

Interview by

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Chris Hani

POM Chris, let me start off with a kind of a personal question. You stepped down last year from a very prominent position in the ANC, what many people would have considered to be a very prominent position, where in the eyes of many you are worthy, as apparent to Mr. Mandela, you were certainly were the leading personality and dominant force within the movement. You left that to take over as Secretary General of the SACP, which in many circles, would have been seen as kind of a downward career movement. What motivated you? It is not many people who would give up such an obvious kind of proximity to power to take the head of an organisation that would not give you such a powerful position. What considerations led you to do so?

CH Well, I think it has got something to do with my own history and the history of my participation in the struggle. I came into the movement from the ranks. I started by being an ordinary member of the organisation, participating in the general grind of things in the organisation down at the grassroots level. I have always considered myself basically an activist. It is true that in later years I got involved in leadership positions of the organisation.

I don't think we should go into the history of my own involvement. When I left the country I was already a graduate, but I avoided pursuing a career path at a time when there were so many scholarships offered to young South Africans, I must have been about 20-21. I was one of the few who said the country is burning, the country is in trouble, apartheid is on the rise, most of our colleagues are in prison and we have just now decided on armed struggle and therefore it is vital that when we have decided on the armed struggle, we should be seen to be going for military training and making an effort to go back to the country and challenge them. We were fighting under very difficult conditions, we had to rebuild the movement which had been literally shattered as a result of the repression. So I went to train, rather I went for military training, I finished and came back, and again still I did not go to school, I went to a camp, I had opened a camp, a military camp in Tanzania in a place called Congoa, under very difficult conditions: shortage of food, no proper accommodation, we had to sleep in tents. Everyday we had to get up to go for our military exercises to sharpen ourselves.

After that I went over to Zimbabwe to fight in Zimbabwe and after that period of more than 6-7 months I ended up in a Botswana prison where I served a sentence for carrying weapons of war.

POM Do you remember which prison it was?

CH It was in Botswana, Gaborone. We crossed over from Zimbabwe to Botswana, then back to Zambia. Again still I avoided pursuing an academic career for myself, I went for a refresher course in military training and after that I was sent to South Africa once again in 1973 or 1974 to build the ANC underground and I landed up in Lesotho, where I built underground structures mostly in the Cape and the Free State. And from there, after several attempts were made on my life, I went to Mozambique and Angola, back into the ANC military camps, where I took part in activities against UNITA which was trying to destabilise our camps through ambushes.

This long story therefore is intended to show that I have always enjoyed being involved physically in building the movement in organisation. It is true that I have been re-elected into the National Executive Committee of the ANC, probably receiving the highest votes, which was an indication of the people's confidence in me as part of the ANC leadership.

Strangely many people have said that I am one of the heir apparents, I have never considered myself as an heir apparent. I thought that when the Communist Party needed somebody, I should assist for the simple reason that, I see the Communist Party, despite what has happened in other parts of the world, as a key vehicle in empowering the ordinary working people in South Africa, especially the black workers, who are so exploited and oppressed, and with the wisdom of hindsight, in terms of what I have seen in Africa, I have no guarantee that a movement, on being elected as a new government in future, will pay the necessary attention in terms of improving the lives of our people because I have seen a lot of revolutionary rhetoric in the past in a number of countries which was never really applied when there was a situation of freedom, of independence, and therefore I see the building of the Communist Party in alliance to the trade unions as a watchdog for democracy in our country because we have learnt important lessons from the Soviet Union, where a Communist Party has neglected to democratise the society.

Strangely, and you won't believe it, but we in the party feel strongly about democratising the society, not in terms of the existence of our immediate party, but the existence of other democratic committees, so that it should never be left to the government to decide what the society should do, to decide the direction of society. I feel the people at every stage should stand up and defend their own interests where a government, for instance, is not tackling the socio-economic issues, where a government begins to favour the elite, to allow corruption and the accumulation of riches by a few people at the top and neglecting the very people really who carried the movement along in terms of the struggle against apartheid and white domination.

POM Are you a subscriber to the school of believers to the fact that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely and that the Communist Party is one of those parties that will keep an eye, or watch over those who have the power to on behalf of the people?

CH I really subscribe to the view that it is easy for those in the corridors of power to lock themselves up in their ivory towers, in their beautiful offices and lose the earlier perceptions which made them involved in the struggle. They get flooded and surrounded by the bureaucrats who conduct their own experiments in their offices away from the people. They get surrounded by powerful economic interest groups, internationally and nationally and locally and gradually you see their advice is sometimes based on their immediate circles. Therefore, if we have a vibrant movement on the ground, that movement cannot be ignored and therefore the party also wants to correct the mistakes which it has seen committed in communist countries, so that it does not become a party of elites and bureaucrats, but a party which is accountable to the people on the ground, the members, the workers, the poor in the cities and the rural areas.

POM I want to relate that to the course the recent negotiations covered and particularly the arrangement or offer by the alliance ANC/COSATU/SACP alliance to the government of 75% veto threshold for provisions in the Bill of Rights and a 70% threshold for provisions in the constitution and it struck me, from abroad, that these are extraordinarily high provisions and many people perhaps in the ANC and certainly in the SACP would regard these concessions as a form of sell-out. (1) Do you think that has something to do with what you were talking about, like when elites get together and bargain things away from the people, that they start reaching accommodations with each other and; (2) do you think that if those concessions had been accepted by the government, that the alliance would have had real trouble selling them to the rank and file of the people?

CH I want to take you back to CODESA talks. The 75% on the Bill of Rights was widely and comprehensively discussed by the entire line. There was a feeling that the Bill of Rights is an important document because it guarantees the human rights of individuals, prevents a situation where individuals become victims of a powerful state without protection from the courts and other mechanisms. So the alliance felt on the Bill of Rights, there was no problem about accepting 75%. But we went to CODESA II with an agreement that we were going to press for a two thirds majority in terms of the adoption of the constitution. But as you remember there was a deadlock, the government was refusing to budge. The government was insisting that on everything, the Bill of Rights and the constitution, it should be 75%.

The ANC's Constitutional Commission was meeting the other side quite a few times before CODESA II in order to break the deadlock, so that would be possible to put before CODESA II an agreement coming from the Working Group II. The government was stubborn.

Then a sort of hurried up meeting was called of the patriotic forces in CODESA, of which I was a part as the SACP. The party stood up very vigorously and opposed any form of concession. We said two thirds is a universally accepted standard in terms of adopting the constitution. We argued that after all that a two thirds majority is a later concession and it is going to be very difficult to get two thirds as shown by the Namibian example. It would demand a lot of work on our part in terms of mobilising the people, in terms of assuring that when elections take place for an Constituent Assembly, we actually have about 70%

supporting our position and the position of our allies. We could have argued for 52% or 53% but you know a constitution is an important document, it must be all inclusive and therefore it must not be seen as a constitution of a political party, or political movement, but as a constitution generally of the majority of the inhabitants or the citizens of a country.

Then some of our people in the ANC as well as some components of the Patriotic Front said that let us offer 70% in order to facilitate movement forward. We were defeated when a vote was taken, so our position was defeated. But after that we went to the ANC later and we said that we are of the view that there should have been a meeting of the tripartite alliance before the meeting of the Patriotic Front because the tripartite is part of the struggle in this country, and therefore it is important before you open up and not for us not to trust each other amongst ourselves. But you see, the government was foolish and it rejected that 70% and for us as the parties right now to get to the original position of 66%. We got a lot of flak from the ground from our members, both ANC and the party and COSATU, and the people were very, very critical of that concession. For me it was indicative of a growing tendency which we should avoid, of sometimes, you see, in a haste to reach agreements, we at the top sometimes find ourselves accepting positions which we are going to find very difficult to defend and justify when we confront the people, the members of our organisations.

POM Why was there this emphasis on haste?

CH There has been a feeling that we should reach an agreement with the government, by June we should have an interim government and we should facilitate a situation where we have elections for a Constituent Assembly by the end of the year, and I think that people felt that achieving that was important. That status was the one that brought this on, and we have learnt our lesson and I think all of us should have learnt that lesson.

But you see negotiations should always be taken to the people. It does not mean that on each and every issue you go to the people, but on fundamental issues, crucial issues of the future, that must be taken to the people. Because you must avoid negotiating at the top where the bottom is not involved because agreements will have to be defended, leaders must defend those agreements if settlements are going to be durable. We never have settlements which are going to precipitate a crisis, and if settlements are seen by the people as a sell-out then there will be a crisis because the people will have seen the settlement as one between the ruling government and the leaders, a settlement that does not take care of the interests of the people.

For instance, the people on the ground expect negotiations to focus also on their day to day problems, unemployment, poverty, schools, health services, etc. They want a government which, after it has been elected, should begin to focus on those problems without any hurdles or obstacles being placed on the way, and it is quite clear that the Nationalist Party government wants to prevent immediate movement on socio-economic issues once we have a post-apartheid government. It wants that government to refer every basic socio-economic issue, let us say, to them for approval, that is why they have brought forward the idea of a second house with vetoing powers. I am told now they are trying to drop it, and that is why they want 70%. Their calculation is that between themselves,

Inkatha, Mangope and other groups they can have about 35% or 36% which they can use to block any serious legislation that begins to address the problems of the people.

POM But just in the light of what you said, according to a 70% threshold, was in fact saying in return for a quick arrangement or agreement on an interim government and an election, we would give you a veto power. But what I don't get is your negotiators are clever people, couldn't they read into this situation?

CH I don't want to be severe on our negotiators. They were juggling with sums and arithmetic, some of them were saying that there is a difference between 66.7% and 70% because of the 3% and yet when you look at the electorate of this country of about 80 million or 90 million that three point something percent actually is more than a million, a million voters. I think that they must have miscalculated, I want to be charitable.

POM Particularly what surprises me more is on the Bill of Rights. My understanding was that a Bill of Rights would be used, coming from the principles of the Freedom Charter, would be used as a document to entrench the basic rights of housing, employment, health care, the basic issues of socio-economic conditions and that this would be one way of ensuring that they would never go off the socio-political agenda, and yet coming with a 75% was effectively saying to the government you get to veto the inclusion of this second generation of rights.

CH And in fact you see the government was saying, and it has been very, very firm on this, that we want the Bill of Rights to include the protection of properties, and you know the property relations in this country. Property is in the hands of the minority and we feel that we should not allow a situation where property should be protected by way of an entrenched core of laws in a constitution, and we feel, the party feels that there should be a definition of properties. We have no problems about personal and non-exploitative property, but you see, in general we feel that property in general in this country can't be entrenched in terms of constitutional protection, because that ties the hands of a future government in terms of addressing the landlessness of the people, and for me, even this issue of 75% is not a closed issue. It is something that we should revisit and discuss.

POM It should be, yes.

CH Should be!

POM I find it difficult to believe there has been quite a bit of discussion within the SACP where people have said, "OK, give it 75%, even though that means we will no longer get second generation rights, even though it means they probably will be able to veto all kinds of things on property rights", it is just difficult to believe.

CH Well, there is an ongoing debate now on this question of property rights. We feel very strongly as a party that we cannot go along with entrenching the protection of property rights. We can only go as far as saying that, "Yes, entrench personal and non-exploitative property", but in terms of property in general, you leave the door open for negotiation with property owners, open for legislating, for instance, for the buying of land

and certain property, open for a situation where we must have arbitration courts, because again we don't want a government which is just going to say, "We are grabbing so and so's property, we feel and we are paying this and this price." We feel that the owner must have access to an arbitration court, so that he should feel that he has had a say in whatever price. So that, let us say we want to buy some land as a government, because we want to distribute that land amongst people who are landless, and because of the nature of our revolution we cannot have a situation where we just grab, we want to negotiate, we want to buy, but we don't want obstacles to be set in terms of acquiring land which is not occupied or utilised, because some farmers here, and big business, like Anglo American and other companies, they are owning millions of hectares, and in most cases, or in some cases, they are not even utilising it productively. Therefore a government must have space to say that land is not utilised, we are going to buy it, we are going to procure it and negotiate for a price.

POM So, would it be fair to say that in future discussions, the SACP will not accept a 75% threshold on veto threshold for a Bill of Rights?

CH We will discuss it with our colleagues in the ANC and COSATU; we will come forward very strongly that this acceptance endorsement of 75% on the Bill of Rights will actually lead to a situation where the government of the day, a democratic government of the day will actually have its hands tied in terms of re-distributing land in this country, in terms even of not opening up some land for acquisition by small business, and we know that for a very long time, black entrepreneurs will have problems about getting land for their own business as well. It is not just a question of redistributing the land, there is the question even of making room for black entrepreneurs in the cities in terms of space and land, for their own business interests.

You know, the land around Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria and everywhere, is still in the hands of white land owners, white property owners and it is going to be very, very difficult, you see, to make land and space and property available for the up-and-coming black entrepreneur group. We are going to be under pressure from that group, even in terms of saying that we want a mixed economy, where private enterprise will play a significant role. The blacks in this country are going to say, but what are you doing about us? I am referring to the black entrepreneur group. What are you doing about us? We want to acquire in the cities so that we can also begin to start our own enterprises, and the government therefore must have room to address a historical grievance on the part of the black middle class or the part of the black entrepreneur group.

POM Let me take you back to the reasons that you suggested that the negotiators made the concessions they did, i.e. they wanted an interim government quickly and an election for the Constituent Assembly by the end of the year. (1) Many people we have talked to say that the ANC, the alliance, or whatever, have an electorate apparatus in place that would ensure a high turnout in the black community, e.g. that maybe up to 25% of people lack any kind of document needed to vote when you are 18 years of age; (2) that in addressing this problem you will run into a cultural objection into having documents, it is another form of a pass book, you have to carry documentation around with you, it is something that is associated with oppression in the first place; (3) other people say that it

makes me liable to start paying income tax, there are a whole host of things that have to be addressed, the mechanism is not there to target a vote and to pull out a vote, and that all of this must be in place before fulfilling your interests of having an election.

CH That is true. I have had experience, serious difficulties in the preparations for the coming elections. The regime is better placed than we are, they come from a culture of elections. Most whites have been registered as voters, and yet the situation on the other hand within the black community is one of millions of people not even having documents like a book of life, or an identity card.

The ANC, especially, is beginning to address this problem of registration, of educating people about the importance of elections. You must realise that very few of us, including, I think 90% of the leadership, have ever voted in elections. We don't know what elections are about, we know about our elections in Durban in terms of a secret ballot at the national conference, otherwise we have never really participated in any form of election, and I think that goes for most of us. And therefore, we have got now, in addition to the mass campaign we are having, to start unleashing a mass campaign to educate our people on the importance of voting, in terms of the elections and the policy of acquiring documents. That must take the form of house to house campaigning, both in the urban areas and the rural areas. We don't have much time and I think de Klerk will surprise us one of these days and call an election, and I think he knows that our Achilles heel is the fact that our people have not been mobilised for participation in elections. It is associated, you know, registration, as you correctly point out, with repression, with the pass laws, with income tax, PAYE, with the state knowing where you stay so that the police can come and raid you and arrest you, so we have got now to change this outlook and say that, you see registration is part of our strategy to defeat this government.

POM Do you think that the leadership's own lack of experience with what elections are about, like mechanisms that are involved in successfully organising for a vote, that mobilising a vote is not the same thing as mobilising for a rally, it is an entirely different thing and the feeling that since we can mobilise for mass action it will just be as easy to mobilise for elections, may make them a bit complacent in this regard?

CH You see I think the basic problem, I think one of the demands we should make is that in the registration of voters, there should be the presence of the international community. I am absolutely suspicious of the Ministry of the Interior or Home Affairs in this country, and as long as our people see that the registration is being handled by a government department they will not eagerly flock to register and therefore there must be the presence, as was the case in Namibia, of the international community working with the regime. Naturally the regime has got the facilities, the offices and the resources. But somebody somewhere must ensure that this question of registration, of voters is going to be a straightforward affair, free and untampered with.

But going back to the question you are raising, I think this regime has calculated that in order to defeat the ANC, let us not even give them time to think and discuss elections. Let us involve them in destabilisation. I think the regime has succeeded to push us away from even a space to discuss elections. We are so overstretched because there is a lot of

violence in the country. Our movement is being destabilised, our members are being killed, the surrogates of the regime are waging a war against us.

In areas like KwaZulu, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana, the puppets of the regime are not even allowing the movement to operate freely. It is very difficult for the movement to organise a meeting in KwaZulu, Bophuthatswana or Ciskei. In other words the regime will bring about maximum disruption of our activities, so that we don't even have the opportunity to set up an apparatus to look exactly into the questions you are raising, or talking to our people, even taking our people, organising transport and taking our people to the Department of Home Affairs and its offices to register to get documents. We have not been given this opportunity because we are still fighting against oppression, we are fighting back to defend the very existence of our movement in certain cases, and I think now for more than a year, apart from negotiations, we have been involved in a situation of sheer defence of our movement. I think the regime is following, as far as I am concerned, a coherent strategy of not giving us an opportunity. The same thing that it did in Namibia, now that it has come to light through details supplied by some of the people who were involved in this campaign of destabilisation of disinformation, of making it very difficult for SWAPO, especially in the southern part of Namibia, to set up structures. SWAPO failed to get the 66% because it got the bulk of its vote in the north, because they had been waging a struggle and SWAPO was very popular in the north, but where it had had problems in terms of setting up its structures is the south. It did not get the necessary support. I think the government does not want us to get the necessary support in the key areas, PWV, the Western Cape and Natal, and that is why it has intensified violence, destabilisation and disruption in these three key, main economic areas.

PAT You have already said for the delegation in the negotiations to accept the 70% is to get to election by the end of the year, what happens in the psychology of that, I mean there seems to be a contradiction here?

CH Yes I agree, and I don't know, I don't want to pretend to have an answer. I rule out as a matter of the party and as part of the leadership any coalitions, any form of coalition with the NP.

POM Even in an interim arrangement?

CH Even in an interim arrangement. I don't think we should have a coalition with the NP. I know the programme says so, but I hold a very strong view as an individual that our movement is being drawn into a very dangerous trap. Co-option if you like.

You know that interim situation, will lead to a position where we are going to be painted with the same brush with the NP. This NP has an accumulation of corruption, of scandals, of systematic withdrawal of social protection from the workers, of having neglected the area of housing for the poor people, of having neglected the building of schools for the African population. Now you share power with that group, whether it is for a year, and I am telling you in the eyes of the people, as they get poorer everyday, when they are retrenched, when they are dismissed by their bosses, they will say, "Mandela is there, he is part of this", and when elections come, people will say, "Why should I vote for

an ANC government which in the last nine months has been part of the government but has done nothing for me?"

POM You are saying that the level of compromise coalition ends up as being defining interests in terms of co-option, that this does not allow the radical changes that must be made at the start of a new government to give people confidence that a new beginning has been made.

CH I don't oppose that part in our thinking, in looking at the problems of this country. The NP has got nothing in common with the SACP or the ANC in terms of say, for instance, we shall not allow the privatisation of public utilities, because the public utilities are supposed to deliver to the ordinary person by providing reasonable services, services which are in line with what they are paid, in line with the wages and the salaries of the people, I am referring to electricity, water and transport. Whereas this government is hell bent on privatising these as soon as possible. In that position the government is supported by Inkatha and other groups.

We are going to press, let us say in that coalition, for a living wage and for the legalisation of trade unions in the public sectors, including the right of those workers striking. This government does not want even now to negotiate with NAHAWU and other public sector unions.

So you are going to have a dog fight within that Cabinet and there is not going to be any movement. But meanwhile the view from down below, will be that those folks are in government but things have not changed, the status quo remains.

POM Did you see any element of that in the recent economic policy released by the ANC, the policy document that was in fact endorsed by Business Day? I have a quote here which says, "It is difficult to take serious exception to the economic policy the ANC has proposed, and that in itself is a measure of how the ANC leadership has shifted from its earlier unflinching support for socialism".

CH Well, Business Day is definitely distorting the ANC policy. The ANC has never stood for socialism. It is true that in the Freedom Charter, if you were to consider nationalisation as indicating socialism, you must say that the Freedom Charter has got aspects of socialism. But in a bourgeois government that is socialised, I mean they have nationalised that, for example, in Western Europe. And they have nationalised in the interests of trying the problems of a country that has emerged from a situation of war, to bring about reparations in terms of damages, loss of property and loss of other things to the people, and also to make sure that government has got a voice in the economic restructuring. Therefore nationalisation must be seen as an attempt by a newly elected government.

POM But the ANC document seemed to play down nationalisation to a considerable degree.

CH It says it is one of the options, it does not say we shall nationalise this and that, but it says we shall consider nationalisation in order to bring about socio-economic restructuring.

I think deep in the nature of the sort of organisation the ANC is, I think for me, this is reasonable.

POM But if you were to contrast its policy document and economics, versus the economic policies of the SACP, where would they converge, where would they diverge?

CH We are busy discussing the economic policies of the party and my view is that those economic policies of the party must be seen to be different from the ANC's. We as a party must come out in favour of nationalising some elements of the SA economy. But you see, we don't want to be state-ist in that nationalisation, as they did in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We want nationalisation to benefit the working class, we want maximum worker participation in nationalising industry. We will have to discuss when we nationalise about our capacity to make nationalised industry cost effective, effective and accountable and democratic because we don't want to create a nationalised industry, a bureaucratic elite, which we saw in the former Socialist countries, and the party will also push for a situation where there should be legislation that will ensure social protection on the part of private industry, where we shall sympathetically support the struggles of the trade unions for worker's participation, not only in nationalised industry, but also in the private industry. Of course the form of that worker participation has got to be discussed between ourselves, the unions and the government of the future. We are going to be mobilising the people for these demands even in a future SA. Some people think that mass action will disappear when we get an ANC government. That is not going to be the case.

We are going to make sure that an ANC government does not renege on the basic programme that revolves around the interests of the working people, the poor people, on the issues of democracy. Some elements might resent, the people in the townships for instance, pushing their demands, setting up their own civic organisation, their own democratic municipalities, because we have seen governments in other parts of Africa, Asia, newly elected governments after colonialism wanting to control the activities of the City Council, of the Mayor, and wanting to impose their own person as a Mayor because he is a good party man, and the people not electing that Mayor, and therefore that Mayor not being responsible, say, to that Local Council. We will want to prevent those things and that is why we feel that as a party we have got to be strong. We don't want to be seen as riding on the back of the ANC. That is why we are going out into the regions on our own steam as a party because we want to make sure that this country is not dominated by a clique of powerful people, a clique of very rich people, who will use their control of the economy to influence the people in government.

POM Jeremy Cronin had this paper on mass mobilisation and the Leipzig option.

CH Where he explained the Leipzig option.

POM Yes. What I hear you saying is that under a new dispensation the tactic of mass mobilisation in the forms of either marches, or occupation of government buildings and stayaways, the tactics that are now being used to put pressure on the government, should still be used to hold a new government to its promises and to make sure that the needs, the fundamental needs of the people are met, that in this sense that government is no different or should be treated no differently than this government.

CH That is right. Well, treated differently. I think we will be sympathetic to the newly elected government. We will engage it in dialogue, and we hope that it will promote dialogue. We are convinced that that new government is not going to be deploying the police and the army whenever we go into the streets. Going to the streets will be the final objective, because in terms of dialogue, the government will not have responded favourably, not opening its doors. Because while we are for an open government, a government that encourages dialogue, a government that does not think dialogue should be confined to the four walls of parliament, because you see there is a tendency, even in the western countries where there are democracies, for people to believe that it is enough that those guys in the Senate and Congress are discussing our problems, the tendency is to petition the MP and say this is the problem, can you raise it with the government.

But we feel that there should be a number of organisations, like the Civics, the trade unions, you know, organs of civil society, the students, the church, which must now and again have their own meetings to discuss the problems of the people, because we feel that we must know the views of the man in the street and even the views of business, big, medium and small. These guys in big business today, they don't know that we are actually fighting for a situation where they themselves would raise their voices in future in the field. We know that our governments for instance, take bribes from them, in terms of facilitating imports and exports, in terms of processing their documents as quickly as possible, we know that in the civil service there are civil servants who have become very wealthy in other countries because under the counter he receives a bribe from somebody who wants to export diamonds or wants to do something, and we want to prevent that sort of situation by everybody feeling that I am protected from the fellows in the civil service, in government. I can say to a Minister, "You are acting illegally", without knowing that will result in a situation where I am kicked out. If I am kicked out or I am victimised, I must go to some democratic formation and say, "Here are the fact, I did the following and I was victimised", and, of course, there will be exchanges, but ultimately people should be able to take to the streets to highlight their demands, and I am saying that that should happen even in future SA.

I want to go to the Leipzig option, which Cronin did not develop. In East Germany the workers came out, correctly, fighting against corruption because the leaders of the Communist Party, both in government and in the party had a life style which was so different from the life style of the ordinary working people. They had holiday homes, they had dachas, they had private hunting grounds, they had yachts at sea for holidaying together with those who were close to them, some of them operated foreign accounts, when people had problems about getting foreign currency, and then there was the Stasi, the security police. If you read Work in Progress, I am allergic to a powerful security force which is unaccountable. In a small way I have seen it in the ANC where the security will whisper to the leaders that you know, so and so is not to be trusted. So I am saying that in a future SA the security service should be made accountable. You know the Stasi, for instance, using the fact that we are surrounded by hostile imperialist forces, West Germany, etc., we must not be allowed to speak out, to spread our views because if we do that we endanger the security of the state.

I am against a situation where people must be made to be blinkered, made to follow a certain path in their thinking because of their so-called endangering of the security of the state. I think a state becomes stronger when its citizens have got freedom of expression, when they are not persecuted, when they are free. I believe free citizens can actually protect the state better than those who will run it because they fear that they will lose a job or they will end up in prison. The point I am making is that in the GDR, these people came out in their millions and said, "Down with Honecker, down with the Communist Party", but that victory did not go into the hands of those people. There were some people waiting on the periphery to make use of this powerful expression of opposition to defeat communism. That victory went into the hands of big business in West Germany and that is why the interests of the ordinary working class in Germany have not been served at all. There are no attempts to improve their lives up to, even in areas where they work, together within the former West Germany, they get poor salaries.

Therefore, my view is that those workers who sacrificed and walked into the streets allowed their victory to get into the hands of other people. They should have reorganised their society to do what we think we are doing and saying in the SACP, build an open society, strengthen the organs of civil society, make sure that you have got regular elections, make sure that no government ever has unlimited powers, and the second step would have been to discuss, in my own view, on an equal basis the modality of the unification of Germany.

POM I want you to relate that to what I would see as kind of a change in negotiation strategy that seems to be taking place between the collapse of CODESA and the aftermath of Boipatong. Of the collapse of CODESA, Mandela and de Klerk kind of put the best face on it and it was said the problems are resolvable. Yet you move on a month and you see a change in attitude in that all negotiations are off, the pre-conditions related to violence must be met, we are going to engage in mass mobilisation, we are going to put our people on the streets. So I see a change in tactics. Why has this change in tactics occurred?

In our address to CODESA II, we said CODESA is deadlocked, on that very day when we stood up. We said the dead-locker is de Klerk, and we continued to explain why de Klerk was deadlocking CODESA. We said basically de Klerk is clinging to power. He is not protecting the whites, he is protecting the interests of the NP. The NP must be around throughout, even in a post-apartheid SA that must be in the constitution. And we said, you see, this government is not fit to rule this country and we continued to present a catalogue of all its misrule, from corruption, looting of public funds, murders by fellows occupying prominent positions in the security forces, and we said this government must go, this is time for this government to go. We said the future of SA is not going to be decided at CODESA. There are millions of people out there in streets, in the locations who want change as soon as possible, and that we are going to go to those people for a fresh mandate. That was the position of the party. And in a way, we already presented, not in an elaborate manner, the whole possibilities of mass action, because the ANC has always said negotiation is the centre of struggle, the terrain of struggle, it is not the only terrain of struggle. If negotiations are deadlocked, we have got to make sure that we unlock those deadlocks through mass action.

We look back at our own failures and weaknesses in the past, we talked to de Klerk against the background of a lull and I think we saw illusions that everything would be solved at CODESA, the people must just wait and should be passive spectators, and I think that was one of the weaknesses of our negotiations strategy. We also allowed this government to play with us, to put us on a merry-go-around. We had no responses to violence, we had no responses to provocations, so that the government was doing nothing about the violence. We certainly did nothing about the growing belligerence of Buthelezi and his war lords and we felt that CODESA was going to succeed. We also made a mistake to think that this government was serious about negotiations. We were saying all the adjectives, very, very nice adjectives we gave de Klerk about integrity and everything, forgetting, and this is the problem with political amnesia, forgetting that these guys were the architects of all those strategies of the past, that these guys actually had the security force drilled into the methods of dealing with us, of seeing us as enemies, and that those officers who ruthlessly crushed the organisation in Namibia and Angola, who killed and maimed, were still calling the shots within the security force in this country. I think those were the mistakes we committed, and I think we paid the price for those mistakes.

I believe that now we should go back to negotiations with clear positions. We must not go back to negotiations to repeat the protracted, endless exchanges and discussions of technical matters. First of all de Klerk must do something about this violence; he must do something about the hostels; he must accept the presence of international forces so that he is not a referee and a player; and finally, de Klerk must be made to agree to certain strategies in terms of the interim government and in terms of elections for a sovereign Constituent Assembly. That Constituent Assembly should be a one chamber house with no veto from anybody.

POM So that is sixty six and two thirds?

CH 66% ratification.

POM You see no movement back to 70%?

CH No, no, no, not at all. The party will fight any movement back. We will take it to the people if we are defeated at the level of the tripartite alliance, because we feel it is a vital issue because anything more than 66%, which is a high ceiling in itself, will make it difficult for us to change our society, and we can't have a society where we have got the few haves and the overwhelming many have nots.

POM Did the government blow it, did they blow the best deal that was on offer? Should they have grabbed it?

CH They should have grabbed the offer and I think some of them are regretting that they did not grab the offer. They had a golden opportunity.

I think these fellows are arrogant. They have ruled for 44 years, they have always had their own trend, they have always eaten their cake and had it. They could not accept any reasonable offer, they wanted the ANC to accept everything the government was dishing

up. This is the arrogance of a government which feels it is on top, that it can, although negotiating, it can at the same time dictate. The NP has not been paralysed, it has not felt our blows and I think part of the mass action in my view should teach a lesson or two to knock sense into them that we can hurt them. That they cannot tell us what to do, that we are not their 'boys'. They still, I want to use Jay Naidoo's phrase, they still believe we are their kitchen 'boys'.

POM Since we have been here in the last couple of days, we have heard that it would be a three week strike, then we heard it would be a one week strike and today the papers said it might be a voluntary one day work stoppage. There does not appear to be a coherent strategy.

CH There is not and this is natural, all these possibilities belong to areas of discussions. You must remember that we are an alliance, the ANC, the party and COSATU and that we are discussing with a number of groups and formations in this country who are expressing their own concerns, the churches, the big business and other organisations. We would like to pull into mass action as many of these organisations and formations as possible, so that we really deal a blow to this stubborn, unyielding and provocative government. Therefore, we also don't want to be seen by anybody to be just going out of our way to ruin the economy. We don't want people to see us as unreasonable because we want to be seen as eminent, reasonable patriots who want to save this country against the sort of destruction this government has wrought, against the sort of suffering this government has brought about, and therefore we are going to be having meetings, I think today or tomorrow, we are going to be having meetings of the Secretaries of the tripartite alliance, that is myself, Jay and Cyril.

We will look into all this and again. What I would say, because as the weeks go by we must come up with a more coherent approach, but I am not worried about everything being put forward, that is general brainstorming, we have not begun to mix together, or to weave together common tactics and common strategies. The Alliance Campaigns Committee is meeting and is also discussing these problems.

POM Where do you see the government coming from now? I mean de Klerk took the occasion of the UN Security Council meeting on South Africa to announce merging of the times he wants to –

CH You see the whole approach is a very, very stale approach. I listened to the TV and radio this morning and I was not impressed. You know de Klerk is trying to provide Pik Botha with ammunition when he addresses the Security Council. Again de Klerk is not addressing issues of substance. It is easy to say, "We are going to dissolve Battalion 32, Koevoet and others and integrate them." You know the same murderers will be in some other unit, continuing to use the same old method, you must remember that battalion was not commanded by the Angolans, they were commanded by white officers, and you see, we are saying this should be dismantled and there should be procedures for instance, for their repatriation. We don't want them in this country, they are mercenaries who were used by this government to fight the Angolan government and to fight SWAPO. We don't need them, we don't need Koevoet here and therefore we are not impressed by de Klerk's

announcement.

Again, de Klerk is saying nothing about covert forces, which we know to be there. We know that this country is full of these covert forces that were used here and outside, those who killed Goniwe and others and those who have killed so many of our activists here, and again de Klerk is saying nothing about the hostels. He says he will deal with the hostels without dehumanising the situation. The situation is already dehumanised, I don't know if de Klerk - he should go to those hostels, those people are not living as human beings there, the conditions are terribly appalling and it is pointless arguing to say, 'without dehumanising. Those people need family units so that they begin to lead normal lives. Inkatha does not want that. De Klerk again is snuggling up to Inkatha. Inkatha does not want to dismantle all the hostels because they are their strongholds, they don't want an open hostel which would be approachable and would also be subjected to a number of influences, so that people can make their own choices.

Inkatha wants these people to be fenced around so that other organisations don't have access to them. That is the strategy of Inkatha. Now you see this is de Klerk wanting to curry favour with Buthelezi and therefore, the point I am making is that even at this stage in his initial response, they fail to address real problems, the problems of violence. The problems of violence are around security forces which are ungovernable. De Klerk has no control. It is either de Klerk is deliberately conniving with them or he has lost control because he has got to make sure that there is control there. I mean those elements within the security forces certainly do what they like.

POM But the Goldstone Commission came out very categorically about eleven days ago saying there was no evidence to link de Klerk, the Cabinet and security officials to the violence. It was a point of issue at a very sensitive time, politically, that appeared to exonerate the government and de Klerk at the very time when your allegations against them were at their most intense.

CH You see Justice Goldstone is creating problems for himself in terms of his own impartiality because he sat for a week looking into the Madala Hostel problem and was quick to say the security forces and de Klerk were not involved. How does he reach that sort of conclusion? Firstly, this government is the de facto government of the day, secondly, nobody is saying that de Klerk is participating directly, you know, putting on a balaclava and going out at night to kill the residents of Boipatong. We are saying the violence on the scale of Boipatong happens because the government is doing nothing about violence. It is allowing 200-300 people to march, provocation which he would not allow if 200-300 members of the ANC or SACP marched to ???. We are saying that it is inconceivable in our minds that people could march to sleeping Boipatong, kill women and children and go back to the KwaMadala Hostel without being detected. It is a repetition of what we saw in Swanieville near Krugersdorp, where they marched to a squatter settlement owned by a certain Swanepoel, killed people on their way back, they met the police and the police escorted them back to their hostels without arresting them. It is a repetition of that sort of thing.

Therefore, we cannot accept Goldstone's assertion that the police and de Klerk are not

involved. They are involved in the sense that they are respecting it. Again, I want to raise another issue. De Klerk visits Boipatong, the people throw him out. After he has left, hardly had he been away for 30 minutes, the police open up on unarmed people and kill them, and therefore would we be wrong to say that the security forces and this government are doing nothing about violence and because of their acts of commission or omission, are responsible for this violence? We cannot narrow it in a legalistic sense and say there is no evidence to suggest that Captain Van Rooyen and Lieutenant Van der ?? were not there. Why were they not there, and secondly, why did it take them 2-3 days after we had protested and called out for them, even to enter the KwaMadala hostel? For 3-4 days the police were passive, they were just denying, they were not even entering that hostel until there was an outcry locally and internationally. Is that not a clear indication of the government's refusal to deal with the violence against the people?

POM What puzzles me then is why Mr. Mandela, on his way to New York would have praised the work of Mr. Justice Goldstone.

CH Well we must agree that there are certain positive things that Justice Goldstone has done and I think it would be wrong just to say he has been a disaster, he has been a failure.

Yes we have complained about Battalion 32 and said this unit should never be used for peace making operations in this country, that instead of keeping peace it is making a mess and should be withdrawn. He has said something about the hostels; he has complained about the fact that the police in a number of bases have been shown to have kidnapped and killed activists and he has said that in Ermelo, the black hats, a criminal group was actually supported by certain police officers, and he says that despite the fact that these things have been exposed, the Sebokeng killings and other issues, the government has not done anything. Therefore it would be wrong for any political movement, wrong for Mandela not to praise where praise is merited, but we are saying although we praise Justice Goldstone, Justice Goldstone's terms of reference are narrow. He cannot go beyond making recommendations. He has no powers to implement, so I think he is becoming frustrated himself in my view.

But again, Justice Goldstone, is investigating Boipatong and the police have got powers in this country to make investigations difficult. He is guided by the same state, by the same administration, so his investigations are within the context of a government which would like investigations to follow a certain pattern. That is why the leader of the NP has always been quick to say, "Look, we are vindicated, the ANC must apologise", that is why at one time, for instance, they said the ANC and Inkatha are to blame, and carefully left out the section which dealt with their own areas of misdemeanours. In other words that is why Justice Goldstone must be praised for his courage, the government had wanted the Goldstone Commission to be a weapon to vindicate, like earlier commissions that this government has appointed, to vindicate the government's actions against the people. So, I think it is correct to say, well done, where we think he has been good.

He is carrying out an impossible task in my view. These fellows here are good in cover-up operations. They will make it very, very difficult for the truth to come out if they can. Do you know how they have rushed to the Supreme Court to prohibit the publishing of the truth? They even block investigations by enterprising journalists in Weekly Mail and the

New Nation. They use everything to make investigations difficult. So with the Justice Goldstone Commission, they will clear the path and remove the traces. I think the police in this country are fully capable of removing the trace so that when he walks there, any signs of anything that would facilitate fair investigations are removed.

We are dealing with a government here which over more than ten years, unleashed a war against us and perfected the methods of misinformation of deception and those people are still there in the government, in the security forces, in administration, even in the Cabinet. We are dealing with very, very dishonest people here. People who have been utterly perverted by years of neo-fascism.

POM Over the last two years, and we have gone into the townships and talked to people, we found a surprising level of goodwill towards Mr. de Klerk, even last year, and many people who would support the ANC would refer to Comrade de Klerk. Is that now gone?

CH It has gone, it has gone everywhere. We have corrected that mistake. We have actually gone out of our way to paint the real de Klerk. We have discovered that we allowed de Klerk's mask to cover up the real de Klerk, the petty and the cruel, calculating leader of the NP, who wants to defeat the ANC, who wants to uproot the ANC at every turn. If the people still have that perception, it was because of our own propaganda, the way we were dealing with this government, and we have decided to take off our gloves. We are really hitting them and if you notice now, the attitudes of our people are hardened and our own propaganda, especially the party, we have gone out to draw posters that reveal the real de Klerk.

When we started this campaign at the time of the referendum, we said well, both of you, when we were referring to Treurnicht and de Klerk. We are going out into the regions everywhere and exposing this government. Because de Klerk wants to be regarded as Mr. Nice, especially overseas, yet he can't even sit down and settle a strike of hospital workers here and would want a situation where he actually bashes and destroys the unions because he can't accept people demanding R724.00 a month and permanent status in their employment, he can't accept that as being reasonable!

POM When did you meet Mr. de Klerk first?

CH I met de Klerk first at some meeting before D F Malan.

POM What was your initial impression of him?

CH Well I did not discuss much with de Klerk. I saw a man who was chain smoking, who is personable and quite amiable and one does not have a good experience of NP leaders, but you know, for me it was clear that de Klerk had his own agenda and certainly I would say the man was not about to surrender power to the majority of the people of this country, but who felt that apartheid had failed and they needed a dispensation. But such dispensation, in my view, was what de Klerk had tailored a year or two years before he met us, and he was selling that dispensation to us. And I think he is quite a good and

capable salesman, he knows how to market the sort of vision that he has for SA: the vision of no winners and no losers, whatever may happen.

POM He calls it sharing. It struck me that during the elections he conducted the dialogue on the debate on the white side since 1990 exclusively in terms of this being a process about the sharing of power and during the white's only referendum reports carried by the BBC, National Public Radio in the States all talked about this being a referendum about whether whites would proceed with a process that would lead to the sharing of power with blacks. The leadership here really did not stand up and say, hold on, this is not what this process is about, this process is about the transfer of power, it is about majority rule and if he is telling you that it is about the sharing of power, he is being dishonest with you.

CH We did, and that is why you are going to see this thing in the Umsebenzi. That position was not given publicity. Well to hell with him, specifically because de Klerk has never accepted a full democracy as universally accepted, he has always felt that the minority in this country, the whites, should have the same powers as the blacks and that any government in future should have a clear representation of whites to safeguard white interests, and those white interests in my view are the interests of capitalism.

POM Were you surprised by the margin of the vote with which the referendum carried?

CH I was surprised, but I expected that he would win because he mobilised not only the NP machinery and the government machinery, he mobilised the entire big business behind him, the entire media, the entire radio, TV and everything behind him. He also mobilised the leaders in the Western countries, he certainly got their support and goodwill, most leaders in the Western communities threatened to do something if de Klerk's initiatives were thwarted by the whites.

POM What do you think white people thought they were voting for?

CH White people were voting for a continuation of the negotiations that would lead to power sharing, that would lead to a situation where their day-to-day lives would remain the same as before, where they would actually have the last word in any changes in this country. The whites still want to be in control, they were voting for that. They were aware that the old control under an apartheid state was no longer effective, they were voting for new controls, that they would have some black faces in government but which would not touch them. The whites in this country don't want to sacrifice their own vested interests in order to make democracy work, in order to have an integrated society.

POM Do you think it eliminates the threat of the right wing or is the threat of the right wing still there?

CH No, it has not been eliminated. The right wing will continue mobilising, but it was mortally wounded as a result of the outcome of the election. The threat was reduced but it still remains. It can always reappear and get a momentum from the growing contradictions between us and de Klerk.

POM Where does de Klerk go from here?

CH I wish I knew. De Klerk will play tough, will try to make sure that he defeats mass action, he will even go to the extent of probably arresting leading opponents of the regime, he will try to destroy certain organisations, he has already started with his anti-communism, painting us as being responsible for the militancy of the ANC, he will bash some of the unions, and he will plunge this country into a crisis similar to the crisis of the eighties.

POM So you don't see any quick return to the negotiating table?

CH No, I don't. We are not going to return to negotiations simply to refute what happened after CODESA 2, and de Klerk wants us to return to that situation. His approach that let us go and talk, let us talk, let us break the deadlock, let us set up some other working groups, let us probably combine the groups, we must have more workable groups, rather than 4-5 groups, let us have one main group, in other words, he will want us to agree to talking about our grievances instead of dealing with them. Our grievances are clearly contained in that memorandum. I think he is going to avoid answers and the provision of solutions, but will want to talk us back into CODESA.

But knowing de Klerk, he is going to stick to his guns, he is going to make concessions on issues which are not of a substantive nature, like saying, "I am dismantling Battalion 32 and re-integrating them into the SADF". He has made these promises before. "We will allow an international presence, but it must not interfere in the problems of this country", and all that sort of thing, "We are a sovereign country", he is going to be repeating all these outworn statements. But now de Klerk will want to assert himself, to make the whites feel that he is not a weak President, that his government is not tottering, he is going to embark on a massive propaganda against the ANC, he will dash the ANC leaders both literally and figuratively. Some activities are going to be eliminated, some activists are going to be eliminated.

POM Do you think, I know you are involved in some mediation in the conflict between former members of the MK and established township leadership in Sebokeng, is that symptomatic of something that could happen if this continuing vacuum of nothing happening, in the absence of the involvement of people at the grassroots, does that create a climate where this kind of conflict can start arising within various elements of the organisation?

CH Despite the suspension of military actions, people have taken their own initiatives. Some upon the decision of the ANC to build self-defence units. The areas affected by serious violence have seized the initiative and they have built these self-defence units, in the Vaal for instance, Phola Park, Meadowlands, Dobsonville, areas where our people are staying next to the hostels where the violence emanates from, the Midlands of Natal, Southern Natal. The movement must realise that it must give leadership to the self-defence units. Those self-defence units are not an abstract, hypothetical, or theoretical issue, they are products of the feeling of people to defend themselves so that they can continue living, continue surviving.

Now, if you don't as a movement intervene and provide the political leadership and whatever form of assistance, you are pushing these self-defence units towards spontaneity, and in the process they will be hijacked by all sorts of elements and I believe this is dangerous. They will be hijacked by criminal elements who want space for themselves so that they can continue with their criminal activities. They will be used even by unscrupulous leaders who want to utilise them in terms of strengthening their own positions, and again that is dangerous for the organisation and we must move in and build them and solidify and make them accountable, accountable to the community and to organisations.

The more de Klerk distorts the violence, the more he will bring back the growing feeling that we should withdraw our suspension of armed activities. The more people will decide on their own if the ANC does not make a move, the people will decide on their own how best to defend themselves. We must not forget that there are hundreds of MK fellows who have the skills here and it is not very difficult in this country to buy weapons. They are coming across the Mozambican border, they are being sold by the elements within the security forces who had their own weapons at the time when it was permissible to kill. People will buy these weapons and will fight back, and we must intervene, of course, to make it impossible, for the government has infiltrated our defence units and in certain cases the government infiltrators push the defence units towards carrying out actions against the people. The government wants tomorrow for the society to blame the ANC, there are many agent provocateurs within the defence units, placed there by the very security forces.

POM Do you think, in that sense, Boipatong is the catalyst that has allowed the movement to regroup its various forces to pull the various strands together, to create a coherence that has been lacking in previous months, and maybe years?

CH It was an important catalyst. It made us to sit up and to look critically at our own strategies, at our own tactics, at the path we have traversed, and made the movement to participate in soul searching in discovering its own weaknesses, and above all, in realising that negotiations have made us to drift away from the people, to drift away from our own base. It was important therefore to take two steps back in order to restore the cohesion, the unity, the togetherness between the leadership and the membership.

POM Just one last question and it refers to - (thanks for all your time and it will be a long transcript when you get it) - the interview you gave me before when you made mention that you were always very vocal in your opposition to any form of internment without trial, and yet in CODESA, it was agreed that the state would have emergency powers and that under those emergency powers you would in fact have detention without trial, subject to critical review, but the new state is going to adopt the old powers the old state had to intern people, and I thought there was a contradiction there.

CH Again that position was a product of negotiation teams sitting there at the World Trade Centre and discussing without making reference to us who are outside CODESA and to the people on the ground. At one meeting where I was, and one is not a member of the

Working Committee these days, you only attend there when there is a meeting of the NEC, because I resigned from the Working Committee, we spelt out the danger of this agreement and I hope now we will have an opportunity to turn our backs on that agreement.

POM Do you think all the arrangements that have been made in the other working groups are now all subject to re-examination?

CH They are all subject, as far as I am concerned to scrutiny, to re-examination, and that our pull-out of CODESA must be used to fully utilise and examine agreements which basically cannot be in the interests of democracy in future, agreements which are loosely formulated, which can be interpreted in a flexible way. Detention without trial can never be justified, and it can never be in any constitution.

Of course if the government declares a state of emergency on the basis of a crisis, something that it will table in parliament so that it is discussed, but for me, there must be no constitutional provision for states of emergencies because it is something that a government, through parliamentary procedures, can table before parliament. We must not have a situation where a President or a Minister of Law and Order can stand up and say, "I am declaring an unrest area in Alexandra township", without consulting the community, without putting it before parliament. Those issues should never be allowed in a future democracy in this country because - probably we could give Mandela those rights because we think that he is a democrat, but what happens when he goes and somebody else comes who is not as scrupulous and honest and democratic as Mandela?

The dangers of constitutions which sometimes are based on the feeling that you know, you have some good guys in the government, the dangers are that those good guys will not always be there, there will come some rogues, and we have seen how rogues are elected because of a particular crisis, and they will inherit those laws and use those laws against the people and then argue that these are the laws, this is the constitution, which you set down. Although some people are speaking about an emergency that would not be the last word because the Constituent Assembly finally must decide on those issues, and if we are defeated at this level at this point in time, we are going to raise this issue at a Constituent Assembly.

POM OK, thank you very much for your time.

CH You are more than welcome. I want to apologise for having come late.

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