

*Durban,
2/12/84.*

*Interview
with
Aubrey Kesteven*

P: You went in on March 21, 1960
Yes that's right I went in on March 21, 1960
P: Where were you arrested?
At the Orlando police station.
P: You were with Prof then?
Yes I was
P: How old were you then?
I was sixteen
P: Sixteen? How long had you been in PAC?
How long had I been at that stage? About a year.
P: Were you the youngest one there that day?
Yes I was.

~~P: When had you turned sixteen?
I had just turned sixteen, I was sixteen and a few months old.
P: Where did you live in Soweto?
In Mofolo. I was actually Prof's neighbour if I may say so. He lived about 200 or 300m away from me.
P: Can you remember the number of his house was it 464, I was trying to remember.
I don't know.
P: So you went in, did you go with him, did you walk with him? You met at Tshabalala's store, is that right?
Yes that's right. Our rendezvous was at Tshabalala's store around six, half past five in the morning. We started gathering there, of course we hadn't slept overnight.
P: Were you given a time to be at Tshabalala store?
Yes we had a time, a prearranged time and I think it was between half past five and six.
P: Okay you got to Tshabalala's store and the sun was just coming up then.
Yes.
P: Okay, and you waited for people?
Yes we waited for people.
P: How many were there of you altogether eventually?
(MORE)~~

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Yes.
P: Okay, and you waited for people?
Yes we waited for people.
P: How many were there of you altogether eventually?
(MORE)

Eventually there could well have been about 100 of us at Mofolo, at Tshabalala. But then people were joining the crowd and some were disengaging.

P: When you set off how many were you?

We were about a hundred.

P: Were you disappointed at the small number?

Yes in a way, but then some of us who hadn't been seized we had been in other places, we had seen bigger crowds.

P: You hadn't been sleeping during the night, what had you been doing?

Going around and generally organising.

P: So you walked then to the Orlando police station, that I think is 2,8 Miles. I've measured it.

Yes

P: And it took you let's see you started walking at about 6:30. Veronica came past at about half past six on her way to work.

Yes

P: And you got to the Orlando police station at about 7:30, I suppose?

It was a slow walk. You must remember we went through Dube, collected a few people, then Dube is a station and there were quite a lot of people, for a while we stopped and some joined us.

P: You stopped at Dube station?

Yes we stopped for a while, some people joined us

P: Can you remember how long it might have been?

A short while.

P: Just waiting for other people.

Yes waiting for other people. Some people joined us, some changed their minds and decided to go to work.

P: Really? So at Tshabalala store some joined you and some left?

Yes, yes.

P: And on the way to Dube? Some joined some left.

Yes, all the way

P: All along the way some people joined you and some left? That's an interesting point.

Yes

P: Do you remember seeing me that day? Because I was there, I was at Prof's house early in the morning and then I touched you. I saw you people near the police station.

I don't remember seeing you. I don't remember who I saw there it was so many years ago. I remember (some of the guys who came from the Mall, although I wouldn't remember their names who came from the then, was 12 World.

P: yes it was World.

It's a pity my wife lost some of the photo's of the occasion.

P: Really, I have a photograph of Prof walking in the front.

There is one, somebody tells me they have one where I appear.

P: Really, I must ask Magubane, he must have other pictures, next time I see him.

P: All right you got to Orlando police station, roughly what time?

We would have got there at about 7:30/8.

P: If I remember correctly the police station then was a single storeyed corrugated iron building, is that right?

Yes that's right.

P: The walls and the roof were corrugated iron and outside was a mesh fence.

Yes.

P: I think barbed wire on the top, is that right?

Yes, yes.

(MORE)

P: And you went inside and there was a sort of sloping grass embankment? And you sat over there?

That's right, we sat over there.

P: You went into the police station, what happened when you went inside? Did you go into the charge office yourself?

Yes I did, there was a little bit of confusion I must say at the police station, I think deliberately caused by the police. Because when we came there we appointed on the spot spokesmen to announce that we had come to surrender ourselves. Prof was among those people who went into the police station first. Then the police said everyone's got to come in on his own to say that he was surrendering himself. We did that and they still wouldn't take us and we had to wait, and we waited and we waited. We were joined incidentally by other people who had come from Orlando.

P: So altogether there were about 250 people? ^{? 160?}

Yes an average-sized crowd. Basically what the police were doing, they were stalling.

P: They didn't know what to do.

Yes, they didn't know what to do.

P: Did you have a pass already?

I had just taken a pass, I don't know if I left it at home. It might have ended in a bonfire or something. Incidentally when we passed through Duke some people were burning passes.

P: Really?

Yes and Prof didn't want those...

P: Some people were burning their passes? I didn't know that. Are you sure it happened that week, not the following week because the following week Luthull burnt his pass, that was a week later.

Yes.

P: Are you sure about that? Because Saturday a week later Luthull burnt his pass.

But I seem to be certain that some people were burning passes.

P: At the side of the road?

At the side of the road.

P: It's possible, I'm just pushing you hard. So then you just sat outside?

We sat outside. At that stage I was Orlando high school, I was doing Metric 1, what you call Standard Nine.

P: Was Willie Kambure the principal?

That's right. And I remember well that some students came from Orlando high also with a view to surrender themselves. But they had first gone to school. I hadn't gone to school that morning. They had gone to school apparently with the view to collecting some guys and to bring them up to the police station.

P: And did they come.

They did come and I remember that they were actually turned away. The principal was phoned and he was told that there were students there and he should come and fetch them.

P: The police phoned him?

Yes. Now I am not too sure whether Kambure came himself to fetch them or somebody was sent from school but I know they were turned away.

P: How come you stayed?

Well I hadn't gone there as a student at such.

P: Were you the only scholar there, the only student?

No I wasn't, there were quite a few.

P: Did they come in school uniform?

(MORE)

Some of them who came from school were but I wasn't in school uniform, I wasn't in school uniform because I was straight from home and some of the guys who came from Orlando and other branches. You see I was a branch member, so I came in as a branch member, a Mofolo branch member.

P: What do you think you were going to achieve that day, what did you think you were going to do?

On that day?

P: On that day.

A difficult question in retrospect. Basically as I understood the plan, and identified with it, was that it would bring the country to a halt, that we would have large numbers of people surrendering themselves to prisons and that the effect of this would be first to clog the legal machinery, secondly, perhaps in an indirect way, to bring industry to a halt.

P: How long did you think you would go in for? Did you have any idea in your head?

Indefinitely. Actually what we foresaw was numbers upon numbers, say after say, continuing to do this.

P: So you were sitting outside, the sun was shining, it was a very nice autumn day, and then finally what happened?

Finally a number of events happened even before we were ultimately arrested at about 10 or 11. Mid-morning or perhaps noon we got news of Sharpeville.

P: Sorry, can I break in, you got news of shooting at Bofalong, at about 10 or 12 o'clock. You got news of shooting at Bofalong because I was there because I went to say goodbye to Prof and I told him about it, and then I went to Bofalong because Sharpeville only happened at about 1 o'clock, 1.30.

Yes.

P: What were you talking about while you were sitting there? Was there any special subject of discussion? Sex, politics, rugby, the weather?

Politics naturally.

P: What sort of things were you talking about, can you remember?

We were just motivating ourselves.

P: Was Prof moving about amongst you or was he just sitting quietly?

Actually Prof wasn't doing much talking. He was not doing much moving most of the time he was just standing. Was Lebaliw there?

P: I'm not sure.

Yes he was there. He was the man who was doing the talking.

P: Were the police keeping guard over you?

Yes the police were keeping watch over us. There were a few police.

P: There wasn't any tension at that stage?

I would say by about 10 am clock their position had relaxed. The whole position had eased.

P: Then you heard the news about Sharpeville.

Then we got the news about Sharpeville.

P: What did you actually hear, can you remember?

First of all we heard that the response in other parts of the country had been tremendous. We kept on getting reports trickling in about Sharpeville, Evaton, Cape Town, which was all very encouraging. Then we got this news that there had been a shooting at Sharpeville, that the police had opened fire on the people. We didn't then know the details. All we heard is that the police had opened fire on the people, because the people had come to surrender themselves and the police had tried to say that they should go home and people had refused. And of course this naturally agitated us quite a lot but Prof calmed everybody down.

(MORE)

P: Did someone bring you the message of what had happened or what? Can you remember how word actually got to you?

I don't remember.

P: So then the police finally came and arrested you?

Finally they came and arrested us in mid-afternoon, and we were taken to the cells behind at Orlando police station and we were locked up there. We spent the night at Orlando.

P: Did you wear long trousers or shorts?

I? I was in the same garb (jeans) as today.

P: So you were locked up at Orlando?

We were locked up at Orlando yes.

P: You weren't given something to eat that first night were you? I think it was too late or something.

Yes we weren't given anything to eat that night, but then we had been eating throughout the day, people had been bringing us food parcels.

P: Passing them over the fence?

Yes sandwiches, passing them over the fence.

P: What, sandwiches and fruit and things like that.

Yes sandwiches and fruit. Quite a lot of people were doing that.

P: So that night you were at Orlando? And then the next day?

Then the next day in the morning we were carted away straight to court to the native commissioners' court. Not the magistrates' court, the commissioners' court in Braamfontein, I mean in Fortsburg. And there we found other guys who came from other areas from George Goch, from Moroka and so on and so forth.

P: How did you greet each other? Very excitedly?

Yes very excitedly. We saluted each other with izwe Lethu (Africa), and the mood was very good and we were all quite determined.

P: And you saw the newspapers that morning?

Yes and we saw the newspapers that morning, but then Prof and the rest of the leadership did not come with us to the commissioners. They were taken to the magistrates. Because we appeared on separate charges.

P: You appeared for not having a pass?

No. No you know, ironically, I don't know or remember the exact charge, but we all did not know what they were going to charge us with. First we heard that they were going to charge us with violation then after a while they changed that and they were now going to charge us in terms of one of those acts on the documents and reference books. They didn't seem to know themselves exactly what to do, so really there was confusion in the legal machinery. They had not anticipated this. We ourselves did not know for how long we were going, what we would be charged for. As far as we were concerned we could have gone on indefinitely. We had the slogan, No bail, no fine, no defence, so it did not matter to us how long we went to prison for. That in fact was the objective, not so? Eventually, I don't remember what time it was, but we had waited for a long time at the court, eventually we were carted onto court, I think all of us, or were we in batches, I don't now remember if we were in batches or if we all went in at the same time. And we were given a very summary trial.

P: You were sentenced that day?

Yes.

P: What did you get?

Three years.

P: Three years?

Yes.

P: In the commissioners' court?

Yes we all got three years.

(MORE)

P: Really?

Yes we all got three years. In any event there was nothing to discuss in the court because our attitude was clear, there was no question of pleading guilty or not.

P: You just took it, that's all?

Yes, yes.

P: So you didn't give evidence, nothing?

Nothing.

P: You sure it was the commissioners' court?

Yes, yes.

P: So then you landed up in prison? Which prison were you taken to?

We were taken to the Fort.

P: Was Prof there at that stage, because his case went on for several months.

His case went on for - not several months.

P: Until at least about May.

Yes until about May, but he did come to the Fort, he was an awaiting trial prisoner at the Fort. We were serving at the Fort. Because when we went to the Fort that day we went as convicted prisoners.

P: It was as quick as that? Are you sure about that?

Yes I am quite about certain about that. Same day.

P: Your age didn't come into it?

No my age didn't come into it.

P: Did they ask your age?

No, nobody asked anybody anything.

P: You weren't asked your age?

No they didn't ask my age.

P: Because if they had known your age you probably would not have got three years.

That's right.

P: Did you look sixteen or did you look older? You didn't have a beard did you?

No, I have always been a very small guy, I might even have looked younger than sixteen.

P: Were there others also of your age there?

Yes there were guys of my age, Thloak.

P: From the Sovietan, the journalist?

Yes he was also there he was also my age, he might have been a year older than me, in fact he was a year older than me, we were the two youngest.

P: So then you were already at the Fort, how long were you there?

Well I will tell you that they took us in this big van, locked us up and we drove up to the Fort and when we got there the whole situation had changed, now they were very hostile.

P: Up to now had the police been pleasant to you, had there been any rough stuff?

Actually they had been rather not nice, but correct.

P: When the news of Sharpeville came through was there a change in attitude?

Not really, they never got rough. At the commissioners' court they were a bit rough, a lot of people had come there -- parents, friends, etc -- to come and

witness what was happening or to come and hear the fate of their children, husbands and so on. So the police were driving them around, I remember my father sustained an injury to his stomach, shoved away by the cops.

P: Really, what was your father, what work did he do?

My father? Oh labouring class.

P: Did he approve of what you did?

My Dad?

(MORE)

- P: Did he go along with you? Well my Dad was always political but he didn't think that our methods were correct.
- P: But your parents stood with you? Yes he did absolutely, once I had chosen my line he would never desert me. My mother also. That's their attitude even now, they don't agree with me, but once I've chosen what I want to do they back me to the hilt.
- P: So you say at the Fort this now changed?
- Yes, and then they were very hostile.
- P: The wardens?
- Yes the wardens. As we entered into the Fort you know those vans back up and they were extremely hostile.
- P: What, shouting?
- Yes, shouting. You know four, four, two, two. You have to experience these things to know what it means. Four, four means stand in fours.
- P: Oh and two two means stand in twos.
- Yes, and they have a lovely way of confusing you. They say four four, and just as you try to stand in fours they say two two.
- P: And were they hitting you with batons, with strips?
- Yes with batons and hands and clouting and kicking.
- P: Was it whites and black, or just whites?
- Whites.
- P: So this was your introduction to prison?
- Yes this was our introduction to prison. Then they took us in and gave us a change of clothing, took our clothes gave us shorts, we went into shorts.
- P: That's the shorts three quarter lengths?
- Yes.
- P: So you were at the Fort. Prof also was at the Fort but awaiting trial?
- Yes he was awaiting trial.
- P: When he was sentenced were you still at the Fort? Or did he join you at another prison?
- I am not now certain because we didn't stay long at the Fort.
- P: But you met up again at another prison?
- Yes we did, I think he joined us in Pretoria.
- P: Which part of Pretoria was that?
- It was Pretoria Central. What they call ~~New~~ ~~Local~~ ~~Local~~.
- P: That's the old prison, the big one at the side?
- The one right along the Pretoria-Johannesburg main road.
- P: Yes, you see there's Pretoria Local, that's where the political prisoners were kept, you were at Pretoria maximum?
- No we were at Pretoria Local on the road, right on the Johannesburg Pretoria main road, they call it ~~New~~ ~~Local~~.
- P: I didn't know that, Pretoria Central is where the gallows are.
- No we were not there, we were at Local.
- P: And Prof joined you there?
- Yes.
- P: And how long were you at local?
- We were at local right into the winter and maybe up to about June or so.
- P: You saw him at local, what was he wearing?
- He was wearing shorts.
- P: What were the trousers made of?
- Sort of mole-skin.
- P: A belt, no you wouldn't have a belt.
- No they didn't give us a belt, just buttoned up. A shirt.
- P: What sort of shirt, a khaki shirt?
- (MORE)

Yes.

P: A cloth shirt?

A cloth shirt. Yes.

P: Shoes? Socks?

No shoes, no socks.

P: Sandals?

No sandals.

P: Not in?

No. We only got our first sandals when we got to Stoneyard.

P: So Pretoria no sandals, just bare feet?

Just bare feet.

P: Jerseys?

No, no jerseys.

P: Winter-time?

Yes winter-time. No jerseys.

P: Heads were shaved?

Heads were shaved right at No 4, that was one of our introductions. As we went in, after they had given us a change of clothing, they carted us into some big room and some guys just came in -- not with clippers -- with blades.

P: Did they cut your heads?

Yes we were cut all over we looked like...

P: You mean your heads were bleeding?

Yes, yes. Indeed.

P: Other prisoners did it?

Yes.

P: Black prisoners?

Yes black prisoners.

P: Just with an ordinary blade, with a razor or with an open blade?

Yes with an open blade.

P: Are you serious, just cutting like that?

Yes, yes they put a little bit of water, a little bit of soap.

P: And just with a blade?

Yes just with a blade. And you get cut all over.

P: Pretoria, where was Prof. Were you together in the same cell or the same section or what?

We were in communal cells. But I wasn't in the same cell as him.

P: But all in the same section so did you see him regularly?

Yes I saw him regularly.

P: All in the same type of cells?

Yes in the same wing of the prison.

P: How many of you in the same cell approximately?

We were about twenty.

P: What did you sleep on?

We slept on mats.

P: Sisal?

Yes sisal mats, they might have been about half an inch thick when they were new, but these were very, very old and they were probably about...

P: One mat?

One mat, old stinking blankets.

P: How many blankets, it was winter time?

I don't remember how many blankets we had but we were so many in the cell, we were overcrowded, we used to share.

P: The cell was packed?

Yes our cells were packed.

(MORE)

P: Can you remember the size of the cell?

No I can't but it was packed.

P: This is stone floors in the cell?

Yes cement floors. Only furniture is the bucket, the overnight pail. And then these mats and blankets which are rolled up in the special prisoner roll --

concertina.

P: And if it wasn't folded carefully?

We get punished.

P: You got two meals?

Yes two meals.

P: That means you didn't eat for 24 hours?

Yes that's right. Two meals, three meals. We got that regular y.

P: Really?

Yes for singing at night, the warden would just come and stand at the door, peep through the key-hole and say "drie maalye nima pore", and tomorrow you don't eat, that's summary trial.

P: Just like that. This used to happen regularly?

Yes this used to happen regularly.

P: You mean if there was singing or some noise?

Yes singing or some noise, he comes in and says "diy julie still" and if we don't hiv still he says "drie maalye" and tomorrow the whole cell doesn't eat.

P: Were you guys getting this more than the ordinary handlets?

Well we definitely were a tougher bunch, and they had it in for us, yes they definitely had it in for us.

P: Did the wardens say things to you?

Yes.

P: What sort of things would they say to you?

Those guys, a guy would just come and stand at the door, not open it, you know the Judas hole, stand there and just issue a litany of swear words, you ma se poes, you ma se brokke, you pa se pieleis.

P: Were these the white wardens.

Yes, the white wardens, and stand there and recite a series of invectives and of course we would reply. Then he would say "drie maalye".

P: What sort of things would you say back to him?

We would say you ma se poes.

P: It sounds a nice interracial friendly atmosphere.

Then we would end up with drie maalye.

P: What about the black wardens? What were they doing?

We saw very little of the black wardens. In fact we got the distinct impression that they were being kept away from us. So also with prisoners. We only saw prisoners when they brought our food.

P: They brought your food?

Yes.

P: So you were most of the day in the cell then?

All day.

P: You were not allowed out for exercise?

No nothing at all.

P: You were kept in the cell twenty four hours a day?

Yes.

P: What about emptying your buckets?

Yes in the morning when we go to empty our buckets down the passage at the toilet. Then we would come back and they would lock us up again.

P: What was it like when you were emptying the buckets, what was going on then?

(MORE)

Well they would open up cell by cell. Open up one cell and as we run up the passage we greet the other fellows who are in the other cells.

Q: Were they being let out at the same time?

No not at the same time, cell by cell.

Q: How many of you would empty the buckets?

Just a couple of us, but then we would try to get every opportunity to get out of the cell.

Q: Were you allowed to go to the toilet at the same time? To use the lavatories there? Were you allowed to do that?

Well no, not really. When we came to Pretoria, I think for the first three or four days we stayed without going to the toilet, without going to the bathroom. Then one morning, very early at about 5 o'clock, they let us all out and they took us down to the showers. It was bitterly cold and they said "was". That was our first shower in about a week -- cold water, cold cold water. It was cold water throughout. We never had hot water, we only had hot water on Robben Island towards the end. So as I say they used to let us out to empty the buckets and we would have a little ablutions, come back into the cell and that was the opportunity we had of seeing other guys from the other cells, because we could then peep through the Judas hole, we could talk to them, I mean the wardens couldn't very well prevent us from doing this, although we were not supposed to do it.

Q: Let me just go back to see if this is right. You started off on March 21,

you then were sentenced the next day, you then went to the Fort.

We went to the Fort for the first time.

Q: How long were you kept at the Fort approximately?

About two weeks.

Q: That means you got to Pretoria...

.... Middle of April beginning of April.

Q: It's not that all cold yet, normally.

Yes but Pretoria local can be very cold. It's a very cold prison.

Q: But not as bad as it got later on?

Yes, yes.

Q: What were you having for food?

Some slop in the morning that goes for soft porridge with half a teaspoon of brown sugar floating on top, something that goes for coffee, coffee, no bread.

Q: Black coffee?

Black coffee, yes. Midday meal, mielies.

Q: Cooked?

Yes cooked mielies, pit mielies, several worms in there.

Q: That would be a regular thing?

Yes regular. Then the afternoon meal.

Q: Anything else apart from the mielies?

Nothing else.

Q: No meat?

No, no then in the evenings we would get the same slop that we get in the morning sometimes with a piece of ear, pork ear, floating on top about three times a week.

Q: Vegetables?

Vegetables I am not too certain. I shouldn't confuse two periods because in the latter period...

Q: Milk, fruit?

No. No we didn't get vegetables then.

Q: When did they start letting you have exercise in Pretoria?

(MORE)

We never went for exercises.

P: Never?

Never even.

P: You mean you were in your cells all day long?

Yes all day long.

P: For how long were you in Pretoria.

We must have left Pretoria in May.

P: So you were there about a month or so.

Yes about a month or six weeks. In fact we stayed in Pretoria, now I remember, for between six and eight weeks because we were undergoing, now I remember it well, we were undergoing what they call observation. This is for all prisoners sentenced to a long term of imprisonment and this observation lasts at least six weeks.

P: Did you have anything to read at all?

Nothing.

P: The Bible?

Nothing.

P: Not even the Bible?

Nothing.

P: The Bible in Afrikaans?

Nothing.

P: Nothing?

Absolutely nothing.

P: So you just sat all day?

Yes we just sat all day.

P: What time was lights out?

Lights out, about sevenish.

P: And open up again about five/six in the morning?

About five/six in the morning.

P: Otherwise all day long you just sat in the cell.

Yes just sat in the cell.

P: When they brought you the food, the bandit brought you food, did they serve it inside the cell?

Oh no, no, no. In prison they don't serve food like that. They come carting the food on a makeshift tray, with some number of dishes on it, and they stand at the door and they shove it on the cement floor.

P: They spin it on the cement floor?

Yes and it goes this way and you catch it.

P: A tin plate?

Yes a tin plate it makes music.

P: Spinning across the floor?

Yes.

P: And then you'd grab it. And if you missed?

If you missed, it's tough luck.

P: And then at the end who would wash it?

And then they would come and fetch them. You wouldn't wash them.

P: So how did you wash in the morning in those six/eight weeks in Pretoria, were you let out in the morning after those few days?

We actually only had one shower, that one shower I was telling you about at five o'clock in the morning. And thereafter they used to let us out in the morning just to go and put a little bit of water on your face in the toilet block.

P: You never again had a shower.

No, never.

(MORE)

- P: None of you?
No, never again.
- P: And you could just go and wash your face.
Yes.
- P: Brushing teeth?
No never brush your teeth, what with?
- P: No toothbrush?
No.
- P: So you were never allowed to have another shower?
No.
- P: That one shower that you had was there any soap or towel?
Yes, if I remember well they gave us some dirty clothe and blue soap.
- P: A small piece of blue soap?
A small piece.
- P: You kept that?
Yes we kept that.
- P: Is that what you washed with in the morning but you could only wash your face and your hands? Didn't you have time to wash more or what?
No, The point about it is that they would open us up at about say 7.30. There were about twenty guys in a cell and as they open you up he says Kom, Kom, Kom, Kom, Kom, Kom, Kom, Kom, Kom, and you get there, you empty your oven (the pail), catch a little wash and he says Kom, and you got to be back in your cell.
- P: And if you didn't?
Well you get clouted.
- P: Was he clouting you, just this one warden?
No all the wardens, not just one warden, there would be a string of wardeners...
- P: Standing there shouting?
Yes, a string of wardens.
- P: All shouting Kom, Kom?
Yes.
- P: And Kaffir?
Yes, of course, naturally.
- P: They were just saying kom kaffir?
Yes, Kom Kaffir, Kom Kaffir, Kom banclat kom
- P: But kaffir was being used?
Yes.
- P: And they were standing there hitting as you went?
Yes, yes.
- P: With hands?
With hands, largely with hands.
- P: Or with...?
With little batons.
- P: Whips? No?
No they didn't then carry whips, not that I remember.
- P: Just with ordinary batons.
Yes those old wooden batons
- P: The short ones?
Yes the short ones.
- P: Not enough to injure you just to ...
Well, I mean it could injure you.
- P: Did they crack you with those things, were you hit?
Oh yes I was several times.
- P: Where about?

(MORE)

All over, all over, I can't now remember, I mean one took it in their stride, it wasn't as if it was something one didn't expect.

P: I found that talking to warders over the years, if you said did you assault people they would say no.

Of course, of course.

P: But when you said well would you hit them with a hand or with a stick, they said yes of course.

That they don't regard as an assault.

P: It's just part of prison.

Yes and I suppose as a black prisoner too, perhaps because we tend to expect these things, you also come to regard it as part of being in prison, so that I wouldn't recall that I was hit here or there. But I do remember that on one day one of our guys objected, I don't remember well what he was being clouted for, and he fought back, he actually fought back I will remember the guy's name, it was Mqaju, his first name was Elias or something, and another guy Hlongwane. And these guys fought and there was a mighty battle, because then the warders went and reinforced.

P: In Pretoria?

In Pretoria yes, and these guys were taken away, they were taken forcibly out of the cell, in fact that one cell almost went into complete rebellion.

P: What was Hlongwane's first name or initials can you remember?

I don't. And the whole cell went into rebellion because these guys were being beaten up, and the guys decided to fight back, and they fought back, and the warders went to reinforce and they wanted to take this Hlongwane and Mqaju out of the cell, and the rest of the cell inmates realised that if they took these guys out they were going to injure them, so they prevented the wardens from coming in. But ultimately they managed to take these guys out. I now think there were three who were taken out of that cell.

P: Is this in Pretoria, not Stofberg?

Yes Pretoria.

P: wasn't there trouble at Stofberg.

Yes there was trouble at Stofberg but this was Pretoria.

P: I see, because Prof never told me about this.

These guys were taken out, and taken to some secluded cells and they were given a thorough working.

P: Did they tell you this?

Yes they told us this, and in any case we could overhear them, there was nothing we could do because we were in the cells, all we could do was give them moral support shouting.

P: A small touch, the bucket in the corner, what did you have as toilet paper?

I don't remember if we had toilet paper in Pretoria, Pretoria was real bad, I don't remember that we had toilet paper.

P: The food was awful also?

The food was awful, everything was terrible, it was cold and as I say the blankets were not sufficient, they were dirty, they were torn. We didn't have any number of blankets allocated to us, this was a communal cell and these were rolled up in a corner, so what we did was that we used to share. We laid the mats on the floor altogether covering it up and then we would lay the blankets on top to cover as much space as possible and then we would share the blankets that we put on top of us, say between two or three people, but their length wise.

P: It wasn't what was going on among the bandiete, when they used to fight over blankets, there was a spirit here among you people, an optimistic spirit.

That's right, in fact we did that throughout even at Stofberg. That's the

(MORE)

way we used to sleep, it was the only way one could obtain sufficient warmth.

P: So you did that all the time?

Yes by sharing the blankets.

P: For observation were they coming to talk to you guys?

No, nobody. Observation simply meant what I am telling you.

P: So no one came?

No.

P: So they weren't giving you aptitude tests to decide what you would make a good doctor and that sort of thing?

I suppose the only real observation was made by these guys who would come and swear and to observe what our response would be.

P: All right so that was Pretoria. And then from Pretoria, and we are now talking about mid May?

Yes, mid May.

P: Then they took you?

Then they took us to Stoneyard, Stoneyard is in Boksburg.

P: Not Blue Sky?

Not Blue Sky. The other prison.

P: What is the proper official name for it? How did they take you there? In a truck?

They took us in trucks.

P: What sort of truck?

It was these big kwela-kwelas.

P: With the wire mesh?

With the wire mesh yes.

P: Was Prof with you, were there several truck loads?

Yes we were quite a few truck loads.

P: What sort of escort? Do you remember.

We had a mighty escort although one couldn't see the full extent of it. But we had traffic cops, we had police, we had vans, we had motorcycles.

P: There was a whole fleet, was there?

Yes it was a whole fleet, we had a whole fleet of trucks and a whole fleet of escorting vehicles.

P: So you were all taken?

We were all taken.

P: There must have been several hundred of you at that stage?

Yes.

P: So you got taken to Boksburg, that's about an hour's drive I suppose?

Yes.

P: Stoneyard?

Stoneyard yes, Stoneyard is the prison facing the lake.

P: That is different from Blue Sky?

Yes it's different from Blue Sky.

P: Were you at Blue Sky later on?

No we never went there.

P: Because people keep talking to me about Blue Skies.

I don't know unless they might have gone to Blue Sky at some other stage, but Stoneyard.

P: BB spoke to me about Blue Sky because he said Prof was there.

It was definitely Stoneyard. Stoneyard prison is in the centre of Boksburg in town, Blue Sky is away from town.

P: So you went to Stoneyard near the town?

In the centre. Yes overlooking the Boksburg lake.

P: You were all kept there together?

(MORE)

Yes.

P: Communal cells again?

Yes.

P: Bigger, smaller?

Bigger cells.

P: Were there more of you in a cell or the same?

More of us.

P: Still crowded or better living conditions?

Better living conditions.

P: Not as crowded?

Not as crowded as in Pretoria.

P: How many of you were in the cell, can you remember?

Maybe twenty five.

P: Was Prof with you in the cell or another cell?

Intermittently, because it looked to me as if they had prepared this prison for us. There were very few ordinary prisoners there, we had a whole wing to ourselves, we had an exercise yard, in a quadrangle with the cells lining the quadrangle on the periphery, and we could spend time out of the cells.

P: So what was your routine now?

Now we still were opened up at about 5/1/2 past 5.

P: As early as that?

Yes it might have been a little later, I'm not now certain, then we would go and empty our overnight pails, make up our blankets, we could then go and take showers.

P: You were allowed showers?

Yes

P: Cold water?

Cold water.

P: Blue soap?

Blue soap. A small piece of cloth.

P: How big was the cloth? About 18" x two feet?

No, you say 18", no about a foot by 3'

P: Grey, just a tired piece of cloth?

Yes just a tired piece of cloth. Then we got sandals.

P: They gave you sandals, those rubber ones?

Yes.

P: They just fitted onto your foot.

Yes.

P: Not a buckle, you just slipped them on, like beach thongs?

That's right.

P: Did you keep the same clothes or did they give you new clothes?

They took the clothes we came with from Pretoria, but they gave us a similar set of clothes.

P: When did they take them away? When we got to Boksburg.

P: And they gave you new clothes?

Yes.

P: New or second hand clothes?

No second hand clothes, but relatively cleaner.

P: Your former ones hadn't been cleaned?

No, no they were dirty, they were old and stinking.

P: They were old and stinking when you got them?

Yes.

P: All of you?

(MORE)

Yes, yes all of us.

P: And now at Boksburg they were better?

They were cleaner.

P: Were they torn?

They were torn, but they were cleaner.

P: And the blankets they gave you now were they better?

A little better, not much better, we didn't get clean, absolutely clean blankets, we didn't get absolutely good sized mattresses, we still got very thin used sized mats but they were a cut above Pretoria's.

P: You still had the same system in the cell, sharing blankets etc.

That's right.

P: So you came out in the morning.

We came out in the morning.

P: And you were showering every single day?

We were allowed to shower.

P: Seven days a week?

Yes.

P: Sundays also?

I doubt if we were allowed on Sundays, because Sundays and Saturdays are very short days in prison. And the wardens want to get off as quickly as possible.

P: And in winter time what was it like? Did you have a shower every day or some days you didn't have a shower? Did you avoid it in other words because of the cold?

Well, some of us younger ones used to shower daily.

P: But you didn't have to? That's the point.

No we didn't have to.

P: What was it like in mid winter having a shower at seven in the morning?

Quite cold, quite cold.

P: Then you would have breakfast in the cell?

Then we would have breakfast in the cell.

P: The same system of throwing the plates to you?

The same system, but this time we got our food in the courtyard, the prisoners would bring it up to the courtyard.

P: So you got your food in the courtyard?

Yes we got our food in the courtyard, we'd go to the cell.

P: You would queue up in the courtyard?

Yes.

P: Were the warders there?

The warders are there, slightly different but yes, some still there, still quite hostile.

P: Hitting still?

Not as frequently as in Pretoria.

P: But still all part of the same system?

Yes.

P: But not as much?

Yes.

P: Did you have your own spoon?

In Boksburg we got spoons.

P: In Pretoria how did you eat in Pretoria?

There were a few spoons and they used to go around the fellows.

P: You had your own spoons, some, but not enough so you shared your spoons?

Yes, yes.

P: How did you wash them afterwards?

(MORE)

They were actually not our spoons, they were prison spoons, but the point is that at the time they delivered the food they didn't use sufficient spoons.

Q: So they would just throw the spoons among you.

Yes.

Q: In Boksburg you had your own spoons?

Yes.

Q: You would keep it in your pocket?

Yes.

Q: You would keep it in your top (left hand shirt pocket)?

Yes.

Q: Is it one pocket or two pockets?

One pocket.

Q: Pockets on the trousers?

No.

Q: Just the one pocket there and you'd keep it there?

Yes. Or keep it at your waist. Because you keep your ticket in your pocket, your most important thing. Then we would go for inspection.

Q: Now for breakfast was it better?

No still the same.

Q: Also soft porridge?

Soft porridge, lot of worts, speck of brown sugar.

Q: And a cup of that funny sort of tasting coffee.

Yes.

Q: Then after breakfast?

Then we would go for inspection.

Q: Line up in the courtyard or what?

Now the inspection sometimes used to take the form of us lining up in the courtyard but sometimes they would come to the cells.

Q: The officer commanding?

Yes, sometimes when one of the bigger officers came then they would line us up outside but mostly when it was local officers they would come into the cell and we would stand around the cell, and he comes in and says any complaints and before you can say anything he closes the door and he's gone.

Q: Did you ever report sick?

Oh yes, there are two parades, the one is the sick parade and the other one is for inspection, well any of the two can come first sometimes the guys from the hospital come first and they ask from cell to cell if anybody is sick.

Q: These are the bandiers?

With the warden, one or two hospital wardens, and you say yes I'm sick, and they say what you got, headache? They take a mixture and give it to you, and maybe some tablets, and then the next guy comes, and he says what have you got, and he says I've got stomach ache, they take the same mixture, they put it in a tumbler, give the same tablets, the other guy comes and says my eyes are painful and they give him the same mixture.

Q: Did anyone ever see a doctor? Were you ever taken to a doctor?

At Boksburg we were seen by a doctor, as part of the admission routine.

Q: Did you have that at Pretoria also, did a doctor check you?

No we were not seen by any doctor.

Q: How long was that admission procedure with the doctor at Boksburg?

Two seconds, just enough for him to stand in front of you, the inspector is not at the hospital. The doctor comes around we all stand in a line, we all take off our shirts and he walks across, he might put a stethoscope on one of you and say phufumula, which means breath.

Q: He didn't do it to everybody?

(MORE)

No he didn't do it to everybody, and there were about three hundred of us and it would probably take about 30 minutes.

P: Yes I've heard about this.

And I don't know whether I am confusing this with another incident but there was an incident where we were actually examined by a fellow who had his stethoscope hanging from his neck, the ear pieces not inside his ears and he was saying phefumula, really.

~~P: Was it Bokburg or one of the other prisons?~~

incident

ID: LIFEY DU: ED: DA: PUB:RDM
 EY: MBENJ11/12/73 12:14:42 VER:00 HD: LA: WT: →
 PO: MBENJ11/12/73 12:14:42 DU: MBENJ1-RDM ST: RDM MSQ:

Q: Was it Boksburg or one of the other prisons?

A: One of the other prisons, I'm not so sure where, and a similar incident occurred on Robben Island, very recently.

Q: Boksburg, what did you do for the rest of the day? Or had a first finish lunch and supper what you had there.

A: Lunch we had the same thing as we had in Pretoria, boiled macis. And supper we had soft porridge sometimes with a piece of pork, about three times a week with a piece of pork.

Q: Vegetables? A piece of cabbage or something like that? ✓

A: No, I remember vegetables only at Stoffberg.

Q: What did you do for the rest of the day?

A: For the rest of the day we would sit in the cell, that's all we did.

Q: No work? ✓

A: No work.

Q: Were you allowed out for exercise?

A: Yes in Boksburg we were allowed out, not for exercise as such but like at the time of breakfast we would be allowed out for a longer period of time than we had in Pretoria so we might spend 45 minutes outside of the cells, just walking around, similarly at lunch time. And we were also able to switch cells, you could spend your lunch time in another cell.

Q: What about if it was raining where did you have your meals? ✓

A: Inside our cells.

Q: Where would you have your meals served up if it was raining? ✓

A: Still outside, in the rain.

Q: What time would you get locked in? ✓

A: At about 7 we would be opened up in the morning for about an hour.

Q: You were locked up at about 9 o'clock. Lights out?

A: About seven.

Q: Anything to read at this stage?

A: No.

Q: Nothing? ✓

A: No.

Q: No Bible nothing? ✓

A: No nothing, of course being good prisoners, we always had some material coming in.

Q: There were black wardens there? ✓

A: Yes.

Q: Am I correct in saying the moment there was a black warden, smuggling was possible? ✓

A: We normally got our material from prisoners, who would probably get it from the wardens.

Q: What did they give you -- newspapers? Bitch and pieces of newspapers? ✓

A: Yes.

Q: Extra food? ✓

A: Mainly newspapers.

Q: You didn't have books, and you weren't doing any work? ✓

A: No, no books, no work.

Q: So you just sat there? ✓

A: Yes.

Q: And you were now allowed visits? ✓

A: Yes we were, our families were allowed, I'm not sure about that because of (MORE)

were allowed letters, but I didn't get a visit at Bokabung, and I'm sure it wasn't for lack of trying on my family's part.

P: For how long were you in Bokabung, at Stonevond.

Quite a while, I don't remember how long.

P: Months?

Yes.

P: What was Prof's position at this time? Was he still the undisputed leader?

He was always the undisputed leader.

P: When you saw him in the morning what would you say to him, good morning?

Izwe lethu.

P: Always Izwe lethu?

Yes.

P: And tremendous respect for him still?

Tremendous respect for him. Prof had that personality, he generated respect.

P: Were your heads shaved regularly at that stage?

Yes.

P: And cut you again?

Yes.

P: You didn't have jerseys in winter?

No.

P: It must have been terribly cold.

Yes it was.

P: But Prof was there all the time?

Prof was there all the time.

P: Moving around at all?

He was moving around. It was a very close association, a very free spirit among all the people there, even the kind of respect that Prof got it was certainly not mixed with fear or anything.

P: There must have been times when you were very depressed? Or wasn't there.

Never.

P: Did you ever see anybody there getting worried, upset, depressed, or anything?

Never, we were in the best of moods at all times.

P: You never thought that everything had failed?

No, Never.

P: In the whole of Orlando you had about 250 people coming, you had a lot of people at Sharpeville, you had people at Evaton you had people in Sofaleng you had people in Cape Town. After that, nothing?

Yes, quite.

P: Didn't you look at all of this and say wow, we failed? We did not have the people with us didn't anyone ever say that?

There might have been a little of that later, much later when we were in Stofberg.

P: But at this stage?

No at this stage we were in great spirit. And we thought that we had been doing tremendously. We had got the international reaction, which was a hell of a boost, we had forced the government into a state of emergency, the passes had been suspended for a while, something unheard of. We counted all these as our victories. But I suppose among the leadership at that stage, there would have been analysis already.

P: Was there a lot of political discussion?

Yes a lot.

P: Had you got to the stage of people preparing lectures?

(MORE)

Yes.

P: You were doing that in Boksburg already?

Yes.

P: As I understand it someone would be given the job of preparing a lecture to be given tomorrow night or tomorrow afternoon?

Yes, tomorrow afternoon.

P: And he would sit in the cell and give the lecture?

Yes then there would be a discussion.

P: Did you ever prepare any lectures?

Yes I spoke on a number of things.

P: What sort of things?

I wouldn't now remember but I spoke on a number of occasions.

P: Can you remember any of the subjects that were discussed?

There was a lot of talk on ideology.

P: That period ended and from there you went to?

Stofberg.

P: Again all of you together?

All of us together.

P: The same thing with trucks, Kwela Kwela, and etotto?

Yes.

P: Did they explain why they moved you?

No.

P: Stofberg was a new prison?

Yes, it had just been changed from a school a seminary.

P: What was it like when you got there? Better, worse?

We were now for the first time outside town in a farm prison.

P: Stofberg is near Vereeniging isn't it?

Sasolburg. In a way it was awe inspiring to get out of town and to go out into the real rural areas. You don't have that production of familiar sites around you. And we got to this huge prison, double fences and warden's walking with huge big rifles and dogs.

P: It hadn't been like that at Boksburg?

Well we didn't see them regularly, we were placed inside. They would be up in the watch towers. But at Stofberg the whole arrangement was much more conspicuous, it looked really like camp, big huge impersonal buildings.

P: Do you remember how high the buildings were?

I think it was double story with a high fence. We were given a very large wing there all to ourselves, which was separate from the rest of the prison, and there was the administration block which was some fifty metres away from our wing, then there was the kitchen block in a different direction, about 100 metres away, then there was the rest of the prison which was also several hundred metres away, but we had this one wing of ours almost self contained, except that we got our food from the kitchen.

P: Communal cells again?

Yes.

P: How many of you in them this time?

The cells were bigger now, for the first time we got new mats, new blankets and proper spoons.

P: You say proper spoons, what had been wrong with them in Boksburg?

The kind of spoons we used to use in Boksburg and Pretoria were cut in half, they had short little handles, they were ordinary spoons but the handles were sawn off.

P: Why's that?

The reason as we got it from other prisoners is that they were being used

(MORE)

as weapons.

P: Is that the only utensil you had?

Yes. Toilet paper we definitely had as well. Boksburg I can't remember.

P: Your cells were they not as crowded now?

No.

P: Still 25 to 28 in a cell?

Yes.

P: So you had the mats?

Yes mats, blankets we had three blankets to a man.

P: And you still had the same clothing?

Brand new clothing. Shirts, trousers, jerseys.

P: You now had jerseys for the first time?

Yes we now got blue jerseys with a red stripe.

P: And the sandals?

It might even have been shoes now.

P: You think it was? Shoes with laces, socks?

Yes laces and socks.

P: This is 1960/1961,8

It is not helpful to talk to a guy who goes to prison so often. I tend to confuse periods.

P: I don't think black prisoners had socks and shoes in 1960. I think they only came in about 1968. It's possible but I don't know.

Check this out with one of the guys. But I think we had shoes, but still the three quarter trousers.

P: The food, any better now?

No, the food was the same.

P: What did you do every day?

We worked.

P: Where did you work?

We worked on the construction of a dam.

P: So what would your routine be now?

Now we wake up in the morning, get our breakfast, wash.

P: Where would you have breakfast?

Outside, we had a largish yard.

P: Were there bandlets also serving this.

No, they used to bring the food from the kitchen right up to our gate, push trolley, bring it in, stop it at the gate, then we would each take our plate of food, then we would sit in the yard and eat.

P: And if it was raining what did you do?

Just routine.

P: Just sit in the rain?

Yes. And the same sort of food.

P: After breakfast what would you do?

Then we would stand for sick parade, the oppie from the clinic would come and ask what complaint you have, and the quality of the medicine was just the same as it had been in Boksburg, you would get the same mixture, and then we would file in four fours or two twos and off to work with a number of wardens escorting us.

P: How far would you go to?

We went about 100 metres away.

P: Inside the grounds?

Yes, you see the wing in which we stayed was fenced in; double row fence, very high, wire mesh fences with I think some barbed wire at the top, watch towers at the corners and wardens patrolling with rifles and dogs along the

(MORE)

corridor formed by the two fences. Then there was a gate opening out of that wing into a large area which was also part of this wing, or let me put it this way: the wing was divided into two. One was where the prison was and the second part was where we were constructing this dam, and this was divided by a fence. The portion where the building was was slightly smaller, about 50m x 40m, that included our yard and our building. And then there would be another fence and the rest of the yard, which was very big, would be where we worked constructing a dam.

P: So you would leave in the morning carrying your tools?

Yes.

P: What sort of tools did you have?

Picks, shovels and wheel barrows.

P: How many of you were there at this stage, the same number, the same people?

Yes.

P: Some people I think got maybe only six months at that stage.

None of them were with us, there were a lot of people I think in other prisons who got smaller sentences.

P: Were they brought from other areas now to you?

No we were still the original group, the group that was with Prof from Pretoria.

P: So there was still a couple of hundred of you?

Yes.

P: Prof was among you now working at the dam?

Yes.

P: Did any of you do special work, did you use only a pick or a shovel or did you do it all?

All of us.

P: In other words would you have used only a pick or did you do everything?

Everything.

P: So you were digging a hole for a dam?

Yes we were constructing a dam, a large dam.

P: Moving earth?

Yes, first we constructed the railway for coca pans, we constructed a line and we used to dig and put the earth in the coca pans and we used to push the coca pans up to some point to build a retaining wall.

P: And Prof was doing all this?

Yes.

P: Did you have lunch out there?

Yes.

P: Any assaults on the scene?

Yes, we had some serious assaults in Stoffberg.

P: Now there was one episode that Prof told me about, it was that one day on the other side of one of those wire fences, is that right?

Yes.

P: There was some trouble and the wardens started hitting some prisoners and Prof intervened.

Yes, I don't remember exactly how it started, but I think there had been an allegation that one of the fellows had made an attempt on the life of one of the wardens, and the wardens reinforced and there was a general assault, what they call a carry on in prison.

P: So it was a general assault by the wardens?

Yes where the wardens came in and they are armed and all the prisoners are locked in the yard and they came in with pick axes.

Yes.

(MORE)

P: And what did Prof do, can you remember?

Prof definitely intervened and the fellow who was alleged to have begun it all was then taken and given a trial, a prison trial, and he was sentenced to spare diet.

P: Who was that?

Yes I remember him, his name was Mxolisi, I don't remember his surname, was it Vavona.

P: Did you see what Prof did on that occasion.

Not exactly, there was pandemonium, because there was this general assault.

P: It was inside a sort of enclosure, a wire fence?

Yes.

P: And the warders came in there with pickaxes and batons and sticks and started pounding the prisoners.

P: Now as I can recall it Prof was on the other side of the fence.

Yes.

P: But didn't he come inbetween the warders? He intervened, he actually stopped them.

Yes he did.

P: Was he in the enclosure or was he outside?

He would have come into the enclosure.

P: Could he have got in, wouldn't the gates have been closed?

I doubt if the gates were closed then.

P: I have a memory of him going in between the two and telling the warders to get back.

Yes.

P: He went in and he put himself between the different forces and the warders backed off.

Yes.

P: You say there were other episodes of violence there?

Yes.

P: Such as what?

Especially the work side.

P: What sort of thing would happen?

A warder would decide that a particular prisoner was not working fast enough, not exerting himself as he should and he would beat him with a handle with a stick.

P: Did anyone ever complain? Or was this just part of the course.

We did complain but complaints never went anywhere, because in the morning they would come again for the regular complaints parade.

~~END~~



- ~~to come again for the regular complaints pa adev~~
- P: So this time the clothing was better, the blankets were better, the food was the same.
Yes but the work was horrible.
- P: But the work was hard?
Yes it was damn hard.
- P: Did you get paid for that work?
No.
- P: You weren't given a shilling a day?
No, nothing. It was hard labour.
- P: How long were you at Stofberg?
I was at Stofberg until I left prison.
(MORE)

P: Right through to the last year?

Yes but I didn't serve three years that's why I didn't go with the fellows to Witbank.

F: So what happened to you then?

A number of us, our parents came together and an appeal was lodged, and the sentence was reduced to 18 months with an option of a fine.

P: Now how did you feel about that?

That is one of the things which caused a little bit of commotion among the forces, up till Stofberg there had been no trouble whatsoever but when parents wives etc started exerting pressure that people should be released this was discussed among us, and some people felt that this was correct and some felt that it was not correct.

P: Why did some people feel that it was correct?

Some people felt that the point had been made, that it is time for reorganisation, that being in prison for that length of period was not now benefiting the struggle, and that the movement needs to get itself again on a good footing outside.

F: Was it argued over a lot then?

Yes, it was, big debates.

P: Can you remember Prof's attitude on this?

Prof's attitude really was that we should ultimately decide what we want to do.

P: Were you all in the same cell or did you move around?

We worked together and there was a lot of mixing at this stage.

P: Where would the talking go on?

The talking would go on at work, it would go on in the cells every night.

P: All the time, not so much a formal debate?

No.

P: Like in Bokburg could you move from cell to cell?

Yes.

P: Did Prof move around talking to people?

Yes he would, but you must understand that the initiative had been taken outside.

P: The reason I am asking this is that there are different versions of this, ZS says that everyone had a terrible shock because no one thought you would get three years. They thought you would get a year, 18 months, there was a shock about this, that's why the idea was accepted of going on appeal.

Yes.

P: You must remember Prof went on appeal.

Yes.

P: What I am interested in is whether his image wasn't damaged because of this, I mean you had gone in with the slogan of no bail, no defence, no fine, and there the leader actually goes and lodges an appeal.

The debate which went on was a pleasant debate, it never got acrimonious and this was spoken over a longish period of time. The suggestions came from outside, up till that stage we had not considered anything of that nature, I mean us inside, but people outside...

P: How long after were those appeals got going, can you remember?

I think about six months.

P: But no one thought less of Prof.

No, and ultimately it was agreed by all that we should try to get out of prison if we can.

P: So you served 18 months and you left Stofberg and he was still there?

I actually didn't serve 18 months, there was an option of a fine.

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P: But he was still at Stoffberg?

Yes.

P: Do you know when he left Stoffberg?

He left sometime in 1961 and then went to Witbank where he served out the rest of his time.

P: Who was with him there? Anyone from Johannesburg?

Yes.

P: Do you think S might know?

Joe will know.

P: Anyone else?

P: What were the warders like towards you at this time?

Very hostile.

P: They saw you as political people?

Yes as political prisoners and as people who needed to be thoroughly disciplined. That was the attitude of the warders and their superiors, and especially of their commanding officers; they were quite clear on that.

P: In which way were they clear.

For instance the commanding officers were the ones who came to take complaints and requests and they would never accept a complaint against a warder.

P: You were still wearing that same sort of clothing?

We now had jerseys.

P: At the end of your day when you finished your work?

When we finished our work we would take our tools with us, fill up in four fours and march towards where we lived. Then we would come to the fence that separates the working yard from the living quarters and there was a little shed there, just a canopy, and we would go in one by one into the canopy and we would undress completely and we would do the fausa.

P: Every day?

Every day, five days a week.

P: White warders?

Yes there were no black warders. There were black warders in the prison; we could see them from afar. But we were always with white warders.

P: So you would then do the fausa up with the warden kneeling on the ground?

No, you undress and you give them your clothes one by one, he searched them one by one and throws them down, then you bend over and he looks.

P: Were you doing the actual dance or just bending over?

You just bend over.

P: You weren't jumping in the air with your legs outstretched and so on?

No.

P: I thought that the fausa meant that you actually had to jump in the air and dance.

Yes that is its actual form.

P: So what you would do is that you would bend over and he would look at your rectum.

Yes.

P: And did he ever do a physical examination?

Not that I remember.

P: What were they looking for, drugs, sharp objects?

They were looking for weapons.

P: So everyone would do this?

Everybody.

P: Then you would pick up your clothes?

Yes then you would pick up your clothes, you would dress up and then you

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would go on.

P: What time of the day was this?

Four o'clock.

P: And then did you go and wash?

Yes and have our supper.

P: How would you wash, would you shower again or what?

Again my memory fails me there, I'm not too sure how we washed in the evenings.

P: Did you have a shower in the mornings at Bsofberg?

Yes -- no -- I don't think we had a shower. I think we just washed in the mornings and then I think we had a shower on Saturdays once a week.

P: Saturdays you didn't work?

No.

P: Did you get extra food because you were working?

No still the same.

P: Same quantity?

Yes.

P: And there were worms in the food?

Yes always, it's part of the menu.

P: Any books allowed at this stage?

No.

P: Newspapers?

Yes we got bits and pieces from other prisoners, we were not supposed to be in touch with other prisoners but like all good prisoners we were in touch.

P: There were no bibles given to you nothing?

No.

P: Visits, you were getting visits from family now?

Yes, we were allowed letters once in 6 months and also visitors I think once in 6 months because we were D prisoners at that stage.

P: Now all the time the PAC guys treated Prof with tremendous respect, what about other prisoners, bandiete?

They treated him with absolute respect.

P: They knew who he was?

Yes.

P: Did they say anything to him when they saw him, did they do anything?

If they got a chance they would, they would say izwe lethu or Afrika.

P: Was he in touch with outside during this time, do you think?

He was.

P: How was he keeping in touch, through visitors?

No, not through visitors but likely through prisoners.

P: You mean prisoners who were coming and going?

Yes, and prisoners who a ways have the means of being in touch with the outside world.

P: ZB told me that in Boksburg he was in a different section than Prof, but Prof would send him a message telling him to report sick and he would then go at the clinic and they would then see each other there.

You will have to check with another source because I don't remember.

Unless IK'm mixed up I think Prof was with us throughout.

P: Wasn't ZB in a different section? He says he was kept in a different section, Prof wasn't on his own but he says his group was in a different section, your memory is that you were all together?

Yes, I remember Potlako at Boksburg. He might remember the old man

Nyoose was there, I remember Madzunya was there and I remember Prof was there. Incidentally the black wardens also showed a great deal of respect for Prof.

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For all of us.

P: Do you have any regrets about that time?

Who me? Certainly not.

P: You must have still been at Stolberg when Fogo broke into the door, do you know it as an officially sanctioned PAC thing or how did you view it?

We wouldn't have known because we were in prison, people were organizing outside and things were happening.

P: I'm sorry, it was after you came out of prison, how did you view Fogo at that stage? You must remember you were very young but can you remember your reaction to it, did you see it as a PAC thing or not?

Difficult to tell because the movement had then gone underground and I was then not in contact with the movement, I'd gone back to school and what Fogo was saying in terms of (his political) philosophy was not much different from what PAC was saying, what it was doing, however, had not been what PAC had been doing, I don't remember what my own reaction was, that is specifically as to whether it relates to PAC or not, I might have had a reaction as to what it was doing, basically my reaction always to any effort of the oppressed people is always not negative.

P: Were you with PAC, when you were a youngster, what was your attitude towards violence at that stage, how did you see it? Were you just prepared for anything, did you just accept that you were part of the struggle?

I always thought that the struggle couldn't actually avoid violence.

P: Was there not a discussion about this in prison?

Well among the vand fellows quite a lot.

P: Was there any discussion among you guys in prison that you hadn't things right, that if you had done something else in another way it might have been different?

When we got to Stolberg there was talk of that especially after the appeals etc had begun and people started to think should we be in prison or should we not be in prison, and some people were saying we should not be in prison we should be out there fighting, perhaps we shouldn't have surrendered ourselves.

P: There was a basic questioning going on?

Yes, there was a searching, and there were sentiments expressed that we might have been hoping for too much to expect to bring down a regime simply by surrender of that sort, purely Gandhian methods.

P: But there was no sense of futility.

There was no sense of futility.

P: No pointing of fingers at Prof?

No, there was only a soul searching.

P: And Prof would take part in these discussions but he wouldn't lay down the law?

No he never did, he was that kind of guy who never did lay down the law.

P: When you came out did you continue to wait for his return?

Yes.

P: And when the three years were up and he was sent to Robben Island can you remember what your reaction was?

I was most dismayed, but then again I accepted it as part of the unfolding struggle.

P: And each year when his detention came up again, the Sobukwe Clause, would you be waiting to see if he was going to come out?

Yes.

P: While you still thought he would give the lead in this country?

Yes, I seriously thought he would and I still think so now, I have not

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most of the leading figures in the struggle in this country, at least those who are within the country and some of those who are outside the country, I still think he was a towering figure. He had that ability within him to make men walk a little taller and do things they would ordinarily not be able to do. This I think was a gift in him. He was not much of a talker, he was quite reserved but even in that reserve he radiated confidence, inspiration.

P: Did you go to PAC conferences, did you hear him speak?

I was at the inaugural conference, I heard him speak on several occasions.

P: What made you get involved with PAC in the first place?

Well I don't like oppression.

P: Why PAC and not the ANC?

My parents had been ANC for too long. It always represented to me the conservative element in our society.

P: What was your attitude towards whites when you were that young 16 year old? How did you feel towards whites personally?

It wasn't a question of feeling. In my own mind it was clear that they had power in their hands and they were not going to relinquish it.

P: Did you know any whites personally?

Yes I did.

P: How would you have come to know whites?

I had been in the city council clubs.

P: In Soweto?

Yes I had come up in the youth clubs and I had known a lot of the people there.

P: Those were the sort of supervisors? You didn't have a relationship with a white guy of your age?

No.

P: This is what apartheid has done to us. This is the way it has worked. This is what I am frightened about for my kids. [But I knew a lot of whites, even the youth clubs I had interaction with them, more than just a formal interaction because I was quite active.

P: Did you have any consciousness of what PAC's attitude towards whites was? Did you think that PAC was anti-white or what?

No, I was quite clear they were not.

P: Except PK. And Madzunya.

I didn't think PK was anti-white either. I think a lot of his rhetoric was mixed up with what he actually thought.

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