationalization of industry etc. They would leave out all the radical clauses and that sort of concerns me. You know, it makes me a bit worried. 'Cause they - people are very - are really - ja - I didn't have definite ideas. I wasn't - I mustn't over emphasize my neutrality, you know.

TIC people are super rich - really super super rich people - some of them - a lot of them. And I - and that worries me you know - in - for the future. And I I see people as well - of course there are some good people like **Billy Nair** and **R.D. Naidoo** and all other - activists that that really make up NIC. Of course they they - we have the same ideas because a lot of these come from **AZASO** and we have discussed these things.

J.F. Which Naidoo - you mean R. D. is the one that is ANC here.

D.P. R., R. - the white haired guy.

J.F. Old with a beard?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. R. Ja.

D.P. Ja. He gave a great speech at the UDF rally.

J.F. Skinny little guy?

D.P. Ja. Small guy.

J.F. JA.

D.P. I don't remember his name now but he was - he - I like his speech. But anyway - so so - Natal is different to Transvaal right OK. But that worries me. The the the - really such is middle class - like rich people having a decisive say in many areas of policy of UDF - being very influential - which has changed now. You see, it changed since the Transvaal stay away - people exclude the UDF, the leadership from the Transvaal stay away and they delegated to the shop stewards and the working class activists right. Because UDF people were removed from it and those - that leadership was mainly long-term Indians and you know - really doctors and and lawyers who who were a bit relieved.

So so I see on the one hand the the impact they make on the media - and they're articulate and their respectful voices. But think of the long-term perspective you know. I I get a bit worried by how much influence they'll have - how much of a conservative influence they'll have on policy and and direction and holding back the militancy of the masses, you know. Ja. Specially in Transvaal. So so so those are my sort of mixed (?..?) of TIC and NIC.



- J.F. So, let me just (...?..). You finished your UNISA degree in Cape Town?
- D.P. Mm.
- J.F. When was this?
- D.P. '84.
- J.F. And that was in politics?
- D.P. African politics and sociology - ja.
- J.F. And then what did you do after that? What did you do after that?
- D.P. Well - then all the time I was working for SALDRU<sup>(?)</sup> doing labour research. ?
- J.F. Ah ah.
- D.P. I was doing that part time in '83 - then full time '84, '85.
- J.F. After you'd finished your degree?
- D.P. While I was doing my degree and after I'd finished it. Ja. And that was also a very strong influence on me - just dealing with labour issues - and just seeing things from a working class perspective - worker issues - work positions - which I never really appreciated before, you know. Ja. My consciousness took a further step forward as a result of that. And also at (...?..) all these great debates - every single tendency was there and so we discussed all these burning issues of the day. Ja. And I felt I was doing something really tangible and worthwhile, you know, wage studies and working conditions and all that. It was good.
- J.F. And then what after that?
- D.P. And of course I was all the time involved in the UDF. I was the coordinator of the area committee and the representative to the General Council. So I was fully involved with all the debates in the Western Cape and UDF.
- J.F. Which area committee?
- D.P. The Woodstock Area Committee and Cape Town region.
- J.F. Which - what kind of area is Woodstock?
- D.P. It was sort of right next to the centre of town.
- J.F. So it was a white area?
- D.P. It was a sort of mixture. White and coloured area - but our branch was mainly not coloureds. But it was the only non-racial media area committee.
- J.F. Really? You found it?
- D.P. Ja.
- J.F. Did it work well in practice?



- D.P. Ja, it worked OK. There were there were problems but it worked OK. We - at a certain level it was a fairly conservative community as well - fairly complacent I'd say. Unless - if you got hold of them - it was a bit difficult organizing them - it wasn't a mixed structure.
- J.F. But I hear there were actually mixed areas in Cape Town.
- D.P. Well - that's one of the grey areas.
- J.F. As as ...
- D.P. (?a.), Woodstock, ja - (?a.), Woodstock, (?b.) - no, not (?b.) - but (?a.), Woodstock - a grey area. ?
- J.F. Does the - and then after that? Did you then go abroad?
- D.P. After that I was offered this great job in East London. Because you see all the time I was in Cape Town I was either going back home or something came up and I didn't go back home. And finally - well - the tension was too great at (... ) for various reasons - work and people. Well, anyway - and so I was offered this job with - you know . Now Thackett in East London the - was quite involved with the unions - with SA and General Workers Union and Food and Canning - doing work for them. Labour education you know - not so much as the other branches which are more high school education and a bit more inclined towards CAL so - especially Cape Town an - anyway - CAL, you know, CAL. So anyway, I decided about this because you had some really good people working there. I don't know if you know Shepard Mati?
- J.F. Mm.
- D.P. His uncle was working there. I just heard he was detained recently. Anyway - so I was really excited about working with all these people in East London - and the scholarship came. And I had to decide between the two. Agonise - did I agonise. I decided to come here.
- J.F. And that was what what - scholarship to do what?
- D.P. To do MA in Southern African studies for one year. And there was - ja - was a possibility of me going back and coming on with that job.
- J.F. So you could go back to East London?
- D.P. Oh then they did - not now.
- J.F. Pardon?
- D.P. Then they did - or this one person did.
- J.F. Oh. Ah ah.
- D.P. But I don't know now if if - I'm sure now they're detained.
- J.F. And it's to do the MA where?
- D.P. York.



J.F. At York?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. So when did you come over here?

D.P. Well I left in - end of August. Travelled around Europe. Came here in October.

J.F. And you'll go back when?

D.P. Either this August, I mean this October or next year.

J.F. But you'll be finishing off in October?

D.P. Ja. I mean this October I'll finish the MA, next year I'll finish the MPhil.

J.F. So you could stay longer?

D.P. Ja. To do the MPhil. It's just a matter of getting more money. Getting another scholarship.

J.F. So what's your goal? I mean, you could be headed for an academic career.

D.P. I hope not. In fact I'm sure not. I I'm not suited for that. Do you think I'm really an academic? No. I've got too much fire in me. I'm not dispassionate enough. No, I want to carry on labour research. I want to either work for a trade union you know to - like, for example, there's the possibilities for working for the NUM which I heard - 'cause I meet people. And if I had to leave now that might be a realistic option. Or or or work for like the (...?) of the labour association(?) units split off after some internal class struggle I might work for them you know. But but that sort of work I'd like to continue.

J.F. OK.

D.P. Ja.

J.F. I've got a few loose ends to clear up. Could you maybe conclude for me by - I have a lot of other small things. If you could tell me how you see non-racialism now and how you feel that your views having changed. I mean, you said you feel uneasy with the four nations and maybe that had a time but never the hot topic of discussion in South Africa today with all that's going on. I mean you know what are your views about non-racialism? Is it actually a pressing issue?

D.P. I think it's a crucial issue - absolutely vital. But - ja - in terms of our perspective of future society you know, that you've got a bold non-racialism. That's the first crucial thing - that you've got a bold non-racial - non-racialism through the course of struggle. Now I I'm becoming more realistic in terms of how we do that, right - as I - just - reflect from this distance.



D.P. That if at all possible I get the strong feeling that we should not form separate organisations, separate racial organisations, because all the effect it has on African people right now we come up with and say you form your separate racial organisations. I think it does have a negative effect on on on people. And and it used to be just to show - ja - I I - the thing in exile - this position has come across very clearly to people right - ANC is now a non-racial political body right. That had a big impact on a lot of people. Even before it was - I always felt that you know. It was a non-racial body as opposed to BC and as opposed to all the racial structures in SADCC countries right. And even though people are coming together in the UDF - and some people are arguing for separate organisations in the UDF - I still think in the long-term it's going to have a negative effect because you still have separate geographical branches which can resolve its practical problems.

? I do see I do see the practical problems - organizing Indian people and coloured people differently to the African people. But OK so that whole thing of building a (...?) I see as absolutely crucial - I can't see anything - ja - beyond working class leadership - anything more crucial. I see this actually really really developing within the trade union movement, right. I think that's where we're going to get true non-racilaism - within the trade union movement - because that is where all races as it were come together - at the work place right. Nowhere else really - any really grass roots sense do people come together - they may come together at a superficial level at mass meetings - but at the work place - and you can see this in lots of unions right.

And I've been reading about Indian workers in Natal unions developing a political conscience and coming out on strike with African workers - and that being very encouraging.

J.F. Where where did you read about - when was that?

D.P. This guy Kassim(?), Fuat Kassim, writing in W or Labour Bulletin - no, Labour Bulletin, I think. The latest one.

J.F. The one the one that was in Durban?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. Ja. So that's historically ...?

D.P. Very recent survey has been done - over the last couple of years.

J.F. Ah ah.

D.P. This is why I see in a work place situation - ja - anyway that's another whole thing. This is the crucial importance of work place organisation.

J.F. Now how does every thing you you've talked about with non-racialism relative to working class leadership as a key issue in your mind?

D.P. I - ja - it's integrally linked because socialism for me is is humane society bringing together all people equally without oppression. So that that broad general perspective has got to have had strong non-racial impact.



- D.P. Of course in order to get socialism you've got to have this working class leadership and as I say this working class leadership or the working class has the greatest potential of developing non-racialism than any other class right. So so it's in those two senses they are interlinked you know. And - but generally - but just that working class leadership, socialism is linked to the broader question of internationalism, right, which goes beyond boundaries, national boundaries and and links up with workers throughout the world you know so it cannot be anything but non-racial. And that's always been my perspective actually you know, just maybe very non-racial.
- J.F. OK. Because of the fact that this is going to come out a long time from now, I'm not going to get into kind of current debates which maybe we can discuss that just now. So let me just complete this by asking you a few more things to finish up this. I'm saying I'd like to pursue it but not on the tape because it will be overtaken by events I think.
- D.P. Mm.
- J.F. Some of the things about - your thesis is on what?
- D.P. Trade unions. Well - trade unions and working class politics in South Africa during the current period.
- J.F. During the current period?
- D.P. Well - since '79.
- J.F. Ah ah. OK. And do you feel that it's important to answer an ultra-left critique - is it that sort of very ...?
- D.P. Yes. I'm doing two things. Ja - I - ja I'm answering - I'm trying to respond to an ultra-left critique for example [redacted] coming up with a whole formulate thing of working class party - (...?) after that - and flirting with (...?) and other organisations. So I want to look at that much more closely and and and and to say that there are you know - working class politics has been developed in a very different fashion as to what is envisaged - envisaging. But at the same time posing two people within our ranks you know - I've never seen myself outside the Congress movement although some people may have accused me otherwise that haven't listened to me carefully.

But as I say, I'm very concerned with all things working class leaderships so I'm trying to address this whole question of populism and how we as a this united front which I see is essential you know - a popular front which I see as essential - How is it going to deepen working class leadership? What are the dangers we are going to face? And what lessons we can learn from Zimbabwe and other struggles? And how the trade union movement with all its faults, right, and the dangers of economism - so I'm looking at two poles: populism and economism right - and and how there needs to be a very very sophisticated linkage between the two. Ja - so so I'm addressing myself to the problems of the community organisations - to the problems of the unions.



- J.F. OK. When you were growing up or even before you went to prison, what what ANC - well known Indian ANC people had you heard of? I mean, if you thought of a person in the struggle who happened to be Indian, who would you have thought of?
- D.P. When I was growing up?
- J.F. Ja. Well, maybe you can take it pre-politicization and post.
- D.P. I don't think I knew of anybody.
- J.F. So there wasn't any role model for you?
- D.P. In East London we didn't have anybody. I can't remember anybody. I remember once we received a letter from Yusuf Dadoo addressing my father. When was that? '78, '77, end of '77 - right, end of '77, Christmas time, a Christmas greeting. I think that could have been end of '77 - could have been the first time I heard of Yusuf Dadoo. Could have been. Unless I'd heard about him before but it didn't really sink in. I identified with him come to think of it - I did - '77 - I was still in a sort of BC phase then. (...?) I thought this was great you know - getting this revolutionary message as a Christmas greeting - or as a Diwali greeting.
- J.F. How did he know your dad?
- D.P. I think subsequently this cousin of mine said that he'd arranged that it be sent to us. I think he said so.
- J.F. I see. So - but your father had had contact with him at some stage?
- D.P. I don't think so. Anyway he wasn't alive then.
- J.F. Mm.
- D.P. '77.
- J.F. So it just kind of arrived ..;?
- D.P. Ja.
- J.F. As if it was some ANC thing - through the post? I mean, it was ...?
- D.P. Just like an innocent letter, posted with an ANC thing inside. I don't know to how many people it was sent in East London but ... Oh no, Mother did tell me later on - when did she tell me this? - recently in fact. That she burnt a lot of stuff that was sent to my father. That's true. Because my father's niece, the one I told you - said she was secretary of the Communist League in East London - her husband was prominent in the Communist Party, very prominent - there was a huge AN C funeral for him when he died in '81. Which I didn't know about until I came here. So that connection was there, you know and they were sending stuff to my father and my mother burnt it all after he died I think. She said she was very scared when she saw all this stuff.



- D.P. Actually it's one thing about my mother that is very very interesting you know - which I think you should know. You know, on the one hand, as a mother, an Indian mother, right, not particularly particularly motivated, she was concerned about me as a son being (..?..) so she was continually going on about this. Like when I came out of prison: I want you to get a good job. Carry on with my studies and not get involved with politics, right. But at the same time, it was very very striking this - I was touched by it in fact - I didn't say it to her - at the same time - Grass Roots. When I came out of prison the first thing she did was, all these copies of Grass Roots she kept for me right, so obviously one side of her was saying: That's a bloody good thing you're doing. Carry on. The other side was saying: Please don't get involved. You're causing so much worry. See what I mean - amazing.
- J.F. Mm. So when would you ever come to know somebody like Mac Maharaj(?)? Before prison or ...?
- D.P. Mac Maharaj - where did I first .... I think with this distant cousin of mine - ja.
- J.F. OK. What about the view of Communism you held? I mean you talked about anti-Communism and the various phases but you know - how - what about - I mean communism is still a lot further than rejecting anti-Communism. I mean, how did you grow up with a feeling that this was something not to be - that was problematic or negative and ... How would that affect you?
- D.P. What? Communism?
- J.F. Ja. Or maybe specifically...
- D.P. Ja. Well. In the papers - like Donald Woods and all those people would be anti-Communist, right. I suppose that was somewhere in my consciousness. And reading A.Y. Rand.
- J.F. I mean did you get past that and how?
- D.P. And then when I I had this impression of mine - that no one was really pro-Communist. I really - I I heard about the student groups and the left-wing talk. I said: Fine. Great. But it's not pro-Communist - it's something else. Maybe it's Social Democratic. I was sort of into social democracy thing, you know. And when I met Guy too I thought: Fine. Great. What he's saying. Class analysis was fine but it's social democratic you see. It couldn't have been Communist because Communism was a spent force and that was my attitude - until I started reading more and seeing what people's views were. And that was when went to university. Really when I met - the turning point was actually when I met my - this cousin.
- J.F. Mm.
- D.P. And he spoke in favourable terms about Communism.



- J.F. Did that shock you?
- D.P. It didn't actually, it made me think: Hang on, hang on. Maybe there's something more to it than what I thought. It didn't shock me - no - it just - ja - it didn't shock me actually.
- J.F. OK. Were they - were all the arrests in Grahamstown - did you get the feeling that all the police - that what bothered them was non-racialism or was it just Communism/ANC? I mean did BC people get harrassed as much as you? I mean, was there anything to do with the police being threatened by non-racialism?
- D.P. No, no. I remember very clearly then in '80 - they told me BC BC wasn't a threat any more - they're after you ANC people. Something something to that effect. The BC people weren't detained - the prominent spokespersons who who weren't really that involved anyhow. They weren't actually very strong at Rhodes - they were just loud mouths around you know. Ja - ja - it didn't come across to me - that's true - in my interrogation with Craig Williamson as well.
- J.F. He interrogate you did he?
- D.P. He came to speak to me and it did come across right that this whole thing of of - ja - communism. Anti-communism being more important than the sort of thing of BC. They could accommodate BC but they couldn't accommodate you Communists - I mean this sort of thing. Ja - that - ja - I remember being hit with that very very forcefully. Although the the underlings were much less sophisticated security policemen in East London - couldn't distinguish between ANC and BC. It was really - they had to unravel it - I think we - education and all that. They were really confronted with this for the first time. They found it altogether - everything was an ANC front - everything.
- J.F. What - the more sophisticated ones - they were anti-communist but what about non-racialism?
- D.P. I don't know. They they they said: Fine. We don't we don't deny black political rights. Race relations was a good thing - that sort of thing.
- J.F. The fact that you and Guy - black and white - working together - I mean, it seems to me that that's a great threat.
- D.P. For the underlings, ja, but not for Craig Williamson.
- J.F. If it was in in a non - if it was in a race relations context would it be OK?
- D.P. Ja, ja. I think - ja - ja - for Craig Williamson his biggest problem was Communism. But then he's really much more sophisticated than the average lot.
- J.F. Ja. OK. When you were growing up did you have a sense of Gandhi? Was that ever part of your - of what your parents taught you?



D.P. Gandhi was a big part, ja. My mother always talked approvingly of Gandhi - and my father did. And Gandhi's books were around - Nehru - that that was something that was around. I never really got into it. But I think before I went to prison Gandhi's diaries were around and I read that. And while I was in prison I read this thing about Gandhi well by Gandhi's disciple - I I became a bit more interested. But - ja - more subtle than overt you know.

J.F. And did your parents ever talk about the 1949 riots?

D.P. My mother did - yes - yes - a lot. They told us about how it happened and how the the army and police encouraged the Zulus to attack the Indians and how my mother's mother shielded a lot of people, Africans, under the house. Yes, I know those stories, very good stories. And also my mother was involved in this - protests in the '40s against the - what was it? - Ghetto Bill, or something like that.

J.F. But was '49 ever brought up to say why are you getting involved with Africans - they'll just turn on you and kill you?

D.P. No, not really. Actually, it wasn't, it was more the other way round - how the whites were using people against each other.

J.F. Oh really. OK.

D.P. Perhaps it was a mixture of both. Really - everything I say is full of qualifications.

J.F. OK. (...?) Ja. There's lots of other things. Devan is spelt with an A?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. DEVAN PILLAY. Ja. OK. More tapes ...

End of tape.