

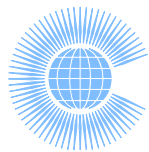
Ruth First Papers project

Interview with Ismael Meer part 2

An interview conducted by **Don Pinnock** circa 1990. Part of a series carried out at Grahamstown University and held at the UWC/Robben Island Mayibuye Archive.

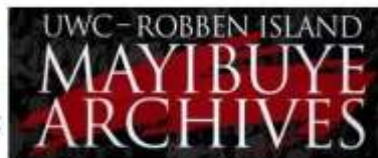
Republished in 2012 by the Ruth First Papers Project

www.ruthfirstpapers.org.uk



Institute of
Commonwealth Studies

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY • UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



UNIVERSIDADE
EDUARDO MONDLANE
CENTRO DE
ESTUDOS
AFRICANOS

IM: ... before Malan came into power, there was this trouble outside the city hall. Well, Michael Scott was **[indistinct]**, you see ... we brought him to Durban with our passive resistance thing, and there was Father **[sounds like Thatcher]** here, and Mary Barnes, who I think belonged to the Quaker group. And they met, and I told Scott I would come and pick him up and we would go out in the bay in a boat and have a little leisure time there ... the trouble with Scott was that he used to eat all the time, little sweets and things, I think he had some problem with his intestine. So we used to sit and discuss: look here, what shall we do, how do we support the Indian cause? And others would say, let us go on a fast! **[laughs]** That was the sort of thing where Scott would draw the line. And when I pressed him he said ah, I'm used to these people, they are talking of fasting, you know - **[indistinct]** my sweets! **[laughs]** **[Sounds like Ramaham]** was the president of the ANC in the Transvaal. And I sent Scott with Ramahahn - Scott was to drive the car, and they were to go and do some work in the rural areas. Ramaham came back, and you know Scott used to be a pilot in the RAF. He said hey, Ismael, I'm sitting at the back and I'm sleeping, and I'm dreaming that we went through a fence. And then I opened my eyes and jislaaik, we were through the fence! **[laughs]**

DP: He'd crashed!

IM: Then he said the next time I'd be dreaming that nobody's holding the steering-wheel, and I'd see Michael with both hands in the cubby-hole looking for his sweets! **[laughs]**. That was a trip he had with Ramahahn ... then he went to the - he served a prison sentence in '46 in Durban –

DP: Who?

IM: Michael Scott, as a passive resister. And he was of course taken to the white cells. He didn't realise that, but he was a white prisoner, and he had to stay that side. So he tried to move to the other side. And a warder came up to him and said, you can do that outside prison, but you do that here and you're going to get a thrashing from us!

[indistinct]

DP: How did he end up picking up the Bethal issue?

IM: We sent him on that. We had information from people coming from Bethel about what's happening there. We had some very good rural africans at the time, and then he went up from there. What was terrifying was when the farmers invited him to come and speak and we thought he was going to be lynched. And the journalist who was taking him said no, no, I'm not happy about this. He said no, it's fine, nothing will happen to us, and he went. He was the least nervous of all of us. Terrifying.

DP: Did you go with him?

IM: No, we didn't go. And - no, it would have complicated things, especially having an Indian with him. It was bad at that time. It was so bad that they were boycotting all the Indian shops at that time, too. It was a very interesting thing, a very interesting story. I sent Michael Scott to do the research with the same car, on Indian shopkeepers and what effect the boycott was having. And then I got the story from the shopkeepers afterwards. They said as soon as we saw a white man coming, we said no, we'd better be careful who this fellow is. So they are talking in the vernacular, **[saying]** don't tell him

the truth, you see, otherwise our credit would be affected. So Michael Scott says, how is the boycott getting on? Is this shop suffering from the boycott? He says, oh no, not at all. We are doing exceptionally well. Bigger profits than last year! He goes to the next shop and they are about to go bankrupt. He says a similar thing, business is doing exceptionally well. There is an old Indian expression that he is surviving by eating herbs and lentils, India's cheapest foods at the time, you see. So Michael Scott writes Mr so-and-so, his business is surviving but he's eating herbs and lentils! **[laughs]**. So **[indistinct]** he looks at it, he says, no Father, you're doing useful work. People who say they're not affected, **[indistinct]**. They've got the answer. You see, our mistake was to send out a man who people couldn't relate to about the boycott.

DP: He used to have a little movie camera, didn't he?

IM: Ja, he had a movie camera. You know what happened to that movie camera, it worked when he was broke. And now what will you do, Michael? No, it's alright because I've got one packet of soup, we'll boil that, and we'll **[indistinct]**! Then he'd say Ismael, let us pawn this darn thing. Right, I would go off with it, same man each time, **[sounds like Bram Fahid]**. **And I would** say to Bram that he must 'phone and tell us when our time is up. So Bram would give us 25 or 20 pounds - a lot of money - and he would keep it there. And I would tell Michael, Michael, I think **[indistinct]** and I will pay it out to Bram **[indistinct]** Then I would make arrangements to have the camera back from the pawn! **[laughs]** We did this about four or five times!

DP: A useful camera!

IM: Very useful.

DP: How did Ruth end up going to Bethel with him? Wasn't it another journalist who went first?

IM: No, she didn't go.

DP: Didn't she go with him at all? She wrote the story.

IM: No, I don't think so. This is '47, is it? Bethel is '46, '47. Because I dealt with Scott in the last three issues of that, just on that incident, and I think he went with a - not with our reporters. I don't think Ruth went to Bethel.

DP: Because she ended up writing quite a lengthy document on Bethel.

IM: Oh yes, in fact she did. In fact, the basic research was done by her.

DP: Where was she living through university? At home?

IM: At home. I think she had after a while - I think she had a flat, or accommodation elsewhere for a while. But she was very much with our people.

DP: Ja. Did she get on with - wasn't there quite a lot of - well, let me put it another way. Were there quite a lot of whites at that stage who had her views? Was she within a kind of group of people who were like-minded? In other words, did she embody the dreams of

a group of people?

IM: Um ... well, Ruth came into contact with a larger number of people who had associations with other individuals than, say, an ordinary member of the Communist Youth League. So she was in a better position to have contact with Yusuf Dadoo, for that matter, who besides working in the Movement was also involved in the congresses for a very long time. In fact he was the first person to have served a term of imprisonment. But I would say that at that period of time Ruth was not a leader of the Marxist movement as such. She was occupying - she had influence there, she was a rising young person who was showing a lot of talent, but I don't think it would be correct to say that she was representing a particular group. She was ahead of the group, really. Far ahead.

DP: I have her academic records - in fact I've got them here. She did rather well at university.

IM: Very well. She was a brilliant person, no doubt about it. She had a very good mind.

DP: How did the papers get printed? Did you have printers who would do it more cheaply?

IM: Each paper was different. The **Indian Views** and the **Opinion** both had bought the old machines of the **Mercury**. They were flatbeds. So you had a man feeding each sheet, and you had the form with eight pages. So eight pages were printed one at a time, and each letter was set separately. So you had the trays with type, and to set t-h-e you had to put "t", capital, then the pitch –

DP: But wasn't it slugs?

IM: No.

DP: Letter set. Terrible!

IM: You had to set each one. And then - worse still - when the printing was over you washed the whole thing and then you took it back and said "p" goes into "t", "h" goes into "f" ... this was the **Indian Views** and **Opinion**. The same thing with **Inkundla**. The others were given out to a printer, they were not our own printers. They had the linotype setting thing. Now also the technique of the moment, the **Leader** is printed on a rotary, but assembling is done by hand. You know, the pages.

DP: So it's still hot metal, even today.

IM: Ja. No, I don't know if it's hot metal, I don't know what's that.

DP: The slugs are set on a linotype and put on a –

IM: No, they are on a ... what do you call those things? Bromide [**indistinct**]. So what I'm saying is they don't put the thing back, but the actual machines do not fold the paper, you see. So you print four pages, but then you've got eight pages that you've got to insert.

DP: Insert.

IM: Ja. That you've got to do with your own hand.

DP: Ja. **Passive Resister** was produced in Transvaal?

IM: Ja, it was printed by a printer who did a lot of work for us.

DP: Who was that? Do you remember? Was it in Fordsburg?

IM: Ja, it was in Fordsburg. I can't remember the name of the firm now, it was a person who was sympathetic to us. What was important, I was interested in the nationalist group of the Indian Congress which took over the Indian Congress in the Transvaal. It was called the Nationalist Group. We couldn't get a printer to print their material. And somebody went to one of the nationalist papers and said oh, the nationalists will do anything for you! Even though they didn't understand what it was all about. Likewise for passive resistance in Natal. Volkskas had just started its bank in Natal and they were looking for customers. They gave us a very nice overdraft to **[indistinct]** the authorities!
[laughs].

DP: The contradictions of the system! Ja. And did you have much to do with **Guardian**?

IM: **Guardian**, I did the - from Natal I was the - well, I distributed it, but from Natal I was its correspondent for some time.

DP: Ja. Govan Mbeki was doing the same in the Eastern Cape.

IM: That's right, ja.

DP: This sounds pedestrian, but how did you actually - you would write an article on a typewriter and post it up, or ... how would it happen?

IM: Ja, we did it on typewriters. We did our own typing. I did - those pages, I would type them out myself.

DP: And then would they be assembled in Johannesburg or Cape Town?

IM: No, Cape Town. Then you would have a special arrangement, that by certain times they had to be handed in for express deliveries regionally. But we used to have those newsprint sheets the right size, so when they were setting it you can - so they would know - you know, you would have bylines that say "first line" and then "one" in brackets, and the second page would have "two" in brackets all typed out, so they can never lose the pages ... that sort of thing had to be done.

DP: And then was there a Cape edition and a Transvaal edition, or were they all the same?

IM: Which, of **Passive Resister**?

DP: No, **Guardian**.

IM: **Guardian** was one, as far as I know. None of them were that - you've seen [**sounds like Cape Sun**], have you?

DP: No.

IM: There was some - I think it was the main paper of the United Party. This came out in opposition.

DP: How did you get money to print **Passive Resister**? Or any of the other newspapers? It must have been very hard.

IM: Very hard, we had no money at all for anything in those days. We went and canvassed for advertising, but it was very, very difficult to finance it.

DP: The **Resister**?

IM: Ja. Nobody got paid. I mean, we all did free work, so the overheads were minimal. And the printer carried us for an issue or two issues. Very tough going. Take, for instance, this lovely paper that was here, the **Indian Views**. My wife Fatima, her father was the editor of that paper. When he died his son took over. When he died we ran it for four weeks, and we found it was impossible for us to run around and collect money from advertisers and all that, and we had to give it up. And there was no mention of it in any of the newspapers to allow its succession to take place. There is individual effort, and you sort of co-opt people into giving certain adverts and that sort of thing ... the **Guardian** was different in that you had the donation system. The front page used to have the

donations for this week, and so on and so on. We had teams of people going out and collecting donations.

DP: Ja, I was speaking to Trudy Gelb, and she used to help form little parties where they'd do a bit of political work and then at the end of the tea-party they'd ask for money for the **Guardian**.

IM: And then you'd see some of the amounts were very small amounts. No, we had the entire passive resistance movement helping **[indistinct]** But what's happening nowadays is that you get money from overseas. Some people of my background, we refuse to take money for any political case. We don't want to prevent what the others are doing, so we have stepped out of that field, largely because of the financing from overseas.

DP: Lawyers are making large amounts of money these days - struggle lawyers!

IM: Oh, it's totally - it's totally objectionable to us. I mean, I did Group Areas hearings for years without earning a penny. I can see the problem, if a person has to be taken away from his office for three months or a year, you know that he has a problem. The treason trial, I was an accused in 1956. Ruth was in it too. We paid a quota of 250 pounds a month, you know, over the preparatory examination. And that sort of thing doesn't happen now. Bram Fischer and all appeared and they didn't charge us anything.

DP: Ja, so things have definitely changed, because they're now charging R13 per telephone call!

IM: No, it's absolutely shocking. I think it's the worst form of exploitation. I wonder what sort of **[indistinct]** the lawyers have? They might as well set up more cases and get more people arrested.

DP: Ja. You were in the treason trial for two years?

IM: Ja.

DP: And then what happened? Because they were sort of pruning down the accused.

IM: Ja, they ... it was at the end of the preparatory examination, I was here in the middle of court. I was cross-examining a witness. **[name indistinct - sounds like Milkweed]** 'phoned to say that the attorney-general had declined to prosecute.

DP: What was that like?

IM: Ja, my reaction was well, what's happened to the rest? he said the rest are still there. So I said well, I'm not free. I'll have to go and see what's going on. You know, everybody was in it, now why is it dragging on a lot longer for those people and the others are ... and then the state of emergency and we were again inside.

DP: You were arrested in the state of emergency?

IM: Ja. I had served in the '46 campaign, I had served in the '52 campaign. Then came

the treason trial and then came the state of emergency. So the period of emergency was a period of - you know, we were in for about four months, four-and-a-half.

DP: Ja. There's lots I'd like to ask you, but how's your time doing?

IM: What's your time? I don't have the time on me.

DP: It's eleven forty.

IM: No, I have still a few minutes.

DP: Where would - have you written down anything, is this the way you're doing it?

IM: I haven't written anything down, particularly because of the ... I would like to write it down. You know, I have been involved in law practice and I have been appearing in court almost every day and that means, you know, on my feet all the time. But I want in the next three months to stop this work and then I'll have time to put my thoughts down.

DP: Into a collection of ...

IM: Ja. Already there's enough there for a fairly thick volume. It's very much personal recollections. Because we come from the village of **[sounds like Washbank]**, which is in Northern Natal, and –

DP: Your father had a shop?

IM: Ja, and this policeman, Dundee, used to come - he was very close to my brother ... two brothers I had, and my brother was very friendly with this policeman. I used to know him well before he joined the police force. And then he went to work in Johannesburg, came back to Washbank and turned out to be Mr AWG Champion, and the biggest branch of the ICU in Natal was in the Washbank area! And we worked with Champion for many, many years.

DP: So Champion was the policeman?

IM: Ja, he was the policeman! Champion one day came and told my brother that we had a very important man coming, because Kadalie had sent him, and he must go to Glencourt Station to pick him up. So my brother went with him, and brought this person, a white man from overseas and they had a meal at my father's place. I was shocked! And then they went to Dundee and this man spoke at Dundee, he said this is the first meeting I am addressing in South Africa. My name is William Ballinger, I have been sent by the Labour movement ... **[laughs]**

DP: Amazing!

IM: ... and ... I didn't get a passport, but I had managed to get one on medical grounds, to go to London for a medical check-up. I was in the 'plane and it was a charter for mostly university people. The only person with whom I started talking, she said she was from Western Cape and had I heard of Kadalie? I said yes. She said he was my grandfather! I said of course I know your grandfather, he came and spoke at Washbank at a huge

meeting. And then he came into my father's shop and he said he liked the gramophone. Now a Columbia gramophone cost you 70 pounds! he said, I want that. So he says, right, and we opened an account and we took his name and address, and for the next five-and-a-half years I would send him monthly statements because it had still not been paid for! **[laughs]**

DP: Because I have been looking for secondary work in the –

IM: Tell me what you do at, er –

DP: I teach journalism.

IM: Oh, that's marvelous. You've got the best centre, isn't it, for journalism?

DP: It's the only undergraduate centre, ja, but my background is in history. African history, basically.

IM: History, ja. I want to know more about history.

DP: But there's so little about our history –

IM: Do you have oral history there?

DP: Not as a course, but I mean, that's how I work.

IM: Ja, I know. I want to know more about it, but I want to do some myself. This is part of it, isn't it?

DP: Ja. Let me find something and send it to you.

IM: No, I - [indistinct - sounds like he's showing DP something with much rustling of paper] american ambassador, documents [indistinct] all this in our history.

DP: Oh, that's useful.

IM: All the mistakes of these people in South Africa [indistinct]

DP: There's a very good, very old history association in America, I don't know if he told you.

IM: Ja, with this [indistinct] I've had a very enjoyable time going through it and seeing what I can do. I would like to see Natal University and Durban-Westville, what departments they have, and it might then take off, because I want to in the next two or three months from here ...

DP: The chap to see there is Keyan Tomaselli.

IM: Where?

DP: At Durban University.

IM: Who is he?

DP: Head of the Centre for Cultural Studies, and he's the best person to talk about that kind of thing to.

IM: I would like to. I haven't been to a varsity for a very long time and –

DP: Just anywhere?

IM: Ja. Are there any Natal students at your place, doing journalism?

DP: Yes, we get them. I never work out where they're from, they're just my students. I seldom ask them where they come from. [pause]

IM: Now what other works of Ruth have you got?

DP: Most of them, and I'm collecting lots of other things as well.

IM: What made you choose Ruth?

DP: I've written several books, and they've always been historical and general in the tradition of - the sort of left-wing tradition, which doesn't tend to personalise. And then I decided that's not getting to people. People like reading about other people. And I was

going - I was based at UCT in Cape Town. I was going to do a biography of Cissie Gool, which still needs to be done.

IM: Ja, I worked with her very closely.

DP: Ja. And then I went up to Rhodes and spent more time in Jo'burg. Then I read - I was in hiding in the emergency, and during that time I read **117 Days**, which had a lot of impact on me. It was very pertinent to me at that point. Then I started reading more and more of her books. I read **Olive Schreiner**, which is a brilliant book, really - the one that she did with Scott. I

M: Ja, the best.

DP: She thinks it's the best. In fact, I've got some letters from her in which she says so. And she seems to embody so much of the tradition that I'm trying to get across to younger, new journalists today, because they don't know - I mean, I was at an Association of Democratic Journalists meeting on Sunday in Jo'burg, and they had no sense of the tradition from which they were coming. They were saying, "this is a whole new thing that we're starting here, the democratic journalists", and I said, now wait a minute! What you don't know is that it goes all the way back to Pringle to Plaatje to Jabavu ... they had no sense of their tradition. And I think through somebody like Ruth I could best re-install those traditions into the –

IM: It could make a very valuable contribution. Speaking of Cissie, is there nothing on [sounds like Hooliman or Rachman]?

DP: There's a bit. I mean, I did quite a bit of work in Cape Town, and Rachman did - he wrote quite a bit.

IM: No, but I mean what has been written on the life of Rachman?

DP: There's no biography.

IM: No biography. Not only that, but I wrote in this series on Rachman. He in 1925 led the South African Indian Congress delegation to India, did you know that? But I read about him, and then I used to remember in the month of Ramadan when people used to come from the Cape to collect money, they used to come to my father's shop and they would sing some Arabic hymns and so on, and then they would tell us, there is a man called [Hooliman], his father was born in slavery, his grandfather had been brought from Bengal, and then this happened - you know, this folk-lore. And we were fascinated by this, you know, how this little child, his father and mother prayed that he should not become a slave, and how they found money and the church sent him to –

DP: Was that in the songs?

IM: Ja, how they sent him to become a doctor, and he arrived in South Africa in the same year as Gandhi, you know. A qualified attorney arrived and a qualified doctor arrived from Glasgow. So all this was what we heard from people who used to come and spend time with us. They knew something about the history of this man, but you ask now, Cissie's - **[indistinct]** was her sister, in Cape Town, but there is a man also who - you

must know him. What's his name again, he's doing some local afrikaans - you know, how the first afrikaans was written in an arabic language and so on.

DP: I don't know.

IM: David ... oh, beautiful book, it really is. I forget his name, but he traced the writings, Muslim writings in Arabic, which were really just afrikaans. It was afrikaans because they couldn't speak the Dutch, but this was another familiar way of expressing. And he says that the earliest writing in this particular language is a fellow sending this note to the Cape Landrost to say that he wants to have a piece of land where he could erect a mosque. And there are no older documents than these.

DP: In afrikaans.

IM: In afrikaans, yes. The script is arabic, it's not latin script.

DP: Ja, that's extraordinary. If you started writing, there'll be no end of publishers, I'm quite sure. In fact, I'm a sort of agent for David Philip on the side, and he's desperately looking for historical things on South Africa. So you'd have no problem getting it published. The only problem is your listing.

IM: Ja, that's the only problem. It's likely that we would put someone else. But you see, from the time of the listing I have not stopped writing ... but you know, the thing is that with this type of journalism where you take for instance this issue ... **[fetches something across room]** look at this issue ... you see, you take this issue ... this is my article. I

belong to the Natal School **[indistinct]** Association, I am the chairman of it. We have 62 schools under us, and the education problems, I still continue to deal with it. The Board, now they are taking away the rights of the pre-schools from Natal. That's one ... the editorials ...

DP: Do you write all the editorials?

IM: Ja. This one ...

DP: Ja. So you're doing a lot of writing.

IM: In fact, that one there, this is my **[indistinct]** the debate. Then this column was written about **[indistinct]**. It's the question of the teacher who travelled by bus from here to Durban, and what happens, the conversation on the bus. It has been going on for a very long time, and it has become quite a popular short. Actually, I was writing for this paper, they were getting a lot of free work done, because they don't have to pay me! **[laughs]**.

DP: Is this the most popular paper of this sort?

IM: Well, the only reason why I'm working for this paper is that it's the only one which it not owned by somebody outside. It's a family paper, it belongs to a black local family. It's the only one.

DP: In the country? Because I –

IM: Well, it's an indicator of something, I mean, **[indistinct]**. But **Ilanga** belongs to Inkatha, and the **Argus** has the rest, so what else have you got?

DP: Ja, the only other paper I know of that's a family affair is the **Grocott's Mail** in Grahamstown.

IM: The **Witness** we had - at one time there were numerous possibilities, but they employed **[name indistinct - sounds like Moodley]**, who is as you know Black Consciousness. But I find it satisfying to be able to do this much.

DP: Well, if writing is –

IM: You know, Sunday night - when was the debate? Monday night. Early in the morning I typed this and I drove over and gave it in. Palestine, we have had a problem here on this question of what's happening there and there are people who want to know. So this is going to be a series now. In fact, the next article - the article should do this without any - the paper must be able to find a minimum, otherwise it ...

DP: Is it struggling as a paper?

IM: It is struggling. It's one of those that haven't been financed from overseas at all. I'm sure if they approached them they would get money. I was told that **New Nation** is having finance of up to two and a half million already.

DP: Well, now of course the problem is going to come with this funding bill. It's going to be a major problem. And it's going to be a problem for lawyers too.

IM: Ja, well, I won't be sorry for that. I mean, who decides which case requires a series of top lawyers and which doesn't? No, it leads to a tremendous amount of injustice.

DP: Last question: do you think Ruth ever stayed in the Party? Or I mean, did she stay in the Party for always? Was her politics ever to one side of the Party? Did she have conflicts with it at all?

IM: Not that I know of. I don't know of conflicts at all.

DP: Ja. No, I just wondered if there was –

IM: Was there a suggestion that she had?

DP: She had a very critical - positively critical way of going about everything, and I've often wondered if there's not a slight conflict - creative conflict - between the Party line which she would hold, on the one hand, and being the journalist she was on the other hand, and telling it like it is, in a way. I wondered if that kind of conflict ever –

IM: No, I'm not aware of any such conflict. I mean, I know that I was not there because I had decided that this was the only path to choose and Marxism was the way of solving all the problems. My getting into activities was not the Marxist approach to start with, it was quite a different way of doing things. Normally, we come from a - my lessons were learned in Washbank, where there was no conflict. My father was - the others were - you

know, I was told this by an afrikaner magistrate here, but this was their attitude, that my father was different. The others **[indistinct]** this Soweto thing that started in '76, I was called by a magistrate who I was very friendly with but who was very narrow-minded. He said, I want to see you. Do you see what's happening? These people are rejecting my language. So I said, come on, Breytenbach, don't be so upset about this! No, he says, you fellows will never learn and understand what we afrikaners are. When I was small, I one day called the nanny who brought us up a kaffir. My father came and took me into the room and he took out a belt and he beat me up until I was bleeding. He said, she is Annie, and those who don't work for us are kaffirs! **[laughs]** So you see, you had that. Washbank was very much protected, there was no "coolies" there, you see. Then coming to Durban, my wonderful experience was that nobody thought of **[indistinct]**, that you should have separate tumblers when you were eating. You used to have a thing made out of - a silver thing, but it was not silver. Anycase, We went to eat at the Bluff, and there were these Zanzibarians, who were these slaves liberated in 1838 here. Africans. They were Muslims. And we all sat down to eat, and - huge trays, at least six people ate together. It taught you a wonderful idea of sharing. But there were six people eating and there were five pieces of meat in the centre. Then that created a problem! And all drank from the same water. To me this was a new experience, my coming to Durban and going there and here, and finding - because we were Muslims, we were all eating together. And it was the birthday of the prophet, so we didn't say only Muslims can come to eat. It was everybody. But who were the whites? All the hoboies who couldn't get anything **[indistinct]**!

DP: Sharing happily.

IM: And this was all done in the name of Islam, it was a wonderful thing, you see! All this has disappeared in Durban now, it doesn't exist. You don't go to them. But these Zanzibar fellows were very interesting. They were africans, then they were classified as coloureds. The coloureds objected to it. Then they took away their land at the Bluff, which was bought for them by the Grey Street Mosque. So they were now shunted into an Indian Group Area at Chatsworth. So this was now the third classification - they were reclassified from african to coloured and now they were Indian.

DP: What a country, my god.

IM: Somebody will classify them **[indistinct]** one day! How long are you going to be around?

DP: I'm here for the next - I leave on Thursday.

IM: Who are you seeing? Are you seeing anybody else?

DP: I was going to ask you that. Who should I see?

IM: JN Singh, just make a note ... whether he is available or they've gone to the States, I don't know ... JN Singh, that's i-n-g-h, 821404. Now I'll tell you that he was with us, right, but he has now become, with all his bannings and so on, a **[indistinct]** man. He's the director of the Republic bank also, the Indian bank. His children are in the States, they spend more time in the states than here.

DP: What is the connection in which it would be useful for me to see him?

IM: He was at Wits at the same time as Ruth, and well, he can give you some idea of university life at that time. He knew her very well. I don't know whether you should see Rowley Arenstein.

DP: I've been wondering whether I shouldn't, perhaps.

IM: Personally, I think despite all the differences that one has with him, with Inkatha and other approaches to the ANC and so on, he is a worthwhile person to meet.

DP: I'm just wondering if it wouldn't be a problem for me in terms of all the other people I have to see.

IM: I don't think it would. I wouldn't say you shouldn't see him.

DP: Where does one find him? In the Inkatha offices?

IM: If you have time, it's worthwhile just meeting the man. Rowley came to Natal from Ermelo, his father was a grain merchant, and he lived in this office in **[indistinct]**. I think he was earning 23 pounds a month. His background of sacrifice is not to be forgotten, and just to find out what makes him tick is in itself –

DP: I have the same problem with whether I should see Piet Beyleveld or not.

IM: No, I don't know. Piet's a different type of person. What is he doing now?

DP: I think that he is still running his printer's business. He was a printer, wasn't he?

IM: Ja, he was.

DP: But I did hear that he has emphesema. He's about to die.

IM: Have you spent time with Yusuf? Yusuf Cachalia?

DP: Yes, I spent quite a lot of time with Amina and him.

IM: What a background he has!

DP: He was wonderfully useful. Yusuf's main use to me was the Congress Alliance. He worked in the co-ordinating committee of the Congress of the People, and hew as very central in the whole Kliptown issue.

IM: Also in the western areas.

DP: Ja, I spent a couple of days chatting to him and Amina. Amina has a very good memory, particularly.

IM: Keep in touch with us. Drop us a note so we can drop you - write down your name and address for me ...

DP: I'm waiting to see what you write. I want to see your book.

IM: You know what I have done, I've written this in such a way that I get my - I get the readership, and I - the biggest amount of questions I've been asked is where do you get this from.

DP: The pictures?

IM: Ja, the pictures. Every issue has got this selection of photographs, and that really perks up the page.

DP: Where did you get these photographs?

IM: You see this? That's Fatima **[indistinct]** ... that's Yusuf Dadoo ... that's **[indistinct]**.

DP: There's a book been written about him.

IM: That's right, and not a word about his magnificent contribution to the Liberal Studies Group. In fact, it says just the opposite. It says he objected to Indians having - going to the Bar without **[indistinct]**.

DP: Is that Tim Couzens' book? Ja, it's not a very good book.

IM: Ja, I'm disappointed. That whole era of his is left out.

DP: Where did you get the photographs from? Do the newspapers have photo albums?

IM: No, we have got a number of sources. But we have also been able to reproduce from photographs that appeared at the time. And we used to also - you know, the **Indian Opinion** used to have the Divali issue with glossy pages, the **Views** had the [indistinct] issue, and these sell very easily.

DP: Because they're nice and glossy. Yusuf had some very nice pictures - in fact, Amina's lent some to you, hasn't she?

IM: I've got some of her photo's here, ja. I want to get back a bit to at least '47, but I want to now find some way of getting back to when we were at Wits, and then deal with a more personal approach to Nelson and Yusuf and them. I think that is important. Also Yusuf's brother Maulvi. A very interesting man. India honoured him [indistinct], the ANC ...

DP: He's in India now, ja.

IM: He was in charge of the ANC offices in Delhi for a while, but he is now in the village.

DP: Yes, he has a big beard, if I remember! Ja, I'm scratching around for pictures as well. I think I'm going to find them in London.

IM: Did you get any from Yusuf?

DP: I got some, I –

IM: Did you get the one of Ruth at the border crossing? When we had the passive resisters going across the border?

DP: No. Have you got a picture of that?

IM: I think I have. We used it in Fatima's book, you know the **Portrait of an Indian South African**. But you can use that on. I'm trying to think of any others.

DP: Was she involved in actually walking across a –

IM: No, no, she was the journalist who went to cover it. The Indian resisters arrived from here. Yusuf Dadoo was to meet them, Monty Naicker took this batch of 15, I was at Fordsburg at a huge meeting where they were going to arrive, and warned to hear they had been arrested. They were not arrested. And I had already made my speech that when they appeared, it was a wonderful victory for us. Now I went back to the mike and I said now, it's a wonderful victory for us, they have not been arrested. I think our credibility was **[indistinct]**. When I finished my speech there was an afrikaner constable there who knew me. So I said God! I don't understand this, but **[indistinct]**.

DP: That's good strategy! So had Ruth gone to the border with –

IM: Yes, she had gone to the border with Yusuf Dadoo. This was the extension of the passive resistance from the - Gandhi had done that in 1913. Now we were doing it for the

second time.

DP: Oh, so there's a photograph of that.

IM: Ja, I think I've got a photograph of that.

DP: If I can't get it from the book, sometime I might come back to you and ask if you can get a copy made.

IM: Yes, for sure. I don't think I've got the book here. Have you seen the little book of Fatima's? She's also had problems; because of her bannings we had to get it out in the name of my daughter. One of my daughters is in Cape Town, she's with Legal Resources. One's in Johannesburg, she's also writing for **Speak** magazine and **[sounds like True]** magazine. She's married to - my son-in-law is a trade unionist.

DP: What's his name?

IM: Murray. Aubrey Murray.

[end of side two]