

MEMOIRS OF A REVOLUTIONARY TYPIST

When Albie Sachs asked me to chronicle the life of his mother, Ray Edwards, I was inclined to refuse. It was a daunting task for which I felt myself totally unqualified. I had never worked with a word processor, I had had very little contact with elderly people and my knowledge of the struggle and of the history of the South African Communist Party stemmed mainly from what I had been taught by a Christian National White education.

I am the better for having agreed to attempt the task. As a third year university student, having only recently come into contact with any form of revisionist history, to actually speak to someone on a first hand basis, especially someone as dynamic as Ray Edwards, was a great privilege and education. She is a revolutionary person. Through her eyes and her incredible memory, I have glimpsed a world which was taboo, threatened, banned and denied by the government of the country in which it was created and sustained.

In her continuous modesty, Ray Edwards has attempted to underplay her contribution to the struggle; she couldn't even understand why Albie wanted her life to be recorded. Her dedication and clear-sightedness, from the racially segregated twenties and thirties, through the pinnacle of apartheid power, to today's world, which hints at tomorrow's peace, are sufficient to justify the record. In fact it is vital. The people of this world, especially those of us in South Africa, need and deserve to know how and why we have reached this point. Her story is not only a tribute to those who have brought the struggle this far, but also acts as an incentive for people to take the process further.

Ray is now eighty-six years old. She insists on living on her own in a flat in Tamboerskloof. For the last two and a half months I have been interviewing her - in between her playing bridge; catching the bus to attend court sessions; going to the ANC Gardens's branch meetings; attending lectures on the Land Act; and cutting out of the newspaper endless articles on the ANC and the struggle. During every session we would have tea. And in spite of having had two eye operations, Ray would insist on carrying the tray as she had been taught the technique whilst training to be a waitress in 1929 so that she could defend the Waitressing and Caterers Union.

I have let Ray tell her own story. I may be more qualified than when I started - I am mildly computer literate, have spent a fulfilling time with an 'elderly' [for want of a better word] person and most importantly, have been given the chance to learn more about the history of my country - yet, I am still not qualified to tamper with such a complete and pleasantly related life. It was my task simply to listen and record. The voyage which I have travelled as a scribe has brought me closer to the light which comes from learning. And for that I would like to thank Ray very much.

Melissa Holloway, February 1991

I was born in Lithuania in 1904 but I have no recollection of the few months of my life I spent there. My family emigrated to Denver, near Johannesburg. After a few years we moved to Randfontein; and finally landed in Pretoria. My father was a tailor - there were no ready-mades in those days so one needed a tailor. He got on very well with the people, too well in fact. He became a drunkard and couldn't cope with the drink. On one occasion, he got the D.T.'s so badly that no-one could go near him. He only wanted to see me. I was the apple of his eye and the only one who could talk to him. I was only a child at the time. One day I got into a fight because the local children said my father was a drunkard. I was infuriated and told them he wasn't a drunkard he was only "inebriated".

My father, who was a Social Democrat - Labour, believed in honesty and wouldn't do anything dishonest. I was brought up to be truthful and not to do anything silly. Yet he was more interested in football than politics. He belonged to the Buffalo Masons.

One day I was invited to a party but I didn't have any clothes to wear because we were very poor. I had a friend whose family had a second-hand clothes shop and I got my friend to send me clothes. However, when my parents found out they gave me a hiding for doing this and I wasn't allowed to go to the party.

As we were very poor during the First World War years and I had nits and lice, I thought it was a natural thing which everybody had. One day someone said to me,

"What nice hair you have, it looks so alive" to which someone else sniggered,

"Yes, it is."

This really troubled me until my cousin from Randburg was able to get rid of the lice. My mom didn't have much time to look after us and this made me more independent and thus different from the other children.

During the First World War we lived in Pretoria street. There were also coloured people living in our street. Most of the coloured men were in the army and they were relatively well-off. My father was a tailor who had a shop in Sunnyside. My mother worked for my father day and night.

I used to be sent to the grocer-shop to buy groceries, usually on tick, something which "wasn't done". Instead of writing it down, I insisted on remembering it. When I got to the grocer I would have forgotten what to buy. I would start stuttering and stammering. As a child I often stuttered until a teacher one day said, "Why don't you all speak like Rachel, slowly." This boosted my confidence and helped me lose my stammer.

When I was 13, my younger brother was killed by a lorry. This had a profound influence on me. The company wanted to pay my parents about two hundred pounds compensation money so that we wouldn't take them to court. I was furious and said my

parents musn't take the money as it was 'blood money' and it wouldn't bring him back. They were very poor and wanted to take the money for the education of their other children, but I refused to let them. So the situation was dropped. As the oldest of five children, and as I had made such a performance, they were forced to listened to me.

I then refused to believe in God as I claimed if there was a God, my brother wouldn't have been killed. I became irreligious and refused to go to shul. My father and I wouldn't go but the rest of the family had to go. Before this, when I still went, a friend once dared me to smoke on Yom Kippur which I did. As the wrath of God didn't come down on me, I was convinced that there was no God. I was irreligious but never did anything to show it visibly.

During the 1916 rebellion, the pupils weren't allowed outside as the commandoes were assembled outside the gates of the Miriam Marks school, which I attended. I had a teacher at school who came from Nova Scotia and we hated each other. When we had civil history, I voted labour not Unionist as expected. Even Nationalist was better than labour. The teacher let everyone know that I was labour, like my father. Yet even though this was 'unacceptable' when I went to High school, this teacher asked me to write to her and tell her the events in Pretoria as she was leaving. She obviously felt that I was the only one capable of keeping her informed.

As it was just a primary school, I chose to go to a Commercial High school, just to be different - the other girls went on to do an academic matric. I decided that I must learn to type and go out and get a job. When I completed my schooling they wanted me to stay and teach but I preferred to go and find a job. At school I was a rebel. I refused to learn anything by heart. I claimed if I couldn't understand it, I wouldn't learn it. I could never study and preferred to play sport. The principal later told Solly [my future husband] that I was the bane of his life as I was so impossible at school. He also predicted that I would become the leader of the female suffragettes, yet I never joined them.

When I was about fourteen, my parents would often go and watch Jewish theatre. As I was the oldest, I had to baby-sit. As soon as they left my brothers and sisters would misbehave. While my parents where there, they were good, but not once they had left. One night I had had enough, so I assembled them in their nighties, and marched them off to the opera-house. We arrived as the patrons were coming out. I then pinched them so my parents were faced with a bunch of crying kids. They never went again.

The Jewish theatre would perform for two or three nights at the Pretoria opera house. They were a group of Polish Jews who formed part of a very famous company. They would travel from city to city - Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town. The audience would all be Jewish, as the plays were all in Yiddish.

I met a young Cockney man, who was a member of the "Young Ikes" [a Zionist group] and he told me about Phoebe, the moon god. He was a very poetical chap and I was quite taken by him so when he asked me, I joined the Young Ikes. He decided to hold a meeting as he didn't approve of the way the organisation was run. He drew up a pamphlet which I typed and made copies of, by using carbon paper. On the day of the meeting, only two people arrived, the young man and myself! I then began loosening my ties with the Young Ikes as they were from the upper classes of the Jewish society and I didn't feel as if I fitted in. I also didn't agree with their political stance.

One evening they had a game of 'forfeits'. I gave my watch as a forfeit. They asked me to sing "God Save the King" as my forfeit, because they knew my politics. So I said I would sing, much to their surprise. I got up and sang: "God save the gracious king when the communists get over him." And that was my swan song, I never went there again.

This young chap then decided to teach me how to play chess. He showed me one or two moves and said, 'play'. So I refused and went instead to the local library where they played chess. But instead of teaching me they put me in a tournament straight away. So I never went there again, either.

At the time the young man thought I was so wonderful he was always putting me on a pedestal. This annoyed me so much that one day I retorted, "I'm not a virgin" - thinking it meant the same as 'angel'! I never saw him again, and only found out what 'virgin' meant when I went to work in the legal office.

I began working for the legal firm Ludolf, Riets and Pienaar. Ludolf, the senior partner, decided to go on his own and so they got another partner and became Riets, Pienaar and van Niekerk. The senior typist left with Ludolf so they asked me to become the senior typist. As I was now in a position of more responsibility, I demanded that I get a junior typist, an increased salary and a new type-writer. They had no option but to agree to my demands, but they did say I was holding them to ransom, which I was. After a year and a half of working I had not got a raise. So in this new position I demanded a raise from ten to twelve pounds a week. They were very resentful about it.

A short while after that they called me in and dictated a message that from the end of the month, the whole firm would have salary cuts. As two of their senior partners were in Parliament, they spent six months in Cape Town and therefore they had less work in Johannesburg. My increase was to be cut along with everyone else's salary. So I called all the staff together and said, "We should not accept this decision. After all, they can do without me but they can't do without the taxing master and the article clerks etc. So we should just say that we refuse the change."

But the others didn't see it that way. They simply accepted the decision, but I left. As they still held my earlier demands against me, they found that ten pounds of the money which I handled wasn't accounted for. They wanted to sue me for the money. My father, who knew I wasn't responsible, went and paid the money. I was furious, but he said he didn't want any trouble. In the end I left without taking any reference, but I didn't need one and I then got a job at another firm of attorneys.

Through-out 1922 I would go virtually every weekend to Johannesburg. My brother had a motorbike and I would get a lift with him; until he got a side-car. Then he didn't need me anymore, even though I'd paid for petrol. I was the only one who would travel on the back of the bike, so with the side-car he could take other people. We would leave on Saturday morning and stay on till Monday morning. We had to leave very early on Monday as we had to be at work at 7 o'clock. It took about an hour to get from Johannesburg to Pretoria.

I would stay at the homes of Party members in Johannesburg. The City Hall steps was where people would come and speak, usually on a Sunday night. One night Albert Luxberg said, "You don't have to go overseas to find baby killers, you can find them right here." - he was referring to the 1922 strike. He was imprisoned for his anti-Smuts attitude. I knew him, but unbeknown to me, I was considered his 'girl in Pretoria'. When he was imprisoned he asked to see me. But at the time I I wouldn't have anything to do with a man in prison. He did however lend me Omar Kayyam. At that time, I was more interested in going on picnics and not really interested in politics.

And then, one day, I saw a notice on the butchers paper i.e. newspaper, about the Y.C.L. [Young Communist's League] and this stirred my interest. That weekend I went to Johannesburg and went along out of curiosity. The unjust treatment of Albert Luxberg probably triggered my interest off.

One day I went to Sarah Sable's house to a YCL party. Eddie Roux was there and as we were both shy, he started speaking to me and befriended me. I grew very attached to him. When he held petitions, I would come through from Pretoria to help. Thus it was Eddie who drew me into the movement. The politics of the party appealed to my sense of justice and so I became committed. I felt more at home there than anywhere else. I was the only member of my family to become politically involved. I became the 'red sheep' of the family.

When I joined the Party it was run on a democratic basis. But afterwards when the Waltons and Bach and the others came along, then decisions were imposed on the members. I suppose they held votes within their committee but their decisions were decided apart from the rest of the members.

I have always held a non-racial viewpoint. Partly on humanitarian grounds but mainly because I am a Jew. I have

always believed that Jews can't afford to be racists. As a Jew, I have been persecuted and therefore I never wanted to pursue that stance.

When I joined the Party, our aims were more to attain democracy in South Africa than to implement strict Communist rule. We thought we would get some work done in trade unions and secure the rights of workers. We had political aims as well - at one stage they wanted a 'black' republic and then later a 'national' republic. For myself, I didn't belong to Labour because I wanted something stronger and ultimately they upheld the White regime. The Party on the other hand was specifically non-racial and that appealed to me. There were times during my participation when I was despondent but I was never disillusioned. I always believed that if we didn't succeed one hundred percent, we would always achieve some success, have some impact on society. For me it wasn't so much communism per se, as the equality and justice which the system proposed and which I couldn't find anywhere else.

Looking back now I realise it was a decision which I took when I was very young, not so much in years but in my then naive and idealistic outlook. I am not in the least bit sorry though, I feel I have had a rich and fulfilled life.

I never wanted to be a leader. I could never do public speaking and simply didn't want a prominent position. I was happy just doing 'backroom' work, the typing and selling etc. It was also a necessary part of the Movement and I enjoyed doing it. I just wanted to do my work. My political beliefs were in line with the Party's, I was a loyal supporter. I would simply accepted the policy directives sent by the Comintern. I never wanted to influence any decision.

When I was still staying in Pretoria, I would come through on weekends. We would hold meetings for the Party members once a week. These were fairly informal. As a group we would do a lot of walking. One person had a bicycle and I would sit on that. We would travel for hours talking and playing word games and number games. We found that entertainment enough. There would also be political discussions. We were quite an impassioned group, staying up all night arguing and discussing. The group would do a lot of political reading and discussing but I never really did.

We never really wanted to do anything else, at least I certainly didn't. I was quite happy doing things only for the Movement. I did sometimes go to a cinema in the afternoon, though. I had a friend who came in from the country and with whom I would go to the cinema. The only problem was he enjoyed 'Skiet en donner' [cowboy] films so, I'd have to sit through one of those in order to see the other film. In those days they had 'Bio-cafes' where you paid a sixpence and could have either a chocolate or a coldrink and watch the film. We used to go to the shop and buy a ticky chocolate and then watch the film for free. They eventually stopped that system.

The more involved I became in politics, the more I lost

contact with my friends and life in Pretoria. I did however, keep one childhood friend, Rose Myers, from Pretoria who was non political. We remained friends until her death.

In 1924 I went to work for "Volkstem", an Afrikaans newspaper. My job was to type envelopes. They used to think I was quite odd as I would sing: "the frog sat upon the log", to keep myself from going mad with boredom. Whilst working for the "Volkstem" in Pretoria, my mother fell pregnant. She had to go to hospital for the birth. My father had gone to pieces from drinking too much. He therefore wasn't employed and I had to go out to work to bring in money for the family. At the time I also had to look after my brothers and sisters and visit my mother in hospital. I would collapse periodically from the strain. On one occasion I collapsed while visiting my mother. The nurses were very pleased as the shock helped to induce labour.

When my mother came out of hospital, I went to work for a legal firm. I decided to try to form a typists trade union. There was a newspaper firm that said it would help me. Then they said they didn't want to help, they wanted to take over. So I dropped it. I wasn't going to create a trade union for an Afrikaans newspaper to take over. There weren't many trade unions at the time in Pretoria so I suppose it was unusual for a woman to try create one.

One day, while I was working for an attorneys firm, I saw one of the chaps in the office snooping in my desk. He was reading a political pamphlet. I said, "You don't have to snoop, you can just read what it says." "You look so innocent," he replied, "and you are actually a red hot communist."

During the 1924 elections, I was working for a legal firm of nationalist members of Parliament. I wanted to work in Pretoria North, but was told, "You have to work in Central or not at all."

Charles De Water was standing for Central. After lots of hard work, he got in. Even though it was winter we had outdoor meetings. I was supplied with thousands of copies of "A Story of a Crime" - about the 1922 strike, the bombing of the Fordsburg laboratory etc. - which I had to sell. The money went to the strikers orphans fund, and the sellers weren't paid. Once the election was won I was taken on stage and made a big fuss of, much to my embarrassment.

Life in Pretoria was very racially segregated during the 1920's. A friend and myself were coming back from a game of tennis one day when we saw a policeman knock a black man on the ground. I went up to him and said,

"What are you doing?"

"Get away or I'll arrest you too," he warned me.

I wanted to go to the police station, but my friend wouldn't go. The next morning I spoke to Hjalmar Reitz and asked him to go and enquire, so he did. He came back later and told me,

"Your friend has been cautioned and discharged."

Apparently the policeman was acting within his rights as the black man was walking on the pavement. Had I not got Dr. Reitz to enquire, the black man would have been locked up. After the incident the people in the area called me a "kaffir-boetie". Even so, the law firm didn't know my politics. There was a curfew for blacks at the time and they therefore had to obtain a permit from 'the boss' to say they were allowed out at night after a certain time.

During the mid-twenties, I was very friendly with Herman Charles Bosman. He was associated with a strange band of people. There were the Chalmer brothers, a cat burglar and a drunkard who used to make a brew from dagga and liquor. I was in the dark as to their proceedings. They lived next to 'Fattis' in Johannesburg and this acted as their larder. Bosman would ask me to come to tea but I would refuse. One day when I had come through to listen to the speakers on the City Hall steps in Johannesburg, Bosman was heckling the speaker. He then wanted to attack one of the audience. I grabbed him and told him to stop. Suddenly he dropped to the ground. I thought he was shamming. Later when he was in jail for murdering his half-brother, I went to see him but he wouldn't see me. After his release, he bumped into me one day at my duplicating offices and asked, "Why did you hit me that day?" He thought I had hit him when in fact someone had knocked him out from behind with a collection box!

All my girl-friends wanted to meet him because he was a 'marvellous character'. One girl even committed suicide over him. Yet I wanted nothing to do with him after I had married Solly.

In 1925 I worked for the YCL in Pretoria. Only a few girls joined the Y.C.L.; I was the only person in Pretoria who joined. There wasn't much to do in Pretoria as I had no contacts. I would go down to the railway station to sell a "worker for a penny" (The newspaper was called "The Worker" and cost a penny). There were two bookshops that were sympathetic to our cause, and as I would help at mailtime, they would let me read the periodicals.

I was in contact with black political activists in Pretoria, either the A.N.C. or the I.C.U. My contact was Thomas Mbeki, Thabo's father's uncle. As a contact I would give whatever assistance I could - I would go and see people and get documents etc. It was one of the only contacts available to the ICU. At the time the ICU was a rather loose organisation and whilst Clements Kadalie was an excellent organiser, he was trying to further his own interests within the organisation. Mbeki told me at the time that they were trying to undermine his influence within the movement. The ICU, run by Kadalie, was in direct opposition to the ANC.

I went to Marabastad, a location in Pretoria, where an elderly ANC man, Bud Mbelle, lived in a Victorian house with an illuminated address on the wall. He was more Victorian than any white person I had ever met. The location was right

next door, about ten minutes walk. All in all there were very few people who were sympathetic to my cause. I had very little contact with white workers in Pretoria. It didn't really matter to me as long as I could try to make contacts.

Whilst working for a legal firm in Johannesburg in 1926, Bunting asked me to start a German Relief fund. The Afrikaners at the time were very sympathetic to the Germans because of the Boer War. I got Pirow and others on the committee. I arranged to hold a meeting in order to inaugurate the committee. On the day that I went to Johannesburg to report, it rained. So I had to wear my hair down else I couldn't get my hat on. (Everyone wore hats in those days). When I arrived, Weinstok [who wanted a finger in every pie], said,

"A school-girl! A school-girl! We can't have a school-girl running this. I'll come to Pretoria and run this myself."

I only looked about 16 so they wouldn't let me continue, even though everything was organised. The relief fund was then dropped as they did nothing further about it.

During my time at the legal firm, we took on a case defending a tribe in Pietersburg that was being forced off the land. They were being moved under the 1926 Land Act. They had gone as far as the Privy Council and needed a firm in Pretoria to defend them. At the time I never realised how important the Land Act was, I don't think any of us realised. I think my contact with Thomas Mbeki was during this case.

At the turn of the decade, comrade Eve Green said that women were a "slave of a slave". That was the position then, but it hasn't really changed much within the Movement, or otherwise. Even in Europe women haven't really come to the fore-front of any major political party. The female suffragettes were fairly strong with quite a following but they let women down. They were only interested in white women getting the vote. They had no interest in even black men getting the vote. I never joined them as my concern went much further than that. I don't know if there were any suffragettes in the Party but I personally felt that their aims were too narrow. Within the home, women were expected to serve the males. In South Africa it was especially so but even on my various trips overseas, men seldom assisted in the home. With myself, as soon as Solly found out I wasn't 'fragile', I had to do everything. I only have myself to blame though, as I insisted I would do my share.

In the Movement women were treated as equals to men, both here and in London, but they never attained leadership positions. Molly Walton was the only exception in the early days. After coming back from the Lenin School, the Comintern decided that she should become a leader. They were basing it on directives which were sent by Doug Walton from Johannesburg. I queried these as they weren't true but was told I was a typist and not an editor. After that things went down.

The YCL was part of the International Communist Movement as

there was a photograph in Moscow of the S.A. YCL. I am pictured as the representative of the Pretoria branch of the Movement. Literature from Moscow was sold in the bookshops in S.A.. Joe Shwartz who was called 'Moscow Joe', would go around selling all the publications eg. 'The Moscow News'. The literature was freely available at the time.

During the twenties, the Party in Johannesburg had a core of about twenty members. Sarah Sable was the secretary of the Party, although she wasn't a policy maker. Her politics were middle of the road.

Solly was a member of the (YCL). My mentor, Sarah Sable, hated Solly, they had differing political views and she was very much against him. One day I got a letter from Solly saying that he had to come to Pretoria for an appeal and as he didn't have much funds could I, as the only comrade in Pretoria, find accommodation for him. So I said that he could come and stay at my mother's place.

Solly had worked on the Reef in the Native eating houses. He would come into town hoping to get some education, but every time he came in either his sister or his brother or someone would need the money and he would have to go work again. Eventually he had left there and come into town. He became a sub-let tenant and earned a livelyhood from it. When he came to Pretoria, it was for an appeal in a case about the sub-letting. As I was working for a legal office at the time, I was able to act as a correspondent i.e. I got a copy of the record, sent it to him - all the work a local correspondent would do. He won the appeal, about some tenant issue, and in return for my work he asked me out to dinner when I came to Johannesburg. Only because Sarah was so against Solly, was I willing to go. Quite honestly, if she hadn't been so insistent that I didn't see Solly, I may not have become so friendly with him.

One day I brought a friend for lunch and as we were sitting down, my brother said,

"I won't have my mother waiting on a 'kaffir'."

So we got up and walked out. My mother came running after us saying,

"No, don't go away, it's alright I don't mind waiting on a 'kaffir'." She never realised it was a derogatory word. As my friend was black, we couldn't go to a restaurant. But even so it was my mother's house and I took it for granted that we would be welcome there.

The whole YCL, about 15 members, would cycle out to Pretoria to put up posters and slogans. My mother found accommodation for them with the neighbours - who knew them as my friends and were unaware of their political interests. They arrived in the afternoon and we went out that night to literally "paint the town red". We stayed out all night whilst the neighbours stayed up waiting for my friends. Solly arrived the next morning and was angry with me for staying up all night and for going out with them. So I said that I didn't want to have anything more to do with him. Solly then left

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for the Soviet Union for a little while. When he returned in 1926, we got married.

I was a vegetarian, I didn't eat fish, butter, milk all for health reasons. My mother would cook bread and special dishes for me. When I left home I stopped being vegetarian, I didn't have time for all that. Solly didn't eat fish and meat but otherwise we ate everything.

When I joined the Party, they gave me 'Penguin Island' to read, but I could never finish it. I did a lot of reading but not political books. I could never absorb 'Das Kapital', for instance.

The YCL was responsible for getting a free library in Johannesburg. There was a State library but one had to pay. The party members formed the nucleus of the library supporters. The library became a meeting place. If there was someone we knew who wanted a book, we would put it in a special place for them.

In 1926, Solly and I were married. I came in on a Saturday morning and we went to the Johannesburg magistrate's court. They asked us,

"Where are the witnesses?"

I said, "We don't require witnesses."

Then they asked, "Where is the ring?"

"We don't require a ring."

And so they had to perform the ceremony without the it and we were married. Benny Sachs, Solly's brother, wanted us to have a religious service with a chupah. It was to be in somebodys garden. So we agreed to go along with it. Solly's family were there, but I only asked my mother. I didn't ask any of my friends from Pretoria as I wasn't interested in a religious 'thing', I simply wanted a civil marriage.

On the day, all the guests were there, we had had our welcoming glass and Solly stood up. He made a political speech, said he wouldn't go on with this farce, and I agreed. So that was the end of the wedding.

My father hadn't allowed me to move to Johannesburg unless I got married. It was unheard of to move out of home unless one got married, even though I was 22. We stayed at a place Judith Paarl in a converted billiards room. When we got married, Sarah Sable and her husband left the Party. Possibly because we wouldn't have a religious ceremony, but basically because they disliked Solly so much.

I was so "fragile" that Solly did everything. He scrubbed the floors, did the washing, everything. One day however, I insisted that I could do my share, and that was the end. From then on I did everything and Solly never thought of helping again. At the time Solly was studying at university and I was working. We lived for a year on my savings and when they ran out, I went to work for a legal firm. This was at the time that Bill Andrews started a Trade Union Congress.

Bill came to South Africa during the Anglo-Boer war and I remember him telling me how they learnt to live off the land. For example they would prepare a meal and then put it in an antheap to cook.

One day, soon after he had started the Trade Union Congress they had a meeting. A young member stood up and said, "Bill Andrews has done a sterling job and we should congratulate him, but he is an old man and I think there should be a young man leading this."

Bill got up and answered, "I agree that I am an old man, but some young men have old ideas and I have young ideas." And he kept the job.

He was the type of person who was at home with workers, scholars, professors, anyone. He could hold his own with anyone. I remember people going to Bill for translations. He was a past master at translating political or legal jargon into simple language. He didn't have any formal education.

Every morning I had to put the lunch on the primus stove, go to work, come home at lunch-time to serve lunch to Solly and his friend, clean up, go back to work for the afternoon and in the evening help Bill Andrews with the trade union typing. I knew Bill Andrews through the Party but we weren't really personal friends as he was alot older than I was. I just felt it was my duty to help and I could do this by typing. Periodically I broke down.

We would socialise mostly with other Party members. Most of us were young, middle class scholars; Willie Kalk was a furniture worker and he joined us, but the majority were students. The Chalmer brothers, who were boiler makers, were at one time also members of the YCL, but they turned out to be a bad group and dropped out. Solly would always have people at the house. As the secretary of the Garment Workers Union, he would have a lot of meetings. He would then give money to someone to take me out so that I wasn't at a loose end.

Eddie Roux went to Oxford on a scholarship. When he came back, Solly and I were living in one room in Harrison street. He was due to arrive early in the morning. So I got very early to clean up and make breakfast. I wasn't sure whether he was still a vegetarian, so I decided not to have meat, but to fry soles. I made many soles for the crowd that would come to the room. When he arrived, he said he wanted meat. So we went to a restaurant and I was left with a whole bunch of fried soles!

As a member of the Party, I would go along to public meetings. One day, we went to Jeppe, a working-class suburb in Johannesburg. It was at the time of King George's visit. In those days there were alot of Black shirts in South Africa, who would object to our anti-Imperialist stance. We would therefore have to link arms to protect the speaker. There would be four of us, three others and me. I was very silly because I would say,

"If you want to fight, fight me."

But as I was a woman, they wouldn't fight me. The talker at these public meetings, usually on a street corner, would often get trouble from the crowd. Sometimes the heckling got potentially violent and the speaker would have to run! The crowd would pursue them. One time, Eddie Roux, Solly Sachs and Willie Kalk were being chased by some louts who wanted to assault them for their political beliefs. Eddie and the others hopped on to a bus, only to be followed by the louts. They had to go from bus to bus until their money ran out. Eventually Willie confronted them and said he would fight, and then they left him alone. It wasn't always easy to carry on...

At one stage Solly's brother, Benny, wanted Solly to join him in partnership in a butcher and grocer store. We would have had enough money and would have had a house but I said I didn't want to be a shopkeeper's wife. I don't think Solly ever seriously wanted to, but once I said I wouldn't mind working whilst he goes to university, he was happy to say no.

He became the secretary of the Garment Workers Union and that was what he really believed in. I think he was genuine about what he was doing. Working among all the women, they would play up to him and he thought it was because he was doing a good job. Meanwhile it was covert love, they wanted bus money and the like. He did a good job for the Garment Workers though. He was a good organiser. He wanted to get the Garment Workers directly involved. He would train them or facilitate their training so that they could become directly involved in the trade union. He was a good organiser because he could delegate. For example, Anna Skeepers became a member of the senate and Johanna Cornelius became a secretary. They were simple factory girls, but good organisers because they were firstly dedicated and loyal and secondly because they understood the workers, having been workers themselves.

My mother, who as a young woman had taken part in the 1905 Russian Revolution, then became very religious - I think the more I became involved in politics the more religious my mother became. She went on to become quite famous for her charitable work. She got awarded a position in the Golden Book and had things named after her. My father on the other hand was never religious. One day my mother said to my father,

"Why don't you go to shul just once a year, just twice a year. Why don't you just show your face?"

"Sonnalena," my father answered, "when I die they will put me amongst the women and when you die they will put you amongst the men."

My father was a Jew but didn't practise as one. He seemed satisfied with my mother upholding the faith.

During the late twenties I would go around collecting funds for the YCL. One of the more memorable characters at the time was Michael Richmans's uncle, Willie Bloomberg, a refugee from Russia who later became a dental mechanic. He set up practice in Johannesburg, near the library. As a child he

never had access to books, so every time he made money, he would buy first editions of books. He was very wealthy as he would charge five pounds for a new set of teeth, and did extremely well. He memorised passages from books; he could recite 'The Golden Bough' from top to bottom. I remember walking along with him on Sundays and he would expound on 'The Golden Bough' for hours. As he was a lonely person he would talk all day, keeping me there for hours and only then would he give his donation. At that time he had the most extensive library. A crowd would come along there, including Herman Charles Bosman, take the books and pawn them. He would then have to go to the pawn shop and buy his books back. Eventually he got married, and became very religious. Needless to say the crowd stopped sponging off him.

I would do a lot of collecting for the YCL as they always needed money and I was considered a good collector. On one occasion I was collecting on a train. As one wasn't allowed to collect on British Rail property, I would get on one carriage, collect, get off the train at the station and get on the next carriage, collect, and so on. I was always collecting for something - so much so that people would cross the street so as to avoid me.

In 1928 and 1929, the YCL would hold a monthly dance for which I would waiter. The dance was attended by the local youth as well as Party members. As it was a fund-raising event, we would hire a band and this would attract a large crowd. People would dance, but there was no alcohol or smoking. Cooled drinks were the only form of refreshment. As a waitress, I got paid but I would return the money to the YCL funds. Yet by being paid, I could join the Waitressing and Catering Union. I was actually a hopeless waitress, I could carry a tray but I could never remember what people had ordered. Still, it was fun while it lasted.

At this time, the chefs at the Stuttafords tea-room were complaining that the wages were too low. As the vice president of the Waitressing and Catering Union, I took their complaint to the Wage Board. Fanny Klenerman was the secretary of the Waitressing and Catering Union, but as she was the owner of the 'Vanguard Booksellers', she was not in the trade. She therefore drew up the memorandum and I trained as a waitress so that I could represent them. Her husband, Frank Glass, was the organiser of various trade unions and he organised the meeting. The Stuttafords' employers argued that they weren't professional chefs but house-wives who cooked. The owner asked,

"Do you mean that we must pay full chefs wages to a house-wife?"

"Yes if they do the cooking and if it's satisfactory, you're employing a cook not a housewife." I replied.

The next day the newspapers said that I made "mincemeat" out of the owner's argument, a claim which I thought was nonsense. Afterwards I left the union as I had only joined in order to represent them. The trade unions were all white at the time.

During 1930, Solly was invited to Moscow as a delegate for the International Trade Union Congress, which was held over a month. I decided to go with Solly to the Soviet Union. We had to catch a train to Cape Town to board the mail-ship that was to take us to England. On the train, Solly realised he had left some important papers in Johannesburg. He had to leave the train and go back. I in turn, had to ask the conductor to lock me in my cabin as a group of Scotsmen kept knocking on the door and disturbing me.

On the mailship over to Europe, I was playing bridge with the older passengers. Periodically I would go out to play deck games - skipping, deck-koits - and then return to the game. As I was playing differently, I kept on winning and ended in the finals.

When we reached London, I had to go about getting a visa. As a South African, I needed to get a visa to go to the Soviet Union. South Africans could go on an organised tour, but it was difficult to go by oneself. The visa which cost 12 pounds, a relatively large amount of money, was organised for me by the London YCL.

I soon became tired of simply being a tourist. One day I went a YCL meeting in London and no-one spoke to me as I was new. After the meeting I told them that this wouldn't have happened in South Africa. They were very apologetic and offered to let me work for them.

I also wanted to go to the opera so I went to book. One had to pay 6 pence to hire a stool which would reserve your place in the queue. I met a lady from the country who had saved up for two weeks and went to the opera every evening. She said she would keep a chair for me in case I came. In this way I was able to see some opera.

At a meeting of an organisation at which I worked, I met a very handsome artist. He wanted me to take him around London, but only to the places where we had to pay. As a person from a country with diamond and gold mines, I was thought to have lots of money and so he expected me to pay. When I eventually got a visa from the YCL, I was able to go to Moscow. The artist then had the nerve, after being taken around London, to ask me to send several things from Moscow for him. That was the final straw and I never saw him again.

On the boat trip over to the Soviet Union, there were a number of tourists, two dons from an English university who were on their way to a soil conference and a few Americans. I was told to keep a low profile because I was going back to South Africa. One of the dons who was drinking a lot started taking a particular liking to me. One day he came to my cabin and asked me to accompany me to his cabin. Instead of simply telling him to go away, I called the steward and the captain and made a big fuss. And that ended my low profile.

When we arrived in Leningrad, I went with the tourists to the hotel. At the time there was a food shortage and so the hotel

was issued with food coupons. I was placed in the suite with the Americans. They tried to persuade me to stay in Leningrad and go on the tour with them by offering to pay for me. I declined as I wanted to get to Moscow as soon as possible. The captain of the ship had organised to get me a place on the train as it was very difficult to get a place as they were always full.

Once I was on the train, I got a message that Solly's relatives were at the hotel in Leningrad. So I got off the train and went back to the hotel. In the mean time the English don had told Solly's relatives that I had left by train. So I was stranded, unable to get back on the train and furious. I couldn't speak Russian or German. The only word I knew was 'delegate', so I went to the trade union office claiming that I was a 'delegate'. While I was in Leningrad I never went to any exhibitions or interesting places as I was only intent on getting to Moscow.

They eventually organised me a place on the train and I was on my way to Moscow. When I arrived, Solly was in the country, thinking that I was still in Leningrad. At the congress, I was to stay with a black woman from America. Coming from S.A., perhaps they were testing me. The woman was a laundry worker from America who was totally apolitical and mainly interested in having a good time. An African chief at the congress boasted that he had so many wives. She replied: "Hah! That's nothing, in America we can have as many men as we want!"

When they found out I wasn't a delegate, the trouble began. To make matters worse the English don, who kept on leaving messages for me, had bought me ballet tickets. I refused to have anything to do with him.

In order to right the situation, I said that I wanted to work. There was an interpreter who had a team of three typists: an American, an Englishman and me. I worked for a short while but then developed the flu. So whilst everyone was going out, I was confined to my room. Furthermore the congress said I wasn't allowed to work until I had had a three month holiday. The translator, however, asked me to work for him after-hours. I received several copies of the "Illustrated Russian News", a glossy coffee-table newspaper, for doing articles for them. I also received a wonderful cake which I hid so as to surprise Solly. They surprised me, however, by finding the cake and finishing it.

Willie Kalk was a delegate, as were Molly and Doug Walton, who had left S.A. as things were a bit 'sticky'. I was invited to stay on and go to the Lenin School, but I felt that Molly was much more suitable. Solly and Willie insisted that Doug and Molly must stay as delegates in spite of their past and so they were allowed to stay. Molly then stayed on and went to the Lenin School. The Lenin School taught a political syllabus, the theory of communism. After graduating one would return to one's country as a functionary.

As the congress was in summer, we went out on excursions and picnics on the Volga in between the meetings. We stayed near the Red Square but I never went to see Lenin's tomb as there was always an endless queue. I didn't really have that much time as I was mostly sick. There were film shows in Moscow and I was sent out to find out where they were showing. I would ask: "Tivarish, Kino?" - [Comrade, film?] - to which they would answer: "Nei tivarish Kino" - [they don't know Comrade Kino]. So I would have to go to someone else until they understood. I also went to see the Kremlin.

I would say to the Soviets,
 "Oh, but the Africans are so tolerant."
 To which they would reply,
 "Yes but aren't they too tolerant?"

Before leaving Moscow I gave away all the clothes I possibly could as there was such a shortage. I knew I could replace them in Berlin. There was also an accommodation shortage so that people had to stay in one room instead of a whole house. I wasn't disillusioned with the general situation as it was to be expected in a time of transition.

Whilst in the Soviet Union, I saw one incident which really inspired me. We were on the outskirts of Moscow and a train came in to collect a harvest. Everybody began volunteering to get the grain onto the train. As I was helping I felt the enthusiasm of the people and that really inspired me. I felt that people were actually achieving something.

Even today I am still hopeful that they will be able to achieve something. I know the CIA is still carrying on, just like the hit-squad here trying to pull the Soviet Union apart. If only they had been given a chance. They showed they had the potential with Sputnik but they were never given any chance to carry on because they had to put all their effort into war. Even the killings and atrocities which occurred haven't changed my overall view. I am sorry that it happened and I am sorry that we condoned these terrible things, but that was the work of individuals and not the result of the idea as a whole. I still have faith that the Great Experiment has not failed, that the day will come when there is justice and equality in the world and the working people come into their own.

On the journey home I went via Berlin, where I stayed for three days. Then to London and home on a mail-ship, which took forty days to reach South Africa.

After completing the Lenin school, Molly and Doug returned to S.A.. Molly became a leader in response to a directive sent by the Comintern in Moscow. A report was sent from Johannesburg to Moscow prompting this directive, but their claims weren't true. I queried these claims but was told to "just type". It was the one time during my work for the Party where I did something which I didn't want to do. I knew the claims were false but there was nothing I could do about it.

The new leadership adopted the policy of a 'Black Republic'. They claimed they had created 'cells' - contacts within the various mines and townships - but this wasn't strictly true. Those that did not follow this new line, were expelled. They expelled Bunting, Bill Andrews, Solly Sachs and others. The reasons for the expulsions were flimsy. They were going to expel me, possibly because I was Solly's wife, but they didn't have another typist.

One of the reasons why Solly was expelled was that he didn't attend C.P. organised May Day celebrations. The GWU [Garment Workers Union] had organised a sport's day in opposition to the C.P.'s arrangements. Solly, as secretary of the GWU, went to the GWU's function. Solly was influenced by Dulcie, his future wife, and she was very anti-communist. I think he decided that his place was in the Labour Party and not in the Communist Party. They gave several other reasons for the expulsions which weren't valid, but which Solly validated later by his actions. The Party became an "elitist" group. Later, when they found out the cells weren't really working, the Waltons were reprimanded and there was a different tone after that, but the damage had been done.

Molly Walton was a very beautiful woman who was not very tall. But she had a powerful voice and could speak excellently. The trade unions loved her. They would call her 'our Molly'. Only after she returned from Moscow did we learn about her heart condition. In her marriage to Doug, she was the dominant partner. He wasn't a speaker, he was more a correspondent, who did the paper work.

Just after Solly was expelled, Molly Walton spent the night in bed with me and Solly. There was a strike in the area and we all had to be there very early. She spent the night trying to get me away from Solly.

Some people wanted to get out of the Party and they used the exclusions as an excuse. People blamed the Party as a whole and didn't really realise the difference between the leadership and the Party. For some, there were personal reasons for getting out of the Party, for instance Harry Snitcher had suffered in his career because of his involvement in the Party - he was never appointed a judge, although for many years he was a top advocate.

There was a girl in the Party called Wilhemina and Eddie was madly in love with her. But she wasn't really interested, so she kept him on a string. When he moved to Cape Town suddenly she became interested but by this time Eddie was not interested. He told me that "She ran and she ran until she ran out of my reach." And that was the end of it. He met Winnie in Johannesburg. They got married, as Winnie was a teacher and she knew that if she had a child out of wedlock, they she would get the sack. At the time, Molly Walton made a Party decree that I must divorce Solly and get Eddie away from Winnie. Not that there was anything between Eddie and me. They just thought that Winnie was a bad influence and that it would be better for the Party. Needless to say, we

ignored the decree.

Eddie then wanted to get a job at Onderstepoort. So he had to go for an interview. I said he couldn't go to an interview in khaki shorts or pants, he must look respectable. So he borrowed a tie from someone and a shirt from someone else and went looking all smart. When he came back, he was furious with me - the man giving the interview was wearing khaki shorts! Anyway he got the job and he came to Cape Town. He worked in a government laboratory developing fish oil. A question was then asked in Parliament, if they were employing a communist to develop fish oil and after that he got the sack. He was publishing the newspaper at the time and that also added to his losing his job.

Whilst in Cape Town, Eddie decided he wanted to learn linotyping as he was editing the 'Umsebenzi' and it would help him with the presentation. I knew two sculptors, Eva and Konya Myerowitz, who had a Arts School at the time. Konya taught Eddie lino-typing. The school building was later demolished, Konya ran off with his secretary and the school folded. Konya was then commissioned to do relief sculpture for a room in the National Gallery. One of the murals was of the Jews coming to Cape Town. There is a ship with dock workers unloading. The name of the ship is the 'S.S. Umsebenzi'. And that was Myerowitz's contribution to the struggle.

During the thirties there were mainly white Party members. One of the Black members was Albert Nzula. I don't know how he came into the Movement, but I do know that he was an excellent speaker. He had a lot of charisma. One day as he was giving a speech, I overheard someone in the audience say, "Maar, die kaffir kan praat."

Unfortunately he didn't get on well with Bunting and others. Bunting was a purist and Albert used to drink. He was more or less isolated. He eventually went to Moscow where he died. It was a great loss to South Africa. Had the Party tried to get him off drink instead of just denouncing him, there might have been a chance. Solly always used to say it was such a pity that he didn't take more time to get to know him and make him feel welcome. He left such a strong impression on us that we named Albie after him.

There was very little real social contact between the black and white members of the Party. We only really saw black members at meetings and sometimes they would come to a party. We would never go to their houses, so it was very difficult to get close to them. Eddie used to say he loved the Cape because he could sit on a bus with a black man. When he first arrived in the thirties he could entertain all Party members in his house, but that fell away afterwards. And yet at Party meetings we were all equal. There was nowhere else in South Africa even remotely like this. And we all shared the idea of a South Africa where everybody would have equal rights and people would be able to associate freely.

Nkosi was another leading black member of the Party and Bunting's election agent, who was later killed by the police at an anti-pass meeting.

The Party's night school, which ran a very elementary academic program, attracted the most blacks. The school was in Commissioner street, Ferrrierastown. Moses Kotane, who was then a baker, and Johannes Nkosi were both products of the school. They would come from working all day and had to study at night. Moses taught himself to read and write through our night school. There weren't proper teachers, only Party members. I would bring text books and help where I could. Sometimes we had to use lamps if we didn't have light.

Later when I was working as a secretary for the Party in Cape Town, Moses Kotane would always introduce me by saying, "She was my teacher at school and now I'm her boss." I really got to know him when he was in Cape Town, at the time he was the secretary of the Party. Before that he came out and stayed for a short while with Eddie Roux in the Gardens. When any body came to the door, he would say, "The boss is not in." Because it was illegal for him to stay there. We would all chuckle about that.

We respected him very much. He started off humbly and educated himself into a position of leadership. He was quite bureaucratic in a way. Everything was neatly listed, so when the police raided the place, they found everything systematically filed.

I also met Jimmy Leguma when I moved down to Cape Town. We were friendly even though I wasn't a Capetonian. We used to work together. He was a very likable chap.

Molly and Doug decided to try and develop Party cells in the 1930's, which were semi-illegal. Instead of having branches, we were expected to create cells with one or two people as contacts. I would have to go to End street and sell Party literature and try and make contact with the people there. There was a compound in the location. The compound was in the city, between the city and Dornfontein. They used to chase me away and I didn't know why. I later found out that they had an illegal brewing yard in the compound. As the police would follow me to find out what a white women would want there in the early evening, they were afraid of being found out and fined.

Josey Palmer [Mpama] and I would also go to the African Crown Mines to try and make contacts. It was utterly ridiculous really, it was all right for Josie to go but not for me to go amongst black men. I couldn't speak their language or anything, I just went along. It was in the middle of winter and we would go out in the early morning. It was bitterly cold and we only had one pair of gloves. So we would alternate hands, Josey would wear the left and I the right and then swop.

Lasar Bach, who was a big influence in the Party leadership

in the earlie thirties later went to Durban to work amongst the unionists there, he called himself "Nelson". He was interested in one of the woman Party members in Johannesburg. So Joe Shwartz would call her "Lady Hamilton".

I was virtually a full-time typist for the Party, yet I never got a penny for my work. This was only a temporary measure until they found someone else. I was then more involved in the GWU than the Party, though I would still help out were possible. Also when I moved down to Cape Town that was further away. When the headquarters moved down to Cape Town, I became the secretary there. By this stage we had become members of the Party as opposed to the YCL. It was an automatic transition. The YCL didn't attract any new members and became redundant and eventually fell away. Sarah Carneson became the new typist. I became more of a free agent. I would help out both trade unions and the Party when I was needed. It was my choice to loosen ties - I knew that Solly had alot of cases. I was also working full-time to earn a living.

As Solly was the secretary of the GWU, I would assist them in their legal work. I would go to court, take notes, do the typing etc. The lawyers would charge for their services yet I was doing all the work and saving them tons of money. I was involved in the GWU all the time I was in Johannesburg, until I finally moved to Cape Town in 1940.

In 1932 the Tramway Workers Union in Durban held a strike. They asked Solly to send down some GWU workers to assist with the strike. Molly Walton was supposed to go but she was ill [she had a bad heart], so I went. There were three Garment Workers from Germiston who travelled down to Durban. When we arrived, there was no-one to meet us. I, luckily, had the address of a chemist who had moved down to Durban so I contacted him.

We eventually contacted the Tramway Workers Union and the union official claimed that the strike was over as a settlement had been reached and therefore he thought we weren't coming. I told him that the strike wasn't over, I wasn't sure but I pretended to know. The Tramway Workers Union then gave us two hundred pounds, struck a levy of two shillings a week for as long as the strike lasted and we were their quests. We had banners and would picket. I told the girls that we weren't there on a holiday and that we must always wear our banners where ever we go so as to publicise the strike. We had a meeting at the Red Square and as I am not a speaker, I wouldn't do public addresses but on this particular occasion, I got up and said, "The Tramway Workers have got the guts to strike. You don't have the guts to strike so you must support them. The depression is affecting everyone and the Tramworkers are doing something about this, so give them your support..." I then looked up and saw someone I knew and dried up. I couldn't think of another thing to say. Then we had a meeting at the Typo Union and we got some support from them. We were made honorary members of the Tramway Workers Union. After about a week we went back to Johannesburg.

Three years later I went back to Durban and stayed with Issy Wolfson's relatives. He took me to a roadhouse owned by a retired tramway worker. We met a chap there who started a conversation about strikes. He said,

"Oh, I don't hold up with strikes, they don't do any good."

"But you supported the Garment workers", Mr. Redmen, the owner of the road house pointed out.

"Oh, but their conditions were terrible", he explained, "We had to. They were working under shocking conditions."

Mr. Redmen asked,

"What did you do?"

"Well, four girls came out and we paid for their expenses and we gave them two hundred pounds and we struck up a levy etc."

"They must have been very beautiful for you to have done all that", Mr. Redmen said.

"Oh no, they were as ugly as sin."

I couldn't control myself I was laughing so much. I had to excuse myself. After all, I was the leader of the Garment workers group. When I told the other girls they thought it was a terrible story and were very insulted, but I thought it was very funny.

In the same year, 1932, there was a GWU strike in Germiston. I would wake up at four in the morning and go to the factory in Germiston to join the picket line. The police would be there to ensure that we wouldn't harm the scab workers. I said to the police that I didn't want to harm the scabs, I just wanted to talk to them. I took the one scab worker around the corner and then I said to her,

"You dirty little scab, you are not going to work."

The factory bosses and the scabs would shout at me:

"Go back to Russia, we don't want you here."

But I would be there all day and go back in the evening.

The strike then spread to Johannesburg, in Commissioner and Market street. The police there were relatives of the strikers so they told us how to link arms and ward them off, which we did. A van containing scab workers tried to push its way through the picketers to get into the factory. The only way of stopping this was by lying down in front of the van, which I did. I took a chance, I didn't think they'd run me over. They had to stop and drag me away from under the van. This enabled the picketers to pull the scabs out and prevent them from going to work. They then withdrew the police as they said there was 'insubordination' in the ranks. Police were then brought in from outside areas where they weren't related to the strikers.

After the 1932 GWU strike in which Afrikaans girls had come out in support of Solly and had gone to jail for it, Solly was not very popular with the powers that be. When he got to Southampton, on trade union and other business, they wanted to deport him back to S.A.. In an attempt to stop the deportation, I asked Weinstok to get in touch with Colin Steyn who was then a judge president, of the Supreme Court of the D.F.S. He said to Weinstok,

"Tell the good lady I remember her well but in a few days time I am going against the government on the question of the gold standard."

He had remembered me from the 1924 election campaign.

So I then went to Pretoria and asked Mr. Mayden who was the chairman of the Industrial Council for the industry, for help. He and his wife took me to Pretoria to interview people in order to get support. I saw Bresler the secretary to Pirow, who was Minister of Justice, and he said he would intercede. I then saw Van Rensburg who was the Secretary of Justice; later he became the head of the O.B.. I couldn't understand why he kept talking to me about his family and other trivial things. Eventually I got a word in edgeways and said I wanted to see see Te Water, who was then South Africa's ambassador to Britain and then on a visit to Pretoria, but by the time I managed to ask Van Rensburg, he said,

"Oh, you have missed him, he has just boarded the train to Cape Town."

I was therefore deliberately kept from seeing Te Water. I also sent him cables which he never received. Eventually the British T.U.C. [Trade Union Congress] got Solly Khim released.

While Solly was overseas buying feature films, I didn't want the GWU to support me so I worked. After returning from Moscow in 1930, I set up a duplicating office as a 'front' to continue Party work. But I also tried to make it self-sufficient. As I had no telephone, I gave a GWU number, so that outside people could contact me for jobs. Eventually one of the garment workers saw me in the Communist Party offices and blew my cover so I had to close down. Even though the Party was still legal, there was always a possibility of being banned. I had hoped to build up the duplicating office in case they were banned.

Herman Charles Bosman lived in the same building as my office. I was terrified of him as I didn't want to be his friend or his enemy. He and a group of friends brought out a periodical which they used to blackmail people. They would extort money from people by saying,

"If you don't give us money we will publish x about you."

During the 1932 GWU strike, Bosman came to Solly and said,

"Look here Sachs, I have been given 25 pounds to publish this article against you, if you give me 50 pounds I won't publish."

Solly told him to 'go to hell', so he published. The article claimed that Solly Sachs gets the girls that go on strike to act as prostitutes and streetwalkers etc. One of the clothing factory owners circulated the article amongst his workers. He claimed that the article was true and therefore they must have nothing further to do with the trade union. As the article was printed in 'black and white', the workers believed him. Solly took the owner to court to claim damages. When asked if he believed the allegations were true, the factory owner replied that he did. He was fined 25 pounds and had to pay quite a lot of money in damages. Afterwards Bosman

went to Solly and said,
 "Where's my cut?"
 Solly asked, "What do you mean?"
 "Well if I hadn't published that article, you wouldn't have made that money!"
 Solly then threw him out.

After the printing office was closed I found a job at the Commercial Printing Works, which was owned by Weinstok. I was meant to do office work, but I was put in the office and had to do all the menial tasks such as taking out staples etc. The foreman, Mostert, was the editor of the 'Forward', the Labour Party newspaper and I was asked to be proof-reader and sub-editor. He then told me I should join the Typo Union, which I did. We as 'workshop floor' workers could only join the union as a 'third grade' [unskilled] worker. This meant that we weren't expected to attend meetings or really partake in the union; whilst 'first' and 'second' grade workers would be fined for not attending meetings. It worked on a 'chapel' system, with a father of the chapel etc. It certainly wasn't a democratic organisation. The Typo Union was aristocratic with the 'third grade' workers only having a third of a vote. Mostert told me there was a meeting on such and such a day and that I must attend. He also expected me to report back to him. I said,

"Do you really think that I am at your beck and call? Do you really think I'm going to be a stoopigeon for you? You must be mistaken."

"Then why did you join the union?" he asked.

"Because I wanted to help them."

I did however attend the meeting, which was unheard of for an unskilled labourer. They actually didn't want me there. The others in the office thought I was trying to take their jobs away, thus they made me do all the menial tasks thinking they would get rid of me. Other office workers were also members of the union but they never attended meetings or anything.

Meanwhile after his deportation was averted, Solly went on from New Hampshire to Germany and the Soviet Union; where he got films. Benny and Solly had formed a company, where Solly got the films, Benny provided the money and I had see that they were shown. They were some of the classics of early Soviet cinema such as Battleship Potemkin by Eisenstein and Earth by Pudovkin, which were regarded as a new art of a new civilization. Solly also brought Madchen in Uniform from Germany

Once Solly returned with the films, I had to find a venue in Cape Town to show them. There was competition from the African Theatres, the main Cape Town cinema company. But I was friendly with Meyerowitz, who then ran an art college. The father of one of the student's was on the censor-board. As the films had to be censored, this man was able to pass them quickly. I wanted to show the films in the City Hall, and therefore had to get it wired for sound. At the time the Plaza was being built in Sea-Point. Meyerowitz was doing the decor. The opening of the Plaza was planned for the same time

that our films were due to be screened. Meyerowitz therefore stalled the completion of the Plaza so that it wasn't finished in time, and there was an audience for our film show. There were three performances of the film, Earth, to which Admiral Evans of the Broke went to every performance. The films had captions. Even though I had done all the work getting the films shown, if I needed money for living expenses, I had to fight for it. I obviously wasn't paid for my work.

In the early thirties, Issy Diamond, a barber, led a protest of black and white workers to the Rand Club in the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg. They marched in and ate whatever was on the table. He was arrested, charged and put in jail. His wife, Irma, was working for people who said her husband was being used by the Communist Party. So she went to the court steps and shouted about how her husband was in jail and the Communist Party was doing nothing. I went up to her and told her she could say what she likes about individuals in the Party but she can't blame the Party as a whole. We started having an argument and I rushed at her and said, "Shut your dirty mouth," and slapped her across the face. She hit me to the ground as she was a hefty woman. I was pregnant at the time and had a miscarriage as result of the fall. Thankfully there were no reporters at the steps so it was never reported. After that I had trouble holding my pregnancies.

It was unheard of in those days to have a black and white couple. And here he was leading both the black and white unemployed against the status quo. He was really quite a character.

While Issy was serving his sentence Irma went to him the one day and said, "Issy, I dreamt that you slept with Winnie Roux. If I ever dream that again you had better watch out!" "Irma, believe me, I have been faithful to you, I haven't looked at another women, all my time in prison," he replied. While Issy was in jail she had nowhere to stay so Issy said she should come and stay with me. She was reluctant. We found her a room and then one night she came banging on our door. She had seen a bug in her room and refused to stay there and so she moved back in with us. After Issy got out of jail, Solly and I became boarders in their house, until we got our own place.

One day we went out to Potchestroom for a political meeting in the township there. The people wanted Irma to make a speech. She stood there saying in German, "What must I say? What am I supposed to do?" and Issy translated it into a marvellous speech.

During 1934 the Garment Workers Union would hold a monthly fund raising dance where I would waitress, but wasn't paid. The dance was for the local garment workers. Syrian chaps, who were in Johannesburg at the time, usually came to the dance in order to pick a fight. They would ask a girl to

dance and if she refused, they would pick a fight with her boyfriend. One night they were attempting to molest a girl who refused to dance with them. People were shouting at them and they enquired who was going to stop them. I stepped forward and said I would, even though I was pregnant with Albie at the time. One chap came forward and was going to hit me as I stood in between the girl and him. Toweel, the famous boxer, then stepped in and said, "We don't hit pregnant women." Either the sight of the boxer or the fact that I was pregnant stopped them.

In January 1935, Albie was born. As I was never a conformist, I didn't wear a ring throughout my marriage with Solly, not even while I was pregnant. Some people would look at me askance, an assumedly unmarried pregnant women but I never cared.

Whilst Solly moved down to Cape Town to orchestrate a GWU case in 1935, I went with Albie to Durban. Albie was only seven months old at the time. After waiting for the winds and seas to die down, we took a ship down from Durban to Cape Town. Solly met us at the docks. His first question was, "Where is Albie?"

His second question was,

"How soon can you leave Albie at the house I've rented in Mowbray and come to Cape Town to work?"

So I had to leave Albie with a nanny in Mowbray and go to Cape Town to work. There was a case against the local clothing union at the time. The Transvaal GWU wanted to force the Cape Union [which was separate] to have a proper constitution. Solly and the Transvaal union felt the Cape union wasn't being run democratically or effectively. Harry Snitcher - was the junior counsel and Upington, the senior, I think. I had to go to court every day and take the court proceedings, which I would then type out at night. This served as a reference for the GWU, ready to be used the next day.

One Saturday night I was up the whole night typing, whilst Solly and his friends stayed up playing poker. In the morning, the woman who was looking after Albie arrived and remarked to me,

"That must be a very interesting game for them to begin playing so early."

Even though I was working, if I asked them a question they would get annoyed at my interrupting their game. When judgment was given, it was against the Transvaal Union. Their attempt to improve the Cape Union's conditions had failed. Sam Kahn was the attorney.

When Albie was about one year old, he got rickets. The woman who was looking after him had tied him to his pram. As he was a docile child and was never any trouble, she took advantage of the situation and kept him tied in his pram. Albie therefore never crawled about and developed rickets from lack of movement. As I was working all day, I was unable to look after him properly. After he developed rickets, I asked Solly

if I could stay home to look after him properly. He replied, "You have the welfare of thousands of Garment Workers at stake, and you are worried about one baby."
Yet even though the case was over I wasn't allowed to stay at home. If they needed funds, they would hire me out to legal firms as a short-hand typist, relieving people.

After six months, we moved back to Johannesburg. As Solly's headquarters for the GWU was in Johannesburg, he would have to spend most of his time up there. In Johannesburg, I would help with the GWU's typing but in Cape Town, I'd help all the unions. I did the magazine for the Food and Canning Workers Union. Ray Alexander used to come round to the bungalow where I stayed or I would go in to type at their offices in town. I would do stencils for the magazine. I had to make a dummy which meant laying out each page by hand. As there was no fancy equipment it was a slow and laborious task. I would only type, not write any articles.

When I was pregnant with Johnny, there was a Clothing Worker's strike on. Dora Alexander, Ray's sister, was arrested for picketing. I didn't picket but helped in the office with secretarial work. Solly sent three Garment workers from Johannesburg to assist with the strike. As they needed to collect funds, they wanted Bill Andrews to be the treasurer. He said he would only be treasurer if I would handle the money. He would only have his name involved if I did the work. So even though I was pregnant, I had to stay on. They didn't trust the treasurer of the local union as they weren't sure he would distribute the funds equitably. So I became the treasurer on top of everything.

During this time there was a Food and Canning Workers strike in Paarl. Every week while the strike lasted, the strikers got paid out by the strikers fund. One week they didn't have a driver or a car and they needed to get the money from Cape Town to Paarl. The strikers were all waiting at the end of the week for their pay. There was a fellow whom I knew from Johannesburg and I asked him if he knew how to drive. He said he had a licence so we borrowed a car and left. He drove all the way from Cape Town to Paarl in second gear! What should have taken less than an hour took us three hours. The strikers were furious and I shan't like to think what it did to the car.

The next time we came down to Cape Town I stayed at Cissy Gool's bungalow on Glen Beach. Cissy was the daughter of Abdurahman. If he had been a white man, he could have been a mayor or a member of Parliament. He was a Provincial Counsellor and very well known and respected. His wife was Scottish.

Cissy married A.H. Gool who had been educated at Guyus Hospital in London. He was a very erudite man. They would entertain the lawyers and professors in Cape Town. As soon as times became difficult because of Apartheid, people dropped them. He would have his salon in one room and Cissy would have hers in the other and they would each have their

followers. I would go there and move from one to the other. I was introduced through Eddie. At that time I was staying at Edith Richmond, Gregoire's first girlfriend.

On my first meeting, I phoned Cissy at her bungalow at Glen Beach, but she was busy so Dr. Gool was delegated to entertain us. I was terrified of him and so was Edith as he had a reputation of being a lady killer. Any rate, we went along there but Edith and I were too frightened to go into the bungalow. So we went away! Later we laughed about it once we became good friends.

Cissy herself was a great personality, one of the best public speakers in Cape Town, with a striking presence and a passionate form of oratory. She was a City Councillor for years. Years afterwards I used to play bridge with Dr. Gool, and still get occasional news of his children.

Solly went back to Johannesburg but, because I loved Cape Town so much, I stayed on at the bungalow for three months. One November, the weather was particularly bad and no-one would come and stay with me until the weather improved. Then my mother and sister came down, my mother stayed in Cape Town at a boarding house as she was very religious and needed her peace and quiet, also so that there would be more space at the bungalow for the crowd who would come visit, among them was Ray Alexander.

One of the men from the crowd who often came was a representative from the 'Arab-Russian Oil Company'. He had a car. One day as we were walking along Glen Beach, this chap said he had a proposition to make, he would teach Harry Snitcher to drive, if Harry would teach him to speak English. Harry said,

"If you can say this sentence after me, I'll teach you English and you don't have to teach me how to drive...-'My nostrils are assailed by the carrion odour of a gangrene society'."

The Russian repeated the sentence successfully. The next evening there was a party, organised by the 'Friends of Soviet Union' fund raisers, to which this representative was invited. He ended up, however, at the wrong party. So he paid his two shillings, went in and realising his mistake, said, "My nostrils are assailed by the carrion odour of a gangrene society," and walked out.

When my family left, I helped them carry all their heavy parcels to the station. Professor Zwarenstein, the originator of the 'frog-test' [the first scientific pregnancy test], came with us to the station. Once they'd left he congratulated me as I was pregnant. All the heavy carrying meant that I was liable to have a miscarriage, so the doctor said I must stay in bed. Sally, Harry's sister came to look after Albie as I couldn't get out of bed.

I then got a summons from Johannesburg saying that the furniture from our flat was to be sold to pay for the rent.

We would normally store our furniture and the caretaker would rent the flat for us. This particular time, I was prevailed upon to leave my furniture so that they could rent a furnished flat and I wouldn't have the bother of having to pack it all up. The flat was rented, yet the caretaker disappeared and the rent didn't get paid. Solly wanted me to come back and fight the case, but I couldn't. We eventually reached a settlement but only got back half our furniture.

Solly came down to Cape Town for a further six months in 1936. When we were leaving from Cape Town to go to Johannesburg by train, I was late. Abe Snitcher, Harry's brother drove me to the station. When we finally got to the station, Ellie Weinberg - Ray Alexander's first husband - grabbed Albie and gave him to Solly. I was about eight months pregnant but managed to run after the train and get on the last carriage. I reached Solly just in time as he was about to get off at Belville station as he thought I'd missed the train. Even though he had Albie, he had lost Albie's mother! When I got to Johannesburg I had trouble finding a nursing home as I hadn't booked. Johnny was born in Johannesburg.

It was a difficult period for me. Solly was involved with Dulcie at the time and she told Solly that if Johnny was his child, which he was, then he had been unfaithful to her. Solly would only visit me with Dulcie, never alone. I went back to Cape Town.

Dulcie left her husband, a railway clerk, some time before. He was angry with Solly, and one day attacked him in Dulcie's flat so severely that Solly had to go to hospital. Albie saw him and told me,

"Daddy has got a hole in his head."

Now it was Solly's turn to be angry. He was fond of litigation and instituted proceedings for assault. The whole world tried to stop Solly, but he wouldn't listen. Eventually I spoke to Bill Andrews who agreed the action was ill-advised. When I told Solly, he immediately went to see Bill, and after that he dropped the case. Bill was the only person he would listen to.

Now it was Bill's turn to be angry. He was cross with me for betraying his confidence, and refused to speak to me for several years.

Albie used to look after Johnny and would potty him at night. If in the morning the bed was dry, I would give each of them a chocolate croquet. I never had any problem with Johnny as Albie would always look after him. One night Albie called me and I never heard him. He got very cross and took the whole box of croquettes and divided them between Johnny and himself. They ate them all at once. After that they both developed jaundice.

When Albie was at the inquisitive age of four or five, he discovered the origin of man! He said to me,
"I know that I came out of your tummy, and you came out of your mothers tummy. But where did the first person come from? I think they came from a monkey. The monkey lost its tail and

that's where the first person came from." (Evolution at the age of four). He also reasoned that God must live under the earth. For, if He lived in the sky, when the clouds bumped, He would fall down with the rain. Also God needed to be under the earth in order to push up the trees and flowers.

Albie was brought up in a non-religious household. He never had a bris and when told he could have a barmitzvah if he wanted, he refused because he did not want to do something he didn't believe in. At school he never followed any religion. It must have affected Albie and Johnny as they mixed mainly with Jewish children, though they never said anything.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, there were German Jewish refugees who came out from Germany to South Africa. They were not all a very pleasant bunch. They could understand Hitler's discrimination of the Polish Jews who were 'foreigners', but could not understand why they, as integrated Germans, should be persecuted. Those in South Africa knew about the concentration camps as these Jews had escaped from Germany. A very close friend of mine was married to a Jewish man. Her sister was married to an important Nazi. They managed to escape from Germany through her sister threatening to divorce her husband if he didn't get them out.

When Albie was five years old the doctor said I must stop moving up and down and decide where I wanted to settle. As I had left Solly by this time, I decided to stay in Cape Town. I rented a bungalow on Clifton first beach.

Eddie Roux had a bungalow on first beach. My friend, Jenny, would go along there on weekends. Eddie's wife, Winnifried, was so used to budgeting that even the week's food was rationed. They had very little money and lived very sparsely. They would have so many potatoes, so many eggs etc. Jenny wasn't used to this and so she got so fed up the one day that she cooked the whole weeks rations in one meal! But they really were poor, Eddie actually died of malnutrition.

At one stage I was staying on fourth beach. The bungalow had an outside room which was my bedroom. Albie had a habit of coming in first thing in the morning. I had to keep it open so that Albie could come in when he woke. On one occasion, Solly spent the night. He was in the one bed and I was in the other. When Albie came to the door, Solly put his head under the blankets. Albie calmly remarked,

"Hello daddy."

"How did he know it was me?" Solly asked.

"Well if he came in and saw there was someone in the bed, he must have assumed it was you," I said.

I had to be very careful if there was someone else there - they had to leave very early in the morning and I would hope that Albie didn't come during the night!

While I was staying on second beach, I went on holiday with Jean and Hymie Bernardt. Alec Bell, the actor, looked after Albie and Johnny while I was away. They adored him, but he got on bad terms with the landlady. She stayed in a room on

the premises and objected to him walking around in his underpants. He would do the housework not in bathing trunks, but in his long, clumsy underpants.

With the outbreak of war, there were slogans which said "Don't talk about ships or shipping", as they were afraid the enemy would find out the Allies' movements. But, all you had to do was sit on the top of the bus and you could see the ships and the convoys coming in. There were a lot of troops going to Australia and the Far East. There were also a lot of Liberty ships coming from America. Many survivors would come to Cape Town to recuperate.

During the war years I had difficulty finding a bungalow. The people from the Belgian Congo couldn't go to Europe for their holidays so they came to Cape Town. Previously I would pay 12 pounds a month for a bungalow and now they shot up to 25 pounds. All I could afford was a room.

Whilst at Clifton, I heard Albie say to another child, "Not all Germans are bad people, there are good ones as well and only the Nazis are bad." I then got a reputation for being a Nazi supporter by the child's parent. I wasn't very popular in Clifton. I would be told that my visitors to the bungalow, sometimes as many as fifty people, must go to the tea-room on fourth beach if they wanted to be entertained.

There was a fire-fighting club in Clifton. Every time there was a fire on the mountain side, you were expected to come out of your bungalow and spray down your roof in case of sparks. The Clifton scout hall was used to entertain the troops. The married women had to stay in the kitchen and cook so that the unmarried women could have a chance to dance with the soldiers.

During the war there was a pageant at the City Hall for a 'Russian Relief Fund'. Ouma Smuts was the patron of the concert. We produced programmes for the pageant, which were printed at the normal rate and which we would then sell. On the back we listed all the progressive organisations, as there was no other way of making ourselves known.

A week later there was a convoy and we had no literature. We were desperate as we used to send people to the docks to sell literature and the Party newspaper. All we had were a few programmes left over from the pageant. I gave the programmes to a youngster and told him to go and give the programmes away. As the pageant had already taken place, we couldn't sell them. I thought at least people could read our names on the back.

A few days later I was at the offices at Bree street and a soldier, Norman King, came along. I asked him where he had got a programme from and he told me he saw a very irate woman telling a young boy not to sell the programmes or she'll have the police after him. I told him the 'irate woman' was me!

He was an artist so I introduced him to Gregoire Boonzaaier and he helped do posters for the various left-wing organisations running at the time, such as 'The Friends of the Soviet Union'. He attended a meeting at the People's Club and later told me that as people came late and left early, he had felt very much at home. One day he asked me to send a parcel to his wife, Kathleen, in England which I did. He gave me money to buy dried fruit and tinned food, whatever I could get as there was a food shortage in England at the time. In those days we used to tell our children to eat up all their food: "Remember the poor starving children of Europe." I then sent parcels regularly to Kathleen and we became very great friends. When I went over to England in 1954, I stayed with them for two weeks at Kings Cross.

Gregoire Boonzaaier was very young and naive when I first met him. Edith and I introduced him to the Gools. He was sympathetic to our cause. He would do posters for our campaigns and meetings. Later, in the days when he still had trouble selling his pictures, he would hang them in my place, saying:

"A house without a Gregoire is a house without a soul". For years he made his living by selling drawings of Paul Kruger. He would pack his paintings in his car and try to persuade school principals in the Platteland to buy them. He was a wonderful story-teller, and would always enthrall the children, who never knew if he was joking or telling the truth. Later when I was married to Norman Edwards, he would come with us on holidays to Hermanus. I am still in contact with Gregoire. The other day he sent me a card saying that my and his association goes back more than fifty years.

In 1938, Pauline Podbrey, who was married to H.A. Naidoo, and I were electioneering for Sam Kahn. We went to one man who told us he didn't like Jews or 'koolies' and Sam was a Jew with a 'koolie name. Here was Pauline, who was a Jew and married to a 'koolie'. We both managed to keep a straight face, and even got his vote!

In the same year, Bill Andrews decided to record his memoirs so I would go across to him and write down his dictation in a note book. Eventually I had a whole notebook full of writing. I stayed on in Cape Town to do this. We: Johnny, Albie and I, were staying at Cissy Gool's place in Vredehoek. During this time I had to go to hospital and when I returned, I couldn't find the notebook, in fact I never found it. I suppose had I just asked for it instead of making such a fuss, I would have found it. The children most probably had scribbled in it and were afraid to tell me. After that, Bill refused to start again. I was terribly upset by this.

Bill would always say,
 "People always say that they are too busy, but if you really want something done, you must ask a busy person because they are the ones who will find the time to do it."
 He wasn't a family man, he was always too busy with politics. I suppose neglecting family life was quite a common trait amongst the trade unionists at the time.

In 1939 I went up to Clanwilliam to recover from an operation. My cousin had a hotel in Clanwilliam so the barman came down to Cape Town to fetch me. On the way back, he told me my cousin wouldn't be there as he was at a meeting, so would I like to go with him to his girlfriend's birthday party in Lambert's bay. I was keen, so we went. We arrived, it was all in darkness. When they heard the car, all these lights appeared and the party started. They gave me witblitz and then hot soup. I had never had any alcohol before. I twisted my ankle and had to be carried back to the hotel. The next morning I was sure I was dying I had such a bad hang-over.

Whilst I was in Clanwilliam I met a woman who was on her way to visit the mission station at Wuppertal, to survey the clinic and see that it was up to government standards. She asked if I wanted to accompany her, which I did.

The daughter of the original missionary, who was married to a German, ran the station. They had a tannery and a school there. The school, all coloured children, were boarders. They would get up at four in the morning and do farm tasks before classes. When we arrived we went to the school where the classes were disrupted so that the children could sing for us, the visitors. Afterwards we went for lunch in a huge hall. At one end of the hall there was a refectory table and above it on the wall was a picture of Hitler. The tannery manager was a gauleiter, a nazi. He refused to sit down with a Jew, so he never ate lunch. I paid my half-crown and ate trying to ignore the picture on the wall.

When I returned I wrote a letter to a friend in Johannesburg, Burford, relating what had happened. Burford had a newsletter and in the next edition he published my letter, word for word. Many years later Norman Edwards and Gregoire Boonzaire went on a trip to Wuppertal because it is a very beautiful place. They were told by the inhabitants:

"Look, we don't like having visitors here because they cause a lot of trouble. We had one woman who was an emissary of Cissy Gool and she came and wrote a lot of lies about us. So we don't like strangers here, but you're all right." The 'woman' happened to be Norman's ex-wife.

There was a slight food shortage in South Africa during the war so food such as butter, eggs, meat were rationed. If one had an account then there wasn't a problem, but if one went with cash to the bazaars, it was difficult. I had a weekly order for four pounds of tuna, a dozen eggs, and a pound of butter, while I got a pound of butter from another shop. Meat was very scarce. The fish was delivered to the house. I would have to order fish in order to get butter and eggs as the fish shop would supply them all together.

Albie and Johnny were in a residential kindergarten until they were old enough to go to boarding school. There was a German refugee who was qualified as a nursery school teacher and who ran the kindergarten. When there were threats that

there might be Japanese or German torpedo attacks at the Cape, she moved her school to Klapmuts, near Paarl. I was able to get Albie into S.A.C.S as a boarder but there was no place for Johnny so he went to Klapmuts.

While Johnny was at Klapmuts, I had alot of trouble with him. When he first started there, it was the 'best school in the Unie'. In the first term, although he wasn't Afrikaans, he came first. The school was part of the Paarl Boy's High Junior section. After that he started causing trouble. He would play truant and get the other children to join him; instead of taking the school bus they'd take taxis - he did just about everything he could to get expelled. As he was such a bad influence, I was asked to take him away. So I said to him,

"Johnny, what is the matter?"

And he said the boys had asked him if he was: "A German or a bloody Jew?" He answered,

"I am a person and you are Nazis."

Even though he was only six, he was tormented by the other children and refused to go to school. I eventually got him into S.A.C.S and so he was able to leave the school.

The children were week-boarders and I saw them on weekends. They would go to their father in Johannesburg for their long holidays. I was still working for the Party at the time. Albie was the dreamer. When he used to go back to boarding school I used to follow him on the bus, without him knowing. I wanted him to be independent but I was afraid he would miss his stop. But the bus driver would call him so I didn't have to worry.

Johnny was the more boisterous one. At one time they were having an election and we printed pamphlets and manifestoes. Johnny went along and surreptitiously took one and put it in his pocket. Flora Snitcher found out and I asked him what he wanted to do with it. He said the boys at school were having a discussion about the election and he wanted to show them the pamphlet.

Albie was about seven when he came home from school one day, having completed his first 'legal' case. One boy had been accused of stealing. Albie wasn't convinced that the boy was guilty. So he asked him some questions and proved that he was innocent. The boy gave him some chewing gum, his first legal fee.

When Johnny was about twelve, he was in hospital with rheumatic fever. As a child he spent more time in hospital than out of it. I would go to visit him and bring him comics and the newspaper. He would then tell me the newspaper said this and the doctor said that and I disagreed - he would discuss the events with the doctor. When I came to visit, the doctor would look at me all strangely, wondering what sort of mother I was. Then Johnny told the nurses to go on strike. He reasoned that the nurses did all the work, and the doctors got better wages. Albie on the other hand would never do anything like that. Albie was quite apolitical. He would hold

his own views but he wouldn't argue about it.

Bill Andrews would say,

"Do not try and indoctrinate your children. If they ask questions, that's fine, but don't force the issue else they will go the other way."

And so I never forced political issues. But it was inevitable that it would leave its mark, as the issues were being discussed in the house. My friends used to play General Knowledge at the house and Albie used join in. One day he said,

"Come on mom, even you should know that!" But I usually wouldn't play, they were too 'high-brow' for me.

In 1944 I divorced Solly. Solly didn't want me to get a divorce but it was over so I felt that was best. My family accepted the idea without too much fuss, being the oldest they simply had to accept my decision. Solly later married Dulcie, who was in the trade union.

A year later, I married Norman Edwards. We got married in a court with a special licence as I never put banns up so that people could have the opportunity to object to the marriage. This time there were both witnesses and a wedding ring. Theo Snitcher was in court at the time, as an attorney. He tried his best to dissuade me from marrying Norman because he thought he wasn't good enough for me. When I said I was going to marry him, he said he would be a witness. Norman later was to marry Theo's sister, Sally.

Norman was a marine in the Royal navy. I met him in Cape Town in between voyages. Although he was not a member of the Party, our political views were similar. He was a musician in the navy and then later played the french horn in the Cape Town Orchestra. [Norman's mother was a house servant and his father was a gardener, so the only way he could learn to play music was by joining the navy]. Once he had finished his navy service, he wanted to settle in Cape Town as he was tired of travelling around.

Johnny asked,

"Why did you get married?"

And I said: "To get you out of Boarding school."

He said, "Boarding school wasn't that bad!"

Albie said, "I don't want another father."

"I don't propose to give you another father," I told him, "It's just better to say that that is my step-father than that is the man my mother is living with."

So he said,

"Oh, all right".

Then Johnny said,

"Its all right to get married, but you're not to have any children."

I did become pregnant and as both Norman and I didn't want more children, I had an abortion. In those days if you had the money and medical connections, it was not too difficult to get an abortion, even though it was illegal. You would be

suprised at the number of prominent people who had abortions, though it was very hush-hush.

My family were not happy with my marrying a non-Jew. My mother reasoned that the worst Jew was better than the best non-Jew.

At the time I was working for Richard Meyer. He had brought out Rabbi Sherman from America to start the reformed shul. They had a public meeting in the City Hall to inaugurate the new reformed synogoue. The rabbi gave a speech which he seemed to be addressing only me as if to convince me of what he was saying, but I remained a-religious although I was very impressed by him. He told them racial segregation had no place in the reformed shul. There was quite an argument about it as they said they must conform to the laws, yet he was adamant that it was wrong. After that I worked for a pathologist.

As a child, Albie wasn't politically minded, at least as far as one could see. He only became interested when the new Nationalist government tried to force Solly to resign. In 1948, the government had tried to expel Solly, but he was very popular amongst the workers and he had kept within the rules. He had improved their conditions and the union worked for him. At the time the Nationalists couldn't get a foothold in the union. Even when Solly wasn't there, they tried to oust Johanna Cornelius and Anna Scheepers, but weren't able to. They had a firm position in the union leadership. After 1948, the government were able to ban him from trade unions. Solly, who over the years had been involved in many court cases, went himself to the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein to upset the banning order. Albie went to Bloemfontein as his 'junior' and it was at this stage that he became politically active. When he returned, he joined the 'Defiance Campaign', at the age of 17.

Johnny's ill health made it difficult for him to become seriously politically involved at that stage.

When the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, we didn't like it at all. Yet we never realised the extent of the change.

With the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and the banning of the Communist Party, I stopped working for them. The Party members resigned after the party was banned. I didn't resign as I wasn't in Cape Town at the time. They thought by resigning they could avoid police harassment. This wasn't the case as the police got a list of those who resigned. As I didn't resign, my name never made the list. So, theoretically I am still a member.

Some of those on the list were detained whilst others lost their jobs. Both the Suppression of Communism Act and the Group Areas Act had ramifications which nobody realised at the time. We said the banning of the Communist Party would create results which would affect everybody, but many people

never thought so and said,
 "Oh well, its just the 'Bantu cranks". I told the ordinary
 trade unionists that they would also be affected. We tried to
 protest against these laws through pamphlets and letters to
 the press, but once we were illegal, there wasn't much we
 could do. Protests couldn't be done openly, only through
 other organisations.

After the Party was banned, I did odd jobs and then went to
 work for Potash Jewellers for a few weeks and ended up
 staying there for 13 years. I did the general office work,
 but no typing.

There was a newspaper which supported the Party. Originally
 called the 'Guardian', it was edited by Betty Radcliffe
 [Sacks] from Cape Town. Even though the government clamped
 down on the Party after 1948, and banned the 'Guardian', the
 paper still came out every week, under various new names,
 with different editors such as Brian Bunting, Fred Carneson
 and Alex la Guma. Govan Mbeki worked for it in Port
 Elizabeth, M.P. Naiker in Durban, and Ruth First in
 Johannesburg. The government would shut it down and they'd
 start a 'new' paper. The government would then shut that down
 and they'd re-open. I was involved in selling the papers.

Norman and I would go on holiday every July with Tom Bulpin,
 the historian and travelwriter. We went to game reserves
 around South Africa and Basutoland. I would help Tom by
 typing for him.

In 1954 I divorced Norman, but we remained friends until his
 death last year. I am still friends with his widow, Sally
 Snitcher, and see Dulcie Hartwell, Solly's second wife, from
 time to time.

When I went to court I met C.K. Friedlander, an attorney and
 famous sports broadcaster, who said to me,
 "What are you doing here?" and I said,
 "I'm getting divorced." The next time I was at court, he
 asked again and I said,
 "Another divorce."
 The third time, he said,
 "Not another divorce!" and I said,
 "No, Albie is being admitted to the Bar."

Just before going overseas in 1954, I attended a youth league
 camp at Redhill which was organised by Amy Rietstein, Dennis
 Goldberg and others. During the camp, everybody began dancing
 and toyi-toying. Later when I was in Berlin I saw the camp on
 a film.

My parents died in 1954 so I got an advance on my inheritance
 and took myself overseas. I was lucky to get a berth on the
 ship as they were very full at that time. We went to
 Southampton and then to London. Albie was in London at the
 time. He had completed his third year at varsity and as he
 wouldn't be 21 by the time he had finished his LLB, he
 wouldn't have been able to be admitted to the Bar. So he took

a year off and went to London, and while there got the chance to go to China via Moscow on the Trans-Siberian railway. He was sent as a delegate for the Modern Youth Society in Cape Town to an international Youth Congress in Peking.

Solly and Albie met me and a friend I was travelling with, at Waterloo station. There was so much luggage that we had to take two taxis! One used to travel with trunks on the ships, so they were very bulky. In any event we eventually found somewhere to stay. The trip was purely a holiday.

At the time Albie wanted to become a professional revolutionary. I said he can become whatever he likes after he has qualified. I spoke to Hymie Bernardt, an attorney friend, who told Albie, "We have got lawyers in the struggle, but we haven't got any advocates so you must become an advocate."

When we were at a meeting in London and Albie asked, "Is Cassiem Jadwat here, as I'd like to meet him." So I introduced them, and Albie said, "My mother has always held you up as someone I mustn't emulate."

I had to explain to him that as he had gone overseas to become a doctor and in the middle of it, dropped out and gone into politics - and now having made no advancement in either field, he was not a good example. Cassiem then explained how someone had cheated him out of his money and he couldn't continue. [He incidentally, went on to become a famous gynecologist.]

I travelled around to the usual tourist's spots. I also tried to get a visa for the Soviet Union, but to no avail. From London we went to Hamburg for five days and stayed with a friend from Cape Town. Her mother had been in Belsen concentration camp. Someone had denounced her as a German spy as they wanted her flat. While we were there we visited the red-light district. We went to a night club where every third dance, the women were meant to ask the men to dance. But I couldn't do it. There was one lady who would eye the crowd and ask the one she favoured, but I couldn't. Then we went to another place where we weren't allowed in as we weren't escorted by a man!

From Hamburg we went to Berlin. We stayed with a couple in West Berlin. I went on a tour of East Berlin with the husband. There was a shortage of accommodation. We saw the local women helping to clear the rubble from the bombing. At the time the Wall wasn't up so there was no real division between East and West Berlin. Yet the housing shortage in the East was more severe as rebuilding was much slower without American assistance.

The people from West Berlin would go to the East for meals as one could get three Reich marks for one Deutsche mark, therefore the food was cheaper and good. Even though I stayed in West Berlin, I would take the underground to East Berlin every day. There was also a shortage of consumer goods. The

delegates at the time were given a folder of notepaper and a ball-point pen. I was also given one, even though I wasn't a delegate, I was accepted as an equivalent of a delegate. One woman there wanted the ball-point pen as they were unobtainable. So I gave it to her. There were some things that were obtainable in the East and not in the West. There were consumer goods but I didn't really buy anything, especially since my friend didn't want me to change my British money - she was very anti-German at the time. Her mother, who was also anti-German, chose to stay on in Germany as she wanted to help rehabilitate the youth. She could have come to South Africa to her husband, but she felt she would be a parasite in S.A. whereas she was able to help in Germany.

While in East Berlin I met some marvellous people who made a strong impression on me. There was a doctor at the local hospital who worked tirelessly with the patients. When I remarked on this he said he was just doing his duty. The local women were also quite amazing. One woman in particular was helping to clear away the rubble and build new flats from the ruins. She herself was staying in a dilapidated shack but was perfectly willing to help build flats without expecting one for herself in return. They were really good people, who felt they were simply doing their duty for Berlin.

I went to see a film which was banned by the Federal Government in Bonn. They were still anti-communist. The film showed how ammunition manufacturers were involved in the War. They would produce for any side, irrespective of whom they killed. The film was obviously anti-war.

One day my friend spoke to someone from Cape Town and they said they knew me. It turned out that she was Ilsa Dadoo, the former wife of Yusuf Dadoo, whom I had been looking for since I got there. I had been asking for Ilsa Praeger, which was her maiden name, and therefore couldn't find her. They had both been away. She had organised a Youth Festival in Berlin. So the last night of my stay, I spent with her.

While in Berlin I tried to make contact with Party members, but it was very difficult as anybody could come along claiming to be someone of importance and I didn't have any credentials. When I returned to Cape Town, I was not at all involved in the Party.

In 1960 I had a bad accident. I was driving in a car at night with Dora Alexander, and it was raining. She had tears in her eyes as her nephew whom she was very fond of was leaving for Johannesburg. She rode into a stationary car. Dora hurt her sternum and I had twenty-six stitches on my mouth. I had to have plastic surgery and I looked a terrible sight. I didn't want Johnny to see me as he had heart trouble. I thought the shock might affect him. As I couldn't let Albie see me and not Johnny, I went to Johannesburg.

Mr. Potash said I must take time off and go for a refresher course in typing and start a new career. So he gave me 500

pounds, which was a lot of money in those days. I went to Johannesburg and took the course. I was offered jobs in Johannesburg but declined.

While I was there, I was able to go to Pretoria to watch the Treason Trail. I stayed with my brother. I was able to get things for the trialists, for instance, Helen Joseph needed cotton and needles for her dress as she only had the one dress when she was detained. Food was provided by the community in Pretoria to show their solidarity. Dora Alexander and Jean Bernardt were detained in Cape Town. It was a time of general detentions in the city, so I did not hurry back, I returned in August.

I got a place in a legal office in Adderly street. One day there was a demonstration going on and I looked out the window to see Johnny being pushed into a black maria. So I went downstairs to find out what had happened. Apparently there had been a demonstration by students which Johnny, a medical student, had known about. He had gone to see what was happening and someone had shoved a whole bunch of posters into his arms. He didn't know what was going on but they still kept him for a night in jail. He was fined but after an appeal he got off, yet the night in jail affected his health badly. He developed S.B.E. [an infection of the heart] after that, and was in hospital for seven weeks. My employer at the time was a very difficult person to work for. Albie said to me that I mustn't go and visit Johnny in hospital after work during the week. He said I mustn't look tired and over-worked as it will make Johnny worry. I should rather go and visit him on weekends when I was looking fresh. I remembered this and it put me in good stead.

During the 1960's the police would come periodically and search the house. They would arrive with a search warrant and take away books; Albie's stuff. At one stage Albie was banned and the police must have been watching the house. Ray Alexander wanted to see Albie and someone conveyed this message to him in a car outside my flat. He said he didn't want to break the ban. When he was detained the police wanted to know why he didn't want to see Ray at that time. They therefore must have had an apparatus for listening into the conversation. He wasn't allowed to see more than two people at a time. He could see family but I couldn't have any visitors at the house. I was later told by one of the neighbours that there was always a car outside and it must have followed us around.

When I came back from Johannesburg in 1960 Albie asked, "Mom, should I stay with you or somewhere else?"

I said,

"Somewhere else." I couldn't take it all the time. Every time a car stopped outside, I thought it was for him. Every time a he didn't come home, I thought something had happened to him. I couldn't sleep at night. It was really too much.

Johnny was staying with me at this time. We were sitting the one evening having coffee when the police arrived. It was a

sergeant who had been coming around quite often on raids. He asked if so and so was there and I replied, "No". And he then said,

"Johnny, I hear you are starting your exams tomorrow,"

"Yes"

"Well I just want to wish you good luck," and he shook Johnny's hand.

It was such a relief for Johnny and I to know the sergeant was just coming to reassure us that they wouldn't take any action.

The first time Albie was detained was in 1963 when he went to Maitland police station, Wynberg and Caledon square. He was held for ninety days and then released for a few minutes and held for a second time under the ninety day law. When first detained, he phoned to tell me. I organised that he got food every day. The prison provided food but there wasn't any fresh fruit etc. so I organised this. Even though there was no active support group for political prisoners at this time, the Advocate's Bar in Cape Town collected money so that at least for a short while he could have a good meal from 'The Red Lion', a restaurant. I took the food to the prison but I wasn't allowed to see him. At Wynberg prison, Dot Cleminshaw would sometimes take his meals and collect his laundry and sometimes I would go.

I was able to get a visit when he was in Caledon Square. Johnny had just undergone an open-heart operation in London and I phoned the police and cried over the phone that my one son was in hospital and my other son was detained; so I was able to visit him. I remembered what Albie had told me and so I went out and bought a new dress for the visit.

On the morning of the visit I went and had my hair and nails done. I came along looking as bright as I could. I never wore the dress again, only that once. The visit had the opposite effect on Albie to what they thought it would. They thought I would be crying and pleading with him to talk, and what happened was to the contrary. He wanted to say something and I put my hands to my lips for I was sure there would be a microphone. After that we just spoke about trivialities. It didn't matter though, it was enough just to have seen him. He was given the choice of me seeing him in his cell or outside. Even though it was very cold, Albie chose outside so that firstly, he could get some air and secondly so that they couldn't listen to what we were saying, but there was always a chance of a microphone. Later, after his release, Albie wrote to Johnny about me saying, "Poor Mommy, son the doctor went to hospital and her son the lawyer went to jail."

In 1966 Albie was detained again, this time under the hundred and eighty day law. He was first held in Caledon Square and then transferred to Roeland Street prison, now an archive. During this time, he smuggled out a note to me, to be passed on to lawyers who were bringing a case about ill treatment of detainees by the security police. In tiny handwriting he told about how he had been tortured by sleep deprivation. I had to give an affidavit to the lawyers about how I got the note,

and identify the handwriting. I said I sent in a new thermos flask which was still in the shop wrapping. The next day it came out so I knew something was wrong. I looked inside and found the note. From then on they wouldn't allow thermos flasks to go to the prisoners. That is what I told them but in actual fact I did get the note in a flask, but not that one.

We had a way of communicating. It was very precarious. I hope we never have to use it again. Somebody else tried to communicate with him, but he indicated that it was confusing receiving messages from two sources, so only I kept in touch with him. I let him know that the accused in the trial for which he was being held as a witness had already pleaded guilty so there was no reason why he should not make a statement to the police. Later on, I was allowed a visit and a group of legal people gave me some questions to ask him. I would ask,

"Are you shaving?"

"I am now."

"Are you sleeping?"

"I am now."

So he was allowed these privileges only after he had made a statement. I would go to Hymie Bernardt's firm and to another attorney, Michael Richman, and they would make applications about the conditions of his detention. There were no legal groups working for the detainees at the time, they were simply his friends.

By 1966, Albie was unable to practise law and therefore he left the country and Stephanie, his future wife, who had been in prison, followed later. They got married in England but I couldn't get a passport to go to England for the wedding.

Through-out my experience in the Party there were police spies. Even after the Party was banned and dissolved, there were still spies checking up on our activities. The police must have known I was a member of the Party even though I never resigned. There were people who thought I was Ray Alexander and these spies would try to become friendly with me.

The one spy would come to Gallery exhibition openings and attach himself to us. Afterwards everyone (Party members) would come to my house as I lived close to town. We didn't know he was a spy but we began to suspect it. I was staying with Dora at the time and she had a place in Kalk Bay. We were watching him and he was watching us. We eventually saw him with binoculars watching our movements. He became very friendly with Rose Ehrlich who ran a speech and drama school. When we suggested that she should be wary of him, she became furious. He was friendly with some students in a hostel and they found out he was a spy. Elenor Eesmond White, the artist, had a friend who married Hawk and she was most upset that this man was a spy. I had nothing to do with him, but I did tell him the problems I had getting stockings. As I had such long legs I couldn't find stockings. He gave me two pairs of stockings. They said,

"How could you take the stockings?"

"Why not?" I replied, "I didn't have to take them off!"

Afterwards he became friendly with Sady Foremen. Her father used to write Yiddish poetry. This man eventually got him arrested for carrying 'subversive literature', which was in actual fact only Yiddish poetry. The shock of the arrest, however, killed him.

There were always lots of spies. Some like Craig Williams got high up. Others didn't get very far. Very often the spies are agent provocateurs. They get the people to commit crimes, get arrested and then their own court case gets "forgotten". Very often they can't be found. There are usually a lot among students. The police approach them and offer to pay expenses in exchange for information. The students often fall for it, thinking it is patriotic.

In 1970 Johnny asked me to meet some friends of his who were travelling around the world on a ship. I met a man who said he had been involved in a consortium which had been commissioned by the Smuts' government to design and build Soweto. They had had a blueprint and plans had been passed, and the money made available. They had had just to wait for the appropriate Minister to sign.

The next day they had gone to have it signed and the plans had been torn up and they had been told that South Africa now had a Nationalist government, who had their own plan. The man told me Soweto was going to be a 'powder-keg' as the buildings were insufficient and they would create and generate problems.

When The Space was founded in 1972, I was one of the founder members Theatre Club. I used to go to every play. It was like a home. Moyna Naidoo was a fellow comrade and she started a film club at The Space. When I moved, I gave curtains and lamps that could be used as props. I also gave an imitation karakul coat that looked very opulent to the Club.

I remember distinctly the impact of 'Sizwe Banzi is Dead' when I saw the first performance. All Athol Fugard's plays were excellent but the impact of Sizwe was absolutely amazing.

One night I was sitting next to a young chap and he suddenly said,

"Oh dear, now I'm in trouble."

"Why?"

"Well I'm supposed to be somewhere else and I can see one of my professors in the audience. Apart from my other appointment, it is unheard of for a Stellenbosch University student to come to The Space. And to make it worse I am doing engineering and they are always the most conservative department. I certainly won't be very popular."

One night I went to The Space and saw a play called 'The Guise'. In the play, they disembowel a woman to have a baby. That was probably too much for the audience. It was banned

after eight performances. In response to this censorship, they put on a play about what is generally available in South African media. I remember the contrast of three actresses wearing g-strings and nipple caps, obviously feeling very awkward - something which was allowed - whilst 'The Guise' was not.

Marda Vanne and Rosalie van der Gucht would direct at the Little Theatre. Though I wasn't a personal friends of theirs, I would go to all their shows. They also used to produce plays at the Labia Theatre which I would attend. On Sunday nights the film society would show films at the Labia. I was one of the early members of the Cape Town Film Society.

During 1972 Johnny who was in England wanted to come to South Africa for a visit. But he couldn't get a passport, as he had sent his South African passport to South Africa House once he had got his British one. I therefore had to apply for a passport to go to England. I had tried previously but wasn't able to get one after I was divorced from Norman. In 1954 I was still able to use the British passport I had gotten through Norman. When it expired I sent it in to get a South African passport but was refused one. I asked for my British passport back but was warned that if I tried using it, I would be arrested.

After making an application in 1972, I was granted a two month passport. This was later extended for a month. This enabled me and Dora to go to Scotland to visit Dr. Gool who had gone there from Cape Town. We spent the night in Johnny's flat and the next day took the 'Scottish Express' to Scotland. We stayed there for two weeks.

I had previously applied for a passport and been refused, on political grounds. The last passport I had was a British passport, which I had gotten from Solly, but when I divorced him, I couldn't get it again. When I went to Moscow in 1930, I had my British passport but it wasn't really necessary in those days. When I got back from the 1972 trip, my South African passport became invalid. I later applied again and got it for six months. The last two times I've applied I have gotten it for five years.

After the 1972 visit, I would go overseas once every two or three years. I went mostly to England and once to America when Albie was lecturing there.

I was due to go to Maputo in 1988 but I had to stay in Cape Town for my eyes. One day Dulcie Sachs [Hartwell] phoned me up and said,

"How are you?"

"I am fine."

"Have you seen the paper today?"

"No."

"Sit down."

And then I knew something was wrong. She told me about the bomb attack on Albie. I was stunned. I just sat there. She came around and brought some supper and stayed over. The next

day, Kim Elias came over and said she was going to stay. I insisted that I didn't need anybody, that I was O.K. But she made up a story that some people were staying at her place and she didn't have enough space. In any event she stayed and I was actually very grateful that she did.

I have a facility that in an emergency I don't panic, I just keep my cool and see if I can be of any assistance. I therefore wanted to fly to Maputo immediately. Johnny phoned me and told me not to come as they wanted to get Albie to England as soon as possible. He then asked me to contact various people which I did. It was easier for me in Cape Town to get hold of people than for them in Maputo. They kept me posted. As long as I had something to do it was alright.

Then the press came along. They wanted a photograph of Albie. Of course I couldn't find anything. I would make no comment. I was going to Dulcie's place for lunch so I asked them to 'hang on' a few moments. I then asked them to take me to Dulcie, which they did. They left without a picture or a comment, but they were very understanding about it. Then friends phoned to say they were thankful I never made a comment. But what could I have said? I wasn't going to burst out. I didn't want to ask for revenge. So I preferred to say nothing. Of course I felt anger, I mean a person who only wanted to do good, who didn't want to hurt anybody. But even so I had nothing to say to the press.

Albie didn't want me to come to England until he was better. He didn't want me to see him in such a state. I went there in August and stayed till November. At the time I was staying with Johnny. On the night of the production of Albie's "Jail Dairy of Albie Sachs", I went with Stephanie and the boys. I sat next to them. Stephanie and the boys were most supportive and that helped. It was very emotional. Then Albie called me up on stage. Even though we got an ovation, I really didn't enjoy being in the limelight. Over that period, there was a vast improvement in Albie's overall condition.

At a Cape Democrats meeting at UCT they gave an ovation for Albie. Amy Thornton was supposed to be in the chair, but she was banned. Dullah Omar took the chair instead. He got up and said'

"Amy was supposed to speak but can't because she is banned and Albie can't be with us tonight, but his mother is. Would she mind coming up on the stage."

He had asked earlier if I minded if he said I was in the audience and I had said yes, I did. But Kim Elias, a historian, was with me and she said I shouldn't object for Albie's sake. When Dallah said this, Kim forced me to stand up. I felt so awkward and uncomfortable.

Today I am a member of the A.N.C., one of the first to sign up on campus when it became legal. I was not involved while it was still a banned organisation. I try to attend meetings and go to the A.N.C.'s Women's Group functions. I don't take any active role, I just like to show my presence. There are some things which I don't agree with. The youth are very

spirited and full of enthusiasm but I suppose I have become slightly conservative in my old age! I agree with the over all policy of the ANC but I have certain reservation with regards to certain decisions. I am still a member of the Communist Party but I don't take any active role at all.

During the early sixties I was involved in Defence and Aid. There were a number of liberals and others including Ronald Segal and Hoffenburg [who was later banned]. At one time I was involved in the Black Sash, but I left that. I felt that I wasn't very much at home there. I admired what they were doing but they didn't go far enough. Now they have a different attitude and are achieving more.

Now it is wonderful to have Johnny and Albie back in South Africa. It is like a dream. I always hoped that in my life time they could return. I remained positive in my thinking and believed that things would change. I was ecstatic when the UDF was formed as I really saw that as a breakthrough. I happened to be there when it was first thought of. After that I was absolutely beside myself with joy as they had launched it. I thought that there was finally something going on. I was hopeful even then, never pessimistic.

We still haven't reached all that we dreamed of, but it is a start. And its going to be a long, hard road and I get despondent at times thinking of all the obstacles in the way but I'm still optimistic. Even though the laws are being disbanded, it doesn't really mean a thing. The Land Act for example, all it means is that the land will be sold to the highest bidder. The dispossessed will remain dispossessed. The world forces aren't making it easier either. They are rewarding FW de Klerk instead of egging him on. Still, I have hopes for the new South Africa. But I am concerned that it is not going to be easy. I wonder whether the ANC will be up to it. Its an amorphous body now, not compact and tight.

The Communist Party can't take over and control things. They can't have a revolution, that is out of the question. It has got to be by negotiations.

The ANC is accountable to the people but it is not easy. The more articulate you are, the more you can persuade people. Even in the Gardens branch of the ANC which I attend I find that sometimes. At the last meeting, I got up and said, "I can't hear anything and I can't participate in any way and I feel useless. I don't hear the speakers and I feel like a dead weight."

They responded by saying that I'm an inspiration and my dedication over the years is a motivation. They look forward to my coming to meetings and they need me. Never before have I just been there and not helped. But they assured me that my presence is sufficient. So now I feel welcome, as if it is my home.

Overall I am hopeful; I have to be.

