

Interview by

Padraig O'Malley

on 15 August 1991 with

Chris Hani

POM We're talking with Chris Hani on the 15th of August. Mr. Hani, I'll start maybe first with an odd kind of a question. But I remember when you were in Washington at the Carnegie breakfast, somebody asked you what were your own kind of personal ambitions, and you talked about going back to being a schoolteacher. And one could look at that assembled audience of political cynics and sceptics who said, Oh, you know, he's certainly not going to do that. And then they have, they more or less have to feel that you had to be consumed by a desire for power. Could you talk a little about how one is engaged in a revolutionary movement and how one distances personal ambition to commitment to the revolution itself?

CH Well, one has got to go back to the early days of one's participation in the revolutionary struggle in this country. Most of us joined the struggle because of objective political conditions that prevailed then. We come from a community which is oppressed, which has no political power in this country, which has no vote. And which is not regarded as comprising the citizenship of this country. So, when we joined the struggle, we wanted to contribute towards democratic changes. And secondly, the one organisation which caught our eyes at the time was the African National Congress. I was a student at one college in the Eastern Cape called Lovedale Institution. And there was clandestine activity of the ANC back then but political activities were not allowed at the college. Now, we as students joined the African National Congress because we were dead against Bantu education which had been imposed in 1954. So, our purpose of struggle as students was the struggle against Bantu education. We wanted an equal education. We perceived Bantu education as being inferior, as preparing us to serve the white government with no decision making on the part of the blacks. But then my participation in the legal struggle was short-lived.

I joined the ANC in 1957 and in 1960 the ANC was banned. And immediately after it was banned it became an underground organisation. So, one had to be involved in the banned activities of the ANC. Now, not only was the ANC banned but the government proceeded with its draconian measures, intended, you see, to crush altogether the spirit of resistance in our country. It was at this stage, then, that a section of the ANC leadership felt that after a long and searching analysis of all these events up to the time of the banning of the ANC,

certainly the conclusion was reached that we should embark on an armed struggle. And after that uMkhonto was formed. And a year after that, after its formation, I joined it. And I began to be involved in the small-scale operations, you see, using homemade explosives and firearms. After that, there was a strong feeling that we should all go abroad to acquire military training wherever it could be given. First, of course, it was Africa and then the socialist countries.

Now, a little bit about my background again. I was born and bred in the Transkei. I'm sure you've been there. I was born in a place about 60 kilometres from Kingwilliamstown and about 100/160 kilometres from Umtata going westwards. I was born in this very tiny rural area. Very impoverished. We had to literally walk 15 kilometres to school every day. There were doubts with regard to whether I'd finish my primary education. The nearest hospital was about 20 or 40 kilometres away. So, it's a background of actual poverty. So, my concern about social justice was a real product of my own experience. I think, comparatively speaking, I was lucky I was able to go to high school. I went to university thanks to a scholarship that I got and did my junior degree at the age of ... I'm a graduate of the Rhodes University in Grahamstown. But even after I graduated, I could have branched into something else. I could have been a lawyer, I could have been a teacher, I could have been anything. But then there was that overriding passion of participation in the struggle against white domination and whites were against us. You see, we faced a real powerful white state, well-armed, with a powerful army, with a powerful police force, powerful administration. But then I felt that my role was to contribute something and if I got a bit of education I should use that education in a system to politicise the people, to rally the people, to mobilise people against white domination so that South Africa could become a democracy. That is what has been my overriding interest and passion, if you like, in the struggle.

POM Did you join the SACP before you joined the ANC?

CH No, no, no. I joined the SACP four years after I joined the ANC. I joined it in 1961 and I joined the ANC in 1957. Now, my road to the SACP, in my own view, was a logical one. In our country, capitalism and apartheid had fused, they had meshed. Industry, without any exception, supported the oppressive policies of the apartheid regime. They were a partner to the oppression of our people. Capitalists built the most inferior facilities for our people. The hostels, the compounds. In fact, the mines, the owners of the mines were responsible for the introduction of migrant labour. Not only the suppression of families, the breaking down of the fabric of family life amongst the blacks. They supported that because this, for them, this was cheap labour which afforded super profits for the mining magnates. It was not only the mines. You could go to the construction industry, to agriculture, the story was the same, the extreme exploitation of the African worker. My own background encouraged me to ask the social system, the socialist system in this case, which said that exploitation was immoral, was criminal. And that ideal of a classless society, if you like, of the situation where no individual would live off the labour of another individual, given my background and after I had read a few books by Marx, Engels and Lenin, I was attracted to that. When I was approached to join the clandestine South African Communist Party, I had no hesitation whatsoever.

CH And just to add one thing. Of course, I still saw national liberation as being primary in our situation. I accepted that the Africans were the most oppressed people in our society, and that the primary task of any organisation, any revolutionary movement, was to speak for the liberation of the African people. And as a communist, or a socialist, if you like, I felt that national liberation would generate a climate now for the movement forward towards socialism.

POM I've been asking people that I've been interviewing to define the problem which the negotiators ultimately will have to sit down around a table to try and resolve. And the problem, depending upon whom one talks to, is either one of racial domination of blacks by white. Some say it's a conflict between two nationalisms, black nationalism and white nationalism. Some say, well, yes, there are severe racial disparities but within the racial disparities there are also deep ethnic cleavages. And the other day while I was going through this with somebody, they said, well, it's about all of those things. But it's about something else perhaps more importantly. It's about access to resources, who gets the resources. How would you most succinctly define the problem that faces the negotiators?

CH Primarily, what faces us in this country is democracy. This country is undemocratic. In other words, we want a situation where decision making should be in the hands of all of the people of South Africa. At the moment decision making is in the hands of those who have been laughed at by a particular subpart of the South African population, in this case it is the whites. Now, we proceed from the premise that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. That's the purpose of the African National Congress. This is a motherland or a fatherland for all the people who are in South Africa, black and white. And we are pushing for the acceptance of that basic premise. The African National Congress has reached a position of majority where it has moved completely from narrow African nationalism. The nationalism we embrace today is one of a common homeland, for all the people of South Africa. We are passionately committed to a non-racial South Africa. So, what we want to see resolved around the negotiating table is first of all to say there must be one person, one vote in this country and having acquired that position of one person, one vote, we must have a constitution that entrenches the individual rights of all South Africans, black and white. Because once you have done that, once you can guarantee human rights of an individual, I think you have gone a long way toward reducing or allaying some of the fears of people who consider themselves minorities.

POM But, let's take America, for example. Here's democracy, checks and balances, the whole thing. And yet there are severe, awful disparities between the standards of living among blacks and the standards of living among whites, which has not been redressed. So, democracy there has not meant the transfer of resources to bring about equality.

CH Call it inequity. Correct?

POM Here, I'm saying, you know, whites might say, give them political power as long as we hold onto economic power. So, what I'm saying is, must the negotiations from the beginning incorporate the understanding that we're not merely talking about a new constitution? We are talking about, at the negotiation table, agreeing upon mechanisms that will bring about the transfer of resources from the privileged to the deprived.

CH Correct. The ANC at the moment, together with the allies of the ANC, is arguing that the liberation does not only connote the right to vote but carries other connotations. And these connotations revolve around resources. The wealth of this country are in the hands of only 5% of the population. It's not even in the hands of all the whites. It is true that basically, even most of the whites have got a standard of living that is better than most of the Africans. But basically the wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few. Now, how do you handle the question of the disparity in resources? A democratically-elected government would be making a serious mistake if it doesn't tackle the question of the resources, because 95% of the population of this country is poor.

Now, we are saying that there must be a restructuring of the South African economy and we have argued, at least in the post-apartheid period, for a mixed economy. We accept fully that there will be a capitalist sector in the South African economy and probably for some years it could be a major sector. But equally, we are saying that a government that is democratically elected should empower itself to intervene, to begin the process of not only restructuring but also a process of redistribution. Firstly, we think public utilities should be nationalised so that they should begin to address the daily needs of our people. Take electricity. I'm sure 70% of the population of this country have houses which are not electrified. Take water, for instance. A big percentage of our people have no access to clean drinking water. Third, you take transport. This is a main problem for more than 80% of our people. We must not only make transport available to our people but it must also be affordable transport. Take housing and construction. The majority of Africans in this country are living in inferior houses, unhealthy houses, houses which have no electricity and no water. So, we need to start a massive programme to build houses in this country and to demolish the squatter shacks from which I'm sure you have seen around each and every city in this country.

POM What I'm getting at is, this requires a massive transfer of resources. Not piecemeal transfer. You can't do a little one year, a little the second year. I mean, from the beginning, you've got to hit the ground running, with a major restructuring of the economy and the social order.

CH Correct.

POM Right?

CH Correct.

POM Well, what I'm getting at is, must this be agreed upon during negotiations, or is it for the government who takes power to say, well, this is what we'll do?

CH No. I don't think this piece will be agreed around a negotiation table. It's impossible. Around the negotiation table, we must agree on the main principles of democracy. And those main principles of democracy are one person, one vote, in a united, non-racial, non-sexist South Africa. Once there's a democratic constitution there are going to be election campaigns. Each party must place its policies now before the people, because, you see,

after placing those policies before the people, if it gets elected it will be having a mandate now, an electoral mandate, to proceed, you see, with the massive schemes of redistribution in this country. And nobody is going to say, now that party has no mandate, because that party will have placed those demands before the majority of the people of this country. They would have voted for that sort of thing. So, I don't see the negotiating table discussing what sort of economic policies each organisation will pursue. That must be left to the people to decide when they elect their own government.

POM OK. What, in all your travels, do you find to be the level of expectations of the black community when a post-apartheid, or one person, one vote, government is formed?

CH Well, materially, our people expect deep and far-going changes, once there's a non-racial government in this country. Certainly, they will expect to have better schools, better houses, electrification. They will expect more jobs, there's a lot of unemployment here. So, those are the major expectations. People are not just looking for a vote. Yes, the vote is important but a vote must carry a message of social justice or rather a content - it must have a content of social justice.

POM Do you think ...?

CH And, I go on to say that we are not going to be solving these problems overnight. But our people would expect a clear commitment towards the solution of the problem of poverty. Because, you see, people are very poor in this country. And they will be expecting year in and year out, better houses being built, more schools being established, electricity being extended to a number of houses. They will expect better social welfare policies so that if one loses a job, he doesn't necessarily go to bed with an empty stomach. They are going to be expecting all this. They are going to be expecting better pension schemes.

POM OK, in this regard what change do you think that a majority rule government will make in the life of the average black family, say, five years after a government takes power?

CH Well, I think if the ANC-led alliance gets elected in democratic elections in this country, after five years our people, especially the black people, should find a situation where the government has actually moved in terms of demolishing slums in this country and building new houses. And I have already indicated, if our people see that this process is taking place, there will be hope existing within every community. Our people expect that inferior schools that are a dominant factor in black townships and in the villages are certainly upgraded. Our people expect that the whites, the lily-white schools are opened up so that they've become non-racial schools. Our people expect the demolition of the hostels and compounds and family units being built. And our people expect freedom of organisation and freedom of expression, with the police concentrating on the prevention of crime rather than interfering with political processes.

POM So, if these expectations are not met, this first ANC government would be a failure?

CH Well, I want to say South Africa is an interesting place. We have a highly-politicised black population. We have got well-organised and militant trade unions in this country. Those trade unions are not going to allow themselves to be assimilated even by a non-racial government. They have opposed the present apartheid regime, they have fought the capitalist forces, and I can tell you, if there's no definite march towards the solution of the problems of the workers and the poor peasants in this country, those workers are going to come out into the streets and even demonstrate against an ANC government.

POM Yes. That brings up a very interesting point. From my reading, and that is of studies done on wage levels in the country, it seems that now the average wage differential between a white person and a black person who is a member of a trade union in the same kind of a job is about 15%. The differential has narrowed to 15%. However, offsetting that is that you have this huge increase in black unemployment, so that in one way, you're getting an elite black sector, that's the unionised blacks who are doing quite well. They are closing the gap with whites. But those who are being left behind are millions of blacks who can't even get into the labour market. So that, the problem, in a way, is becoming more, not black versus white, but unemployed versus employed. Do you think that's a correct analysis?

CH Well, in a way, there is a lot of truth in what you are saying. The organised black workers have fought for the amelioration of their working and living conditions. Through the struggle, their standards of living have certainly improved over the last 17 years or so. Now, there are millions of our people who are not members of unions, those who work on the farms and those who are unemployed. And I think they are going to have to receive priority from a democratically-elected government. You know, farm workers, for instance, have had problems about organising themselves because farmers have been very, very hostile. And they always believed that they have been backed up by the apartheid regime. Now, it's going to be the task of a newly-elected democratic government to ensure that all workers have a right to become members of trade unions. In other words, the farm workers, the domestic workers, and everybody else.

But now, what happens to the unemployed? Because there's a high level of unemployed in this country. We shall need to acquire funds to help our people to move away from subsistence farming into commercial farming so that our people don't just participate in agriculture to satisfy their immediate needs but also be generating income. I don't know how this will be solved. Everybody now thinks that I must go to Johannesburg, I must go to Cape Town, because that's where there's a possibility of getting a job. There's a good many people here come in to join us and are not finding jobs because there are no jobs.

Now, it means that a new South African government must reorganise agriculture. At the moment, agriculture in this country is very wasteful. Because labour is cheap. The white farmer can afford to have 40 workers on his farm, because he pays them nothing, he gives them peanuts. And meanwhile he does not even teach them modern agriculture. We have got to look into the question of land allocation, reallocation if you like. We have got to come to bring about drastic land reforms, so that we provide land to the black landless. So that they can begin to utilise the land, to satisfy their immediate needs but at the same time to try to get some income from agriculture. But they can't do it alone. It would mean

that we must have a new and fresh look into our education. Our education must begin to say, Why are not the assets in this country, apart from industry, the mines, is also land, fertile land if you like, with lots of water, lots of rivers, and that we begin to organise as a culture in such a way that agriculture can be a sector which will absorb, in terms of employment and in terms of utilisation of the soil, more and more of our people.

POM One of the things I'm getting at, I suppose, is that the general pattern in both developing and industrialised countries is that the wage rate goes up, the level of employment goes up too, because it's a trade-off between, for the employer, of more workers, more wage earners or less workers at higher wages, if you start substituting capital for labour. Will there be a special responsibility, is what I'm getting at, is that unions' first responsibility is to their membership. You know, will you need a broader definition of the responsibility of unions? So that when unions make their demands for higher wage received in a given industry, that they also have to take into account what that might do to the level of unemployment?

CH Yes.

POM You know, so that you have to have - maybe they will not be able to get as much, because you must pull more people in.

CH That's an interesting concept, you see. And fortunately, we have a trade union movement in this country which is political and which has been involved, which is involved in our struggle. I don't think the solution of the economic problems of this country should only be the responsibility of the government of the day. Trade unions have an important role to play in the organisation and the restructuring of an economy. I think it should be the responsibility of the trade union movement to ensure that all the workers are in trade unions. They should actually organise every worker into the trade unions.

POM But, where does that leave the unemployed?

CH Even the unemployed. Now, the trade unions are concerned with the unemployed workers. I think even in a post-apartheid South Africa, we must interest the trade union movement in the plight of the unemployed. In other words, we must say, how do we together reduce unemployment? That must be the concern of the organised workers as well as the government. What do we do about unemployment? How do we reduce unemployment? Should not our demands for increased wages be indexed, if you like, to profits and also unemployment? In other words, let's say, for instance, workers say they want an increment of thirty or forty percent in a given industry. Then that is us who say, 'Look, we want to be frank with you. This is the profit that we are making. If we increase your salaries fifteen percent or twenty percent, it means we close down the factory.' And we'd like that sort of participation by the worker in industry, where they would all actually sit down, with management or the owners of industry, and say, this is the level of profits after we've paid you. And it's important for us to carry on. This factory has got to continue operating. If there's a turnabout, and the profits go up, we're accepting the principle that we will satisfy your demands for an increment of thirty percent. But then you have got to bring up a situation of trust and co-operation between the workers and industry. Because

in this country, we would like a situation of where there's the democratisation of the production process.

POM Just mentioning trust and co-operation. Do you believe, this is kind of moving almost into another field and I'd like to come back to economics towards the end, do you believe that the revelations of what's called Inkathagate are irrefutable proof that this government has over the past year been engaged in the orchestration of violence involving the slaughter of hundreds of people in order to undermine and destabilise the ANC while at the same time holding out the olive branch of negotiations?

CH I have no doubt at all. This has been the modus operandi of this government for years, even when the ANC was underground. It went out of the way to ensure that the ANC is completely emasculated. It financed all sorts of schemes in the black areas to try to ferret out information about the ANC. It employed agents. And over the years, it has infiltrated many organisations, church organisations, social organisations, sporting organisations, to make sure that the ANC did not build influence amongst blacks. Now, even after the unbanning of the ANC, this government has not stopped implementing this strategy of weakening the ANC.

POM My question is, how can you negotiate with somebody who is out to undermine you, whom you have to distrust at every level?

CH Well, you don't have to negotiate with somebody because you trust him. Negotiations have come about because, despite the government's attempts to undermine us, they know that we are an important force in this country. They know that they have failed to destroy us. We have a stable, viable, strong organisation, despite the attempts of the government to undermine us. Since we know that this government is orchestrating a campaign to undermine us, to weaken us, and to kill our supporters, why do we negotiate with it? We are negotiating with this government because we want a new government in this country. And we are so convinced that their schemes to undermine and weaken us will fail, they will fail definitely, and we know that we have got the strength to push them to the negotiating table.

POM Well, I'll read a quote from Viljoen when we interviewed him and I asked him about what common ground existed between the government and the ANC and in an incomplete reply he said, 'Both the ANC and the government accept negotiations as the only way forward. They both understand that they will enter negotiations with well-defined positions and a will for give and take.' Now, a will for give and take implies respect for your adversary. You may not trust him, but it implies respect. Do you think this government has been treating you over the last year with anything like respect at all?

CH Well, I think they have been treating us with a measure of respect. It might be grudging respect. They know that we're a formidable enemy and they know that there's no other force amongst the blacks they can negotiate with. Despite the fact that they don't like us, they know that we're a serious reality they cannot ignore. And at the same time we're aware that they will continue until the final process to try to weaken us. It is our task, you see, to fight very hard not to be weakened. This is our task, to strengthen us. We

don't expect any sort of assistance from them. Now, coming to this question of give and take, there's a bottom line even in negotiations. But we accept that in the process of negotiations you can make compromises. But you're not going to make compromises around fundamental issues. For instance, you see, we cannot compromise on the question of one person, one vote in this country. For us if we compromise on that, it's the ... of democracy.

POM Could you compromise on this? When the national government talks about power sharing, what do you think they mean when they say, this process is about power sharing, not a transfer of power. Is it really, when you kind of strip it all down to its basic core, is it really about a transfer of power?

CH Well, I thought they had moved away from that early position of power sharing because for us, the immediate connotation is that it will result in some veto powers for the government. And certainly we cannot allow a situation where one community, in this case the white community, would have powers of veto.

POM Let's signal a situation where if they said, what we mean by power sharing is that in any Cabinet, say, of thirty people, the National Party would have five portfolios. So, we would exercise authority at the highest level. We would be in an alliance, even though we would be the junior partner in the alliance.

CH Well, I don't know, because our perception is we've got to be going for elections on the basis of one person, one vote. There will be, of course, proportional voting in the sense that if a party gets 5% or 6% throughout the country that would allow it to have parliamentary representation. I don't know exactly what we would do. But a party which gets 8% or 9% nationally, even if it didn't get the majority, would be entitled, for instance, to have a certain number of seats in the national parliament. But the point, I'm coming to the point that if the ANC wins the elections, and of course, we are going to be fighting elections on a non-racial ticket, an ANC government will not be a black government. It will be a non-racial government. It will be a South African government. Those who would go into parliament would be really reflecting the non-racial character of South Africa.

POM I'm not talking about the compilation in the parliament. If you take the same principle, now, to the Executive Authority, i.e., that you have proportional representation in parliament, that that proportional representation would also be reflected in the composition of the Executive Authority.

CH No, no, no. No, no, no, no. It would be reflected in the makeup of parliament.

POM OK. What you're saying ...

CH But in the government, when the ANC, even if the ANC's a majority party in that parliament, when it sets about to form a new government, it's going to form a government made up of ANC supporters! Because, you see, it'll be an unstable government which will be bringing in, so-called - this is the representative of the whites, representative of the Coloureds, and representative of the Indians. The ANC will see itself representing all the

people of South Africa, black and white. So, I can't see a situation where we are going to, in the Executive, we are going to be having so many ministers representing the Nationalist Party and representing so-called white interests.

POM Would you regard that as a sell-out?

CH I would regard that, actually, as a departure from the norms of democracy. Because I feel that the ANC can represent the interests of all the people of South Africa. The ANC must ensure that in its composition of the Executive, it's not just blacks that are Africans, but all the people of South Africa but on the basis of their support for the principles of the ANC. And the principles of the ANC to not just cater to the interests of the blacks but the interests of black and white. I'm aware of the fact that there're sections of the white population who don't like the ANC for their own reasons, for their own political reasons. They don't like us because they see that we're a movement, that's not just only the interests of the blacks.

POM So, do you think that if this proposition were put to the country, that, in effect, for perhaps ten years, the ANC and the National Party would share power, with the ANC being the senior partner and the dominant voice in government, that the people of this country would turn that down?

CH One would have to look at the basic principles of that power sharing. What would be the basic principles? Because before you get into a coalition with another group, you must work out the bottom line and the basic principles. What would be your objectives? What would you be building? We would not be bringing a force that would obstruct, that would stonewall preventing the ANC from realising its programme, for instance, of affirmative action to promote blacks. We would not be bringing a force that will see itself vetoing important decisions in the interests of the section it represents.

POM Well, for example, one argument might be, some economists have estimated that it would take an investment of 100 billion rand over ten years to maintain a rate of growth of 5.5%, which is necessary just to keep the level of income as it is. Not growing. And that if you had an ANC government that was committed to a radical restructuring of the economy and redistribution of resources, that foreign investment is simply not going to come here. So, some kind of trade-off is made. The trade-off is, OK, you get rid of the fears of the international capitalist community, or whatever you want to call it, by having the first government, post-apartheid government, that is broad-based so that there appears to be a better climate for foreign investment to come in.

CH Well ...

POM Like, you know what I mean? Like, you know, the trade-offs that are ...

CH I see, I see. You see, the point is, a new government gets into power on the basis of the mandate of the electorate. Now we are going to define that mandate very neatly. And if the mandate is in the direction of social upliftment, that government must respect that mandate. Of course, the economic realities, I agree with you. Now, we would have to enter

into serious discussion with the investors, whether it be World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, and we would have to start with the conditions they are putting before us. We say, OK, yes, to economic growth. And economic growth is important, because it creates jobs. But, secondly, that economic growth must be linked to social upliftment, to affirmative action to improve the lot of the blacks. We can argue, for instance, that every year we must see to it that we build 5,000 housing units, on the basis of the sort of economic growth that would be a reality in that particular situation. But, you see, we must avoid a situation where financing, international financing houses, are going to be imposing conditions which only concentrate on profit but ignore the question of social upliftment.

POM Is it your view that the majority of the resources for the restructuring of the economy and the social transformation you envisage will have to be generated from within, that one can't rely on foreign investment?

CH No, no, no. No, no, no. I think foreign investment is important. I think foreign corporations must come in. But we've got to define very clearly the operation or the operational methods of foreign corporations. Secondly, we must enter into agreement with foreign corporations or foreign investors from the basis of saying, Yes, to profits, yes to fair exportation of even some of the profits, but yes, also, to some commitment to housing, to education, to transport, to health facilities. We cannot just, you see, speak of economic growth and not address the question of better working and living conditions for our people.

POM So you would be linking the opportunities to invest with social action on the part of the ...?

CH Yes, social action, that's the phrase. I would be linking these, the question of investment and social action. And I think serious investors, not those who want to make a quick buck, would have to sit down and listen seriously to what we say. Because, let's say they come in and invest on the basis of economic growth, huge profits, but no social action. They immediately are going to plunge into an unstable situation. There are going to be many strikes, there's going to be a lot of dissatisfaction, the government will face endless problems. And we'll get a situation in which we'll see many Third World countries, where you get the few getting rich and the majority who are poor getting poorer every day. And I wonder about a situation where - are people going to say, 'Look, man. Our lives were better under an apartheid government, economically.' And, you see, we must make sure that our people see an improvement once there are changes in this country.

POM But that takes massive transformation. And that kind of massive transformation frightens the international community because they think of it as, you have to massively use, redistribute resources.

CH No, no, no. No, no, no. I'm not speaking about a great leap forward. I'm not saying that within five years or ten years or twenty years we shall have solved all the terrible legacies of apartheid. But, you see, our people must see that there's a steady, if you like, march towards social upliftment. Social economic changes in this country.

POM One last economic question, and it goes back to the start, really. Many people that I've talked to have suggested that what whites are more interested in doing is in protecting their economic power and that they will trade political power in order to hold onto economic power. What do you think? What do whites most want to protect?

CH You see, the whites are being short-sighted. White society is an island of comfortable living and that island is surrounded by a mighty sea of impoverishment. That mighty sea of impoverishment frightens the whites. The crime rate in this country has shot up. There are robberies, 20 or 30 or 40 a day in all the major cities of this country. Whites have got to live in barricaded houses because they know around them that there are hungry people in the millions. And what a situation! Where are white compatriots? Are they going to see themselves as targets of hungry people? And the whites must be the first to realise that future peace in this country revolves around massive attempts to upgrade the living standards of the very people who have made them comfortable and secure and prosperous. So, in a selfish way, they can fight for the continuance of prosperity of their small community. But at the same time, they should realise that they're creating an unstable situation which will affect them eventually. They must come out and be committed to social, to deep social changes in this country. And that goes for industry, for the captains of industry in this country. They must undo the legacy of the rule of white minority government. Which did not just impoverish the few million, but an entire people. And in this case, I'm referring to blacks.

POM To move just to a question that has come up since the Inkatha scandal. One, what do you think this has done to Buthelezi?

CH Well, Buthelezi has been discredited by the Inkatha scandal. It is quite clear to us that you can't speak of Inkatha as an independent political formation. It's very clear to us that the Nationalist Party and Inkatha are partners. And very few Africans and very few South Africans are going to accept the elevation of Inkatha into a key player during the negotiation process.

POM Do you think this link is part of a conscious strategy? Do you think that the National Party or the government, have worked out more or less what they want out of this process and how they hope to get there?

CH Well, it is quite compatible with the strategy the government has always devised. Has this government not created puppet organisations since it came into power? It certainly set up Bantustans and Bantustan governments and homelands administration as partners in order to maintain white domination. So, for me, it is a situation or the continuation of the strategy of this government, of forming junior partners so as to continue with the dominant position, political position of the whites in this country. And they saw in Buthelezi, as they saw in Mantanzima and the members of the House of Delegates and the House of Representatives in the tricameral parliament, blacks it wanted to manipulate in order to reduce the strength of those they saw as their adversaries, in this case, the ANC and its allies. So, Buthelezi has been playing that role but he was clever in the past giving the impression that he was an independent force. It's quite clear now he has been stripped naked that he's not an independent force. He has been financed by the security police, by

the government. He has built over the years an intricate network of collaboration with the security police.

POM That finishes him in your view among the larger black society?

CH That finishes him, as far as I'm concerned. And even his friends in the media dismiss him, actually, as a key player in the political process. All the polls conducted by organisations actually give him less than 3% of national support. And that goes for Natal as well. In Natal, he does not command majority support. It's true that, you see, through a campaign of intimidation, he has managed to frighten many of our people in Natal.

POM What happened to Brigadier Gqozo? We visited him, I talked to him a year ago. He was enthusiastically pro-ANC, he was scathingly anti-Buthelezi. We go back this year and it's like a 360 degrees turnaround.

CH Well, it basically shows instability. And the erratic behaviour of Gqozo. I think he was just an enthusiast who had no basic and strong convictions. Probably thought that there would be an ANC government in a year's time and he was preparing a role for himself. I think now he has looked around and feels that there's a possibility that in elections an alliance of Buthelezi and the Nationalist Party would actually be a winning card.

POM He's forming his own political organisation.

CH Well, he's forming his own political organisation which will be stillborn, if you know the realities of the Border region. And he sees that his organisation is a potential ally to Inkatha and to the Nationalist Party government. Now, for me, you know, with the benefit of hindsight, I think Gqozo was planted by either the National Intelligence Service or military intelligence. And he was given instructions to play along with us, he was trying to strengthen his position, and that he should, at the right time, go back to his masters. And that's what he is doing now, he's co-operating very fully with the government. He has that stand, you know, the patriotic officers in his army. And he's basically causing a lot of instability in the Border region.

POM One thing that the Inkatha scandal gave impetus to was your demand for an interim government.

CH Correct.

POM That the government can't be a player and referee, particularly their behaviour in Namibia is probably more evidence of this than the funding of Inkatha. I want to figure out something. You want this government to resign. And you want it to surrender its sovereignty. You want to replace it with an all-party ...

CH An interim government of national unity.

POM That would be vested with sovereign power.

CH Correct. Correct.

POM With the new government. The government said under no circumstance will it resign and that's one end of the spectrum. The other end of the spectrum is what they offer, which is, we will have members of the ANC and PAC and whatever, join the Government, i.e., it's a form of co-option.

CH Well, comrade Mandela has been clear on that point. We are not going to allow any sort of co-option in that sort of government.

POM OK. This is my question. In the case of a Constituent Assembly, where the National Party has said, no, we're against a Constituent Assembly, or the government has said, no, we're against a Constituent Assembly completely. Your response has been, OK, if you're against it, come up with something that would achieve the same kind of result, and we'll look at it. In the case of an interim government, of the resignation of the government, is it more important that this government surrender its sovereignty than that you have an arrangement where that, where everything can be monitored and power shared or whatever? In other words, if they come up with an arrangement that didn't require them to give up their sovereignty, that would achieve what you want to achieve, would you accept that?

CH They wouldn't achieve it. You see, who would make the decision? It still would remain the Executive, they would be there in their own offices, they would have their own Cabinet meetings, they would take their own decisions without the other parties who settled the conflict. And how can we ensure that the same government, with its non-track record, will overnight be transformed into an impartial institution that would oversee the transitional period? It's impossible! I mean, it just is an unreasonable expectation. I mean, on the part of the oppressed. What I am saying is that at an all-party congress, we must discuss with all the parties, including Inkatha, and say it is necessary, that in the process of transition, everybody should feel heavy, including yourselves. Now, what should we do to ensure that all the parties are heavy? Certainly the ANC, the PAC, AZAPO, and other organisations are very uncomfortable and insecure with the management of this process thing in the hands of the Nationalist Party government. Now, we say an interim government of national unity, which would bring into its fold, people say, why not? We are going basically to enjoy the confidence, in terms of fairness and impartiality, of the majority of the key players. And we would have a situation where the Nationalist Party government would also feel comfortable with that interim government arrangement because they are an important player in the process. And we arm that interim government with sovereign powers for a limited period, not for more than 18 months, in order to take us to a Constituent Assembly and the drawing of a constitution and the democratic election. This government must accept the position that it has failed dismally in bringing about justice in this country. They should have a guilty conscience, as far as I'm concerned, in terms of its own track record. And the majority of the people of this country don't want this government.

POM In terms of the government's own behaviour and its history and its record, do you see this government resigning?

CH Well, what is the alternative? It's plunging this country into more chaos, into more instability.

POM Say if the government refuses, what options do you have to put pressure on them?

CH Well, firstly, the international community should realise that this government is not serious about democracy. That's number one.

POM Yes, but the international community kind of applauded his moves about Inkathagate and said, You know, you handled that well!

CH Well I don't know. They might have applauded. But, you see, the international community should judge the responses of the oppressed people in this country. Which it's not doing in certain cases. But we say, what would happen if this government refuses to establish an interim government, a transitional authority that would have the confidence of the majority of our people, with the liberation movements. You've got to be trying for it and discuss what strategies they should adopt to bring about democracy in this country. I'm unable to say exactly what would be done but it would be part of the struggle.

POM Would there be a reconsideration of resuscitating the armed struggle?

CH Well, I don't know. It's not for me to decide but we would have to look at all strategies. What we'd be looking for would be an intensive struggle that will bring about transfer of power in this country from this minority, the majority of our people.

POM Are there circumstances, I don't want to push you on this, but are there circumstances in which you can envisage that the armed struggle will have to be resuscitated, or do you think that pressures from the outside world at that point, the international community, kind of ...?

CH Well, I think the international community wants a settlement in South Africa. It's desperate for a settlement. And they know that it would not be in the interests of the international community if negotiations fail. I don't know what leverage the international community has on de Klerk and his government but for us, first of all, I'm referring to the ANC, the PAC, COSATU, and AZAPO, would have to sit down and say, how do we pressurise the international community to exert very, very strong pressure on this government to proceed with negotiations with seriousness.

POM The question I asked Viljoen that he didn't answer very well was, 'What common ground', I'll put it to you, what common ground, as you get ready for negotiations, what common ground do you see existing between yourselves and the government and what would you categorise as the main areas of difference? And of those differences, which ones would be differences of principle and which ones would be differences of modalities?

CH You see, I don't want to agree with this government on the question of one person, one vote. There's an agreement, it was moved, on one person, one vote. Now, we are not

yet agreed on constitutional principles. There's certainly an agreement with this government on the question of an all-party conference where we'd discuss all this. The problem is modalities: how do we get towards one person, one vote? They've not rejected the concept of one person, one vote and I think that's an important departure on the part of this government. But they have not yet spelled out how do we reach that process? They feel that you can reach that process whilst they are still in power. Now, the implications of this government being in power, the implications are, that the whole process will be organised by them. Secondly, they would be in charge of resources in this country, government resources. They would enjoy an unfair advantage as a government, as a Nationalist Party, over the ANC, PAC, and other organisations. Whilst you are a government, you certainly enjoy distinct advantages over those who are outside the Government, including access to resources. And now with Inkathagate, actually our demands for an interim government are even more reasonable. Because, you see, how would we guarantee that they are not going to be funding other organisations? They are not going to be using the resources, of the kind of public resources, to advance the interests of the Nationalist Party.

POM I was struck in that regard by a quotation where Mr. Mandela said at his press conference, which would have been shortly before the whole Inkatha scandal. It's one he gave to John Battersby and is being printed in the Star and he said, "With regard to the transitional government of national unity, if the mutual confidence is there, it is not actually necessary to form the interim government before we go into negotiations." That mutual confidence is gone?

CH It's gone, it's gone.

POM That's gone out the window. There're a couple of things I'd like to ask you, and thank you for the time. I'm used to being kicked out after 55 minutes. A couple of things. I was talking to Allan Boesak the other day and he said he shared a platform with you in Durban. He said there was some question on the differences between the ANC and the SACP and he said you got up and you said the SACP was for the empowerment of poor people, for uplifting the masses, for ensuring equity and justice and the end of domination. And he said, 'Chris, if the SACP stands for that, what does the ANC stand for? You know, if they stand for the very same thing, why are there two organisations?'

CH Well, there's a lot of common ground between the ANC and the SACP. But you see, the ANC is a multi-class organisation. Multi-class organisation. The ANC's got workers and it's got poor people. But the ANC is also a political home for those who are not so poor. And the ANC, in its programme, has got to make sure that it strikes that balance of a multi-class organisation. The ANC wants to build a just society. And the Party also wants to build such a society. And I think it is this stance which brings the Party and the ANC together in an alliance. The ANC is not an organisation committed to socialism. We who are committed to socialism are committed to fighting the exploitation of one person to another and to an ideal. I want to say an ideal, after so many years, where no individual would live off the labour of another person. That's the ideal of the Party. We are opposed to capitalism completely as a Party and yet the ANC speaks of a mixed economy. And we support that mixed economy as a stage, as a Party.

POM On the way to?

CH It's on the way to socialism. But as I say, there's a lot of common ground in terms of objectives between the ANC and the Party but the Party goes beyond.

POM I think something, you've probably been asked this a hundred times, so this is probably the hundred and first, one thousand and first time, is that, for many years, the SACP here was a very strong supporter of regimes in Eastern Europe, particularly in Eastern Germany where lots of members of the MK went and that these were among the most authoritarian and the most undemocratic regimes one could envisage, which in the end were overthrown by the masses of the citizenry acting in their own behalf. How could you have been so blind? And why could you not see that their form of socialism was a corrupt form, a state form of socialism?

CH Right, right.

POM And how have your own definitions, your own models of socialism, evolved since that time? That it constitutes a clean break with the past.

CH Right, right.

POM People just don't say, A communist is a communist is a communist.

CH Right, right. But, I was just going to say that we're not the only ones who were blind, apart from all the communist parties. Virtually all the national movements which fought colonialism, which fought imperialism, had very warm fraternal relations with the socialist countries. Because the socialist countries, more than other countries, gave a lot assistance to the struggle against colonialism and for freedom and national independence. The Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc, gave a lot of the material assistance to the struggles of the peoples of the world for liberation. I think Cuba could have been overrun if the socialist countries had not come to the assistance of Cuba when Americans decided to strangle Cuba economically. I think, for instance, Americans would have walked over Vietnam, probably, if the socialist countries had not given assistance. And this sort of assistance, you see, applies to many countries. As a communist party, we're close to the communist parties of other socialist countries because we are waging a fight together against imperialism and against capitalism.

Now, it's not only ourselves who were blind to the imperfections, to the totalitarian or authoritarian tendencies within the socialist countries. I'm sure one can ask that question of the citizens of those countries, because certainly, until recently, they moved along what was happening. And what was happening was not known to most of us. And I want to be frank with you, it was never known to some of us because, you must remember, we went there for a definite purpose. We either went there to train or to certain institutions. And our movements around the country were certainly conducted by officials who were never accessible to the population. So our interpretation and analysis of those countries was on the basis of what we read or what we were told. You can, of course, say that, you see,

we're naïve and myopic. And that naïveté and myopia certainly dominated millions of people throughout the world. Millions of honest people, very, very honest, who were absolutely dissatisfied and found capitalism repugnant, people in the capitalist countries who saw capitalism as an incentive (?) and saw what was happening in socialist countries as a sort of paradise. And yet behind that façade of beauty, terrible things were happening.

Now, we acknowledge openly that these were terrible things, that democracy was grossly violated, that there were labour camps, that political differences were treated in an unacceptable and authoritarian way. But we could equally say that look at the basic principles of socialism. Don't they enshrine liberty, freedom, I mean, principles of equality, hatred of exploitation of one person by another. If you like, it's like some of the principles in the Bible. But despite the fact that we have the Bible, with its enshrinement of justice, how many terrible things have been done by Christians? Christians, including bishops and popes, have supported fascism. Yes, there were some of them who supported fascism. But I am not going to come around and say, there's something basically wrong with Christianity. We know of religious leaders in Latin America who are going along with despots and dictators. But you see, that should not bring us to a conclusion that Christianity is basically bad. And going to capitalism. Capitalism has certainly spawned terrible governments. In Spain, in Greece, in Portugal, in Chile. And, you see, there has been a general feeling that capitalism is dictatorial, is repugnant.

So, we as South African communists look at those principles and, given our own experiences of apartheid capitalism, feel that we can be born-again socialists, if you like, or born-again communists, excepting one, that terrible things happened in the socialist countries, like totalitarianism. And committing ourselves to pluralism, to multi-partyism, if you like, where one is going to impose socialism on the people, where we are going to do away with the concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Because although it was said that it was a dictatorship of the proletariat, it was not a dictatorship of the proletariat but a dictatorship of the leadership of the communist party. The workers, actually, were outside the process of ruling the process of decision making. And we are saying in the South African Communist Party that we shall implement a democratic form of socialism. I know, given what has happened in the socialist countries, in virtually all of them, is going to be very difficult for people to accept that they have got to work very, very hard. But in this country, capitalism is not marketed.

POM I suppose the odd thing here is that the people in Eastern Europe are not running from communism to socialism. They're running to capitalism.

CH Correct.

POM They're not running, they're stampeding.

CH Well, they're stampeding into a, from a place where socialism was grossly violated and where they were not allowed to see the reality of capitalism. I'm telling you that if some of them would sit up and say, no, no, no. We have not run away from hell into paradise. We've run into some hell, from a more comfortable hell than the hell where we come from.

PK Do you make distinctions between the European social democratic types of systems and the socialisms that communism system?

CH Well, there is social democracy in countries like Sweden, Norway. And I think their systems deserve a lot of close study. I think in many ways we have moved towards their positions. But, it's very difficult for me to say, "I embrace social democracy", because I've not seen social democracy in action. I would still feel that basically, there's nothing wrong with Marxism. The principles of Marxism. And my view is that they were wrongly applied. Force was used, you see, to ram those principles down the throats of people. But the leaders of the communist parties carved for themselves powerful positions and left the masses out of the process of socialism. I would certainly prefer a situation where the masses would be the main force in determining the road to socialism.

POM Two final questions. One concerns the right-wing. And I want to break the right-wing up into the Conservative Party and the militant right. When we were here last year, it was about this time, there was a lot of speculation about the strength of the Conservative Party and how if there was an election, they'd get more than 50% of the vote and so on. We don't hear that this year. Has the CP, is it still a potent threat or are most whites realistically understanding that irreversible change is on the way?

CH Well, you see, it was interesting to listen to Treurnicht two days ago when he addressed the meeting in Queenstown, where he actually was appealing for the politics of tolerance. And that people shouldn't carry weapons to meetings and party gatherings. I thought this marked a departure from the belligerent tone which has been characteristic of many of his speeches. I think the right-wing in this country will come to a conclusion that the process of the end of apartheid cannot be reversed. Apartheid has failed dismally. And, you see, South Africans now are trying to find a path towards democracy. And that if they block this process they are going to be left behind. They represented some segment of the white population and it's going to be in their interest to participate in the negotiation process, to articulate their reasonable demands of the sector they represent. And what is good about negotiation is the fact that the doors are open for all those groups with their proven constituencies. That is, if they have their constituency, thirty percent or so of the white population and certainly should be allowed to come and represent that sector. There will be a time in this country when ourselves, that's the ANC, the PAC, and others, with the Nationalist Party and the Democratic Party, there's a time when we shall join to stop the nonsense of the AWB. Because the AWB is trying to plunge the whole country back into the dark past, a past which has been so disastrous and traumatic for the majority of the people of this country. And I think a growing number of the whites in this country don't want to go back into that past.

POM I was going to ask you that. I mean, are they, the AWB, really appealing to what has become a rapidly diminishing constituency?

CH Exactly. Exactly. It's a rapidly diminishing constituency but it's a vocal and belligerent diminishing minority with the potential to destabilise.

POM Yes. I had used an analogy, not in a direct comparison but an analogy between the Protestant community in Northern Ireland and the Afrikaner community here. It's that, in Northern Ireland, the Protestant paramilitary organisations never enjoyed any real support among the Protestant people because the Protestant people thought of themselves as being a law and order people who obeyed authority. And they looked upon the police as their police because the police was 97% Protestant. So, if a paramilitary, a Protestant paramilitary organisation attacks the police, it was like, they were attacking their community! Do you see any similar kind of thing on the Afrikaner side?

CH That's the same thing. Exactly! I think Terre'Blanche shot himself in the foot as a result of his conduct at Ventersdorp. Because the view of the average white person in this country is that the police is there to protect law-abiding people. For years they have supported the police because they saw the police as an instrument of order, of law and order. Once a group now begins a ferocious campaign against the police, that white group is going to be isolated. It will have its faithfuls amongst the lunatic fringe. But most of the whites want to go about their day-to-day business with the least molestation. And I think Terre'Blanche and others are going to be losing a few supporters as a result of the sort of bellicose tone they are beginning to adopt almost every day. And, you see, people cannot even accept to say that peaceful commuters in the trains should just be subjected to brutal attacks, merely on the basis of being black.

POM Last question. Since 1967, I think, with just a few exceptions there's been no transfer of power from one elected government to another elected government in Africa where ... Either they've become one-party states or one party enjoys such a monopoly of power, it did not make any difference ...

CH But there is a vertical transformation in Africa as well, you see? One party governments are crumbling in a very rapid way. In Zambia, in the Congo, in Ivory Coast. Almost everywhere, they have been seen to be dictatorial, authoritarian, unworkable. They have plans to turn the continent into economic chaos. So, why should we in South Africa go back to examples which have been found unworkable? So there's no way this country can become a one-party state. The people of this country would revolt against it. Certainly, I want to say that I would never accept a one-party state.

POM Last thing deals with uMkhonto we Sizwe. In Zimbabwe, the men who had been the freedom fighters were never properly integrated back into society with all kinds of deprivations. Will special steps be taken here?

CH There will be important steps taken. We have discussed these steps at our conference in Venda this weekend. And we shall try our best to have our comrades integrated in all the processes in this country, political, social, and economic ones. We shall also try to organise for a situation where our comrades are upgraded in the various fields, some of them going back to school. Others upgrading themselves in military skills. And we want to sensitise all the time the ANC to the plight of comrades.

POM And, do you envisage a day where in a post-apartheid defence force, that an officer corps, a black African corps, would come from members of uMkhonto we Sizwe?

CH We'll certainly envisage a situation where in that new army there will be members of uMkhonto we Sizwe playing an important role. Those who qualify, because there will be standards that will be set up for that new army. Because any army has got its own standards. And we would expect that army to have a solid corps from uMkhonto, yes.

POM Well, thank you. It's been worth chasing you half way around the world!

CH Thank you. Thank you. I hope it has been useful.

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