Interview with Dorothy Robinson by Håkan Thörn, 2 March 2000, reproduced on the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee Forward to Freedom project website http://www.aamarchives.org/

Håkan Thörn: Which year were you born and where?

Dorothy Robinson: I was born in 1927 in London.

HT: What organisations, groups and activities associated with the struggle against apartheid did you participate in and during which periods?

DR: It was basically in the 1950s, and there was a lot going on in London and in the British press about the colonies, largely because there was a lot going in Kenya. A lot of the colonies were coming up to independence and that was the main interest for me, through something called the Movement for Colonial Freedom [MCF]. I hadn't been involved with anything to do with South Africa, it was more to do with Central and West Africa, Ghana and Tanganyika. I was introduced to a Tanzanian writer, who was doing some scripts for the Central Office of Information. I believe it was for students; it was going to be broadcast in Swahili, and the idea was – because there were also a lot of students in London, coming to London to study – to inform them about life in London. So it was more like tourist stuff – I remember one thing we did was when parking meters first started to appear. So I was involved in mixing with that sort of people. He also had a lot of friends from East Africa so I used to go and meet them. They had social events, and then I got to know about something called the Committee of African Organisations, and I went along there and met a young woman called Jeannie Pynor. I don't know where she is now. I think she was at one time the secretary of the committee. She and I had known each other because we lived nearby, in St Pancras. I started to do typing and other things, going to the office in the evenings and then we would go off and have a drink. It was quite a social sort of thing. And then the Boycott Movement was formed and that's when I became aware of that, of what they were trying to do. There was a secretary working for the Boycott Movement [Anne de Swarte], who has died unfortunately, and she retired from that because she had children. She couldn't do it full time, she was only there for the period of the Boycott Campaign, and then I was asked to work for them as a secretary, which basically I think was when it became the AAM [Anti-Apartheid Movement].

HT: Did you get a salary?

DR: Yes, a small salary, I can't remember how much it was. It wasn't very much, but at that time I was living at home.

HT: Where did they get the money to pay your salary?

DR: Oh well, they were always fundraising. People would donate money, there were fundraising concerts and people used to go around and get money. I believe also that Canon Collins gave some money from IDAF [International Defence and Aid Fund],[1] because Patrick van Rensburg was working in both places, and he was working on the boycott. I think some of that is in the archives. So there was this little money around, and I suppose that we took collections whenever we held a public meeting, and we sold *Boycott News*. We printed lots of

[1] It was then Christian Action.

things, leaflets and the paper, three issues of *Boycott News*, and I think people bought those and sent us money for them. I can't see how we could have managed with the postage. We probably weren't paying very much rent because our office was in the basement of a building where Dr David Pitt had his surgery. We had two basement rooms, so I started working there, I think until 1961, when the office was set alight by the fascists, and we had to find new offices.

HT: I didn't know about that actually.

DR: There was an awful lot going on before the Boycott Movement actually got going. I mean this one goes back to 1958. I'm sure there were things going on all the time which were probably either being organised by the MCF or the Committee of African Organisations. So in a way the Boycott Movement and the Anti-Apartheid Movement mobilised opinion on South Africa and took that forward. There was a terrible amount of racial tension in London at the time, in most of Britain and certainly in London. There had been race riots in Notting Hill and someone was killed there. It was the Union Movement I think at that time, Mosley's outfit, and I think that Mosley was standing for election in the Notting Hill area, but he didn't get elected. The Race Relations Act only came in in about 1976, so I mean black or coloured people of any description, I mean if they weren't white would be very likely to be turned down for accommodation or jobs, or maybe in a restaurant or a pub. This is all quite well documented, that period, so what I am saying basically is that this is what the background to what was happening, which was why they rather objected to us doing things for the blacks, as they thought. The National Front – the Union Movement became the National Front – some of the people were arrested and charged, but they were found not guilty.

HT: Of burning down your office?

DR: Yes, it wasn't actually burnt down, but the fire damaged the furniture and it meant that we had to get out of there. It also meant that we had great difficulties in getting accommodation, because nobody wanted to know about us. We went to an estate agency, but they regarded us as a political organisation, as someone who was likely to get their premises damaged.

HT: Was it because they were afraid that the fascists would come again or was it because they didn't like that kind of political organisation?

DR: I think it was both. There weren't that many organisations; there was the MCF, there was the Committee of African Organisations. I think that Oxfam also existed, but it was quite quiet. Of course, there was another big organisation, CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament], so these kind of political pressure groups, I suppose, were beginning to have a presence. I remember having a long argument with the estate agent – he was quite friendly. This was a commercial estate agent and he said 'What exactly are you, how do you define yourselves?' I hadn't actually thought about how we defined ourselves in that sense, and he said 'You are a political pressure group, aren't you? You will find it difficult to get accommodation.' I had this long conversation with him and I got nowhere. Eventually I was walking around Bloomsbury and an African student stopped me and he said 'Are you still looking for offices?' I think I had just been viewing somewhere that wasn't suitable. He told me that the NUS [National Union of Students] had a room in a building in Endsleigh Street that was vacant. That was fantastic because, and I believe that Abdul [Minty] went to see

them, and they let us have the room, they let the room to us. So that was wonderful because we had somewhere to move to.

HT: And for how long did you work there?

DR: I was there from 1960 to 1966. After we had moved in to Endsleigh Street we really had quite a lot of problems.

HT: How many people were working in the office in those years?

DR: One, me, the only one of the staff who was paid. There was an Honorary Secretary, Ros Ainslie, who was a fantastic woman. I don't think she had a salary, and there was also Abdul, who became Honorary Secretary [when Ros Ainslie left]. We really couldn't afford it, and I actually had to work half time, because they could only afford to pay half of my salary. The MCF offered to employ me for the other half, so I would go to Endsleigh Street in the morning and then go to Kings Cross, where the MCF office was, get a sandwich on the way and work there in the afternoon. Then I would get the bus back to Endsleigh Street and open the office up again, because we would have people calling in in the evenings, and committee meetings were held in the evenings. People would call in for literature and speakers. We were very hard up, and then we seemed to have found some money from somewhere and were able to find premises in Charlotte Street in 1964, which again were rather ramshackle offices above a shop called 'Products from Spain'. But it was great because we had more room. Then we began to have more staff. That was when Ethel [de Keyser] joined, and we had a membership secretary and an organiser, Leon Levy – he is in South Africa now. There was another girl, called Dorothy Lewitt, who was a student, dealing with membership, because we had become a membership organisation. That was really our salvation, because we had a structure, we had a constitution, we had a membership and the membership began to grow, so we had formal committees and so on.

HT: When did you start to have formal membership?

DR: It was when we were in Endsleigh Street, 1961 or 1962 – I don't know.[2]

HT: So individuals and organisations could be members from 1961?

DR: We weren't originally a membership organisation. If you look at a copy of the early papers you will find that there were a large number of organisations who supported our aims, and they had representatives, so there was a structure of having so many people who could vote. Sometimes they didn't want to have voting rights and they would send observers. The South African organisations actually sent observers – that was to keep it as a British structure.

HT: You worked as Secretary until 1966. What happened then?

DR: I left, I had a breakdown actually. I got very depressed, and I just thought – because by that time there were more people there in Charlotte Street, Ethel was there, there were more people around – and I just thought I'd leave. I was fairly depressed at the time, something

[2] The AAM adopted a new constitution that provided for individual membership in July 1962. Organisation membership was introduced in 1966.

had happened in my personal life. So I suddenly decided to leave, and I got another job. I went off to do temporary work as they called it, in London. I was a trained secretary and short-hand typist, whatever, I had done that before. I did have regular jobs, I had worked for trade unions and for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, I had worked in a solicitor's office, so I had a wide work experience. I went doing commercial work, but I had always been terribly interested in newspapers and journalism, and I decided to get a job in Fleet Street. I mean I had a vain hope that I might actually become a journalist, but then once I got there I realised how male dominated it all was and that I really should have started in the provinces and got a job on a newspaper and then come through to Fleet Street, so I was doing it quite the wrong way. But the whole thing of how newspapers and news functioned has always interested me, so I got a job in Australian Associated Press for a while as an editorial secretary, and then I got another job at something called Universal News Services, which is a news wire service that puts out news to the papers in Britain. But I always stayed as a member of the Movement.

HT: Were you an active member all through?

DR: Yes, I used to turn up to pickets and whatever. It was a bit difficult when I was working in Fleet Street, because quite often people were taking photographs outside South Africa House and I think this was getting back to my employer – in fact I am sure it was.

HT: And did it have any effect?

DR: No, not then. Oddly enough, when I went there (to the news service), I didn't realise what they were actually doing. The South African Embassy had a contract with them to put out its news, which was trade news, what was happening in South Africa. It wasn't the real thing, this was trade news, contracts and whatever. It was quite interesting that I got there, because they were one of our clients. I never had to deal with them, but then after a few years they ended their contract with us, and they said that they were going to do their press releases in a different way. I remember the chap I worked for there said that there were files. They invited him to go to South Africa House. He said they asked if he would like some tea, and one of them said to him 'You don't mind having a coloured tea cup, do you?' And as I said, they ended the contract. Now whether that was the time when they were setting up BOSS, I'm not sure. I think it could have been about that time – this was in the 1970s.

HT: So did you have any positions of trust in the AAM?

DR: Well I was the Administrative Secretary, which now would be called the Executive Secretary. Yes, I was responsible for everything, organising the marches, the meetings, writing to speakers. We also had Joan Hymans, who was our speakers organiser and she was also a kind of secretary and very active in the MCF. We were sending out people to meetings and at that time, in the 1960s, very many South Africans were arriving here, in exile, and they were all prepared to go out to speak to meetings, with the Labour Party, the Co-op, trade unions …

HT: I would like to ask if you can recall your earliest images of Africa, Southern Africa, where they came from, if you could even go back to your childhood?

DR: Well, when I was at school in the 1930s, we used to have geography lessons. I don't know whether it was called the Commonwealth then, or whether it was just called the empire.

There was a great emphasis on teaching us about the importance of trade – how goods came to this country from Africa, say, and how we exported things. So there was this two way thing, and we had a big map, with all these lovely patches of red, so I was certainly aware of the empire. There were very few black people in London at the time, the only person I saw was wonderful – Prince Monolulu. He was about 6 foot tall, and he was actually a racing tipster. He used to wear a feathered headdress – an Indian headdress – and my mother used to take me to a market, the Caledonian Market, and he would be there. He would walk around and say, 'I've got a horse'. Betting was totally illegal, but you would put bets on a horse with him. The other thing I remember from that period is that we used to walk to this market, and a meeting would take place. I recently discovered that in that road there is a Jewish synagogue, on the corner of that road. There was a meeting of the Union Movement people. I didn't know who they were, but my mother walked by one day and she stopped and she said, 'Well, if you think that Hitler is so bloody wonderful, why don't you go to Germany?' My mother was actually quite Conservative – they were sort of lower middle class people, we had our own business. But she was aware of what Hitler was up to in Germany and that there was going to be another war. But South Africa really didn't impinge on me until after the war, basically in the 1950s.

HT: And how did that happen?

DR: Well, as I say, because of the newspaper coverage and getting involved in going off to meetings with the MCF. That's how I got to know about it. I remember I worked on a pamphlet with Rosalynde Ainslie about British investment in South Africa [*The Collaborators*]. I didn't know that there was so much and she told me that South Africa was like a mirror image of Britain in a sense, in that all the major companies were represented there, and there were organisations like the Scouts which existed in South Africa as well as Britain. We actually had a campaign writing to these organisations, asking them if they practised segregation. We wrote to the organisations in Britain asking about their fellow organisations in South Africa. I think we got the kind of answer – 'Sorry, that has nothing to do with us, you have to write and ask them'. The letters are probably in the archives. The other thing that I found out when I started to do research for this pamphlet was how many British firms had subsidiaries in South Africa. There is a book called *Who Owns Whom,* a huge tome*,* that I worked on in the Westminster Reference Library. I went there copying all that – in those days there were no photocopies.

HT: You copied by hand?

DR: Yes, you copied by hand, you typed it out, and if you wanted copies you had to do lots of flimsies – no photocopiers, no fax existed. There was a Gestetner – you typed on a wax stencil and put it on a roller and inked it and …

HT: So it was an old stencil machine?

DR: Yes, that's how we used to reproduce our minutes and things.

HT: Can you remember reading any books that meant something to you, in forming some sort of … ?

DR: There was a lot in the press about what was happening.

HT: Do you remember any particular journalist, or which papers?

DR: Well, the *Daily Worker*, probably. I think there was a paper called the *Daily Herald*, which was a Labour paper, and the *Daily Mirror* was also not bad, it was a more of a Labour supporting paper. In fact they sent Barbara Castle out to South Africa as a journalist, and one would see things in the newsreels, you know if one went to the pictures, about events going on in South Africa. The other book I read – it was a bit later on – was called *Time Longer than Rope* by Eddie Roux, which is a very comprehensive book about the whole history of Southern Africa. And of course I remember hearing about the Boer war as a child – images of that were still around.

HT: How was that narrated to you?

DR: You know – the soldiers had gone out there, done a great job, and defeated the Boers. There were songs …

HT: Did you read any novels, fiction, that were in any way important?

DR: I read Huddleston's *Naught for Your Comfort*, but that's not fiction.

HT: Alan Paton?

DR: Oh yes, I read that, and there were journals around that had things about South Africa and Africa.

HT: Apart from this early period, were there any particular books or reports that formed your consciousness or general picture of South Africa?

DR: A lot of it actually I got basically from the news and from the papers.

HT: So if you look back at the period, and the British media on South Africa, do you think that it was accurate all the time, or did it shift, depending on what media, of course?

DR: We had to take Southern African information from the media. There was also a journal called *New Age*. I have some very old copies of that, we used to receive it in the office. But basically the press reported it, mostly, you know what they did. I'm not sure how many correspondents were there, but there were a lot of people. When I started, there were people already making contact with the press, there was a press list, and they would organise press conferences, so we would be organising our own press information. The other important thing was that there was something called the London Bureau, which had people from the South African press and Australia and New Zealand. They were based in London, sending back to South Africa what was happening in London, that was their role. So we would always make sure that we phoned the London Bureau, and also the South Africa Press Association, so they were reporting back into South Africa our meetings and demonstrations. So it was a kind of two-way process, and sometimes they would phone us up and say that something was happening [in South Africa]. We might already know that, but they would say, 'Well, are you going to be demonstrating, are you going to be taking a petition to South Africa House?' When we had events in Trafalgar Square they always wanted us to focus on South Africa House – at one demonstration we laid a wreath in the shape of Africa on the gates of South Africa House. Or we would go round to the side door to try and hand in a petition, so it wasn't

just a Trafalgar Square demonstration – we were specifically doing things at South Africa House, which I imagine from a journalist's or photographer's point of view meant that they got something at South Africa House, not just in Trafalgar Square. That's how the press works.

HT: So would you say that the attitude of the British press towards the AAM shifted over the whole period, 60s, 70s, 80s?

DR: Oh yes, there was a radical change. They were mostly anti us in the beginning. We used to get quite small coverage, although certain journalists were sympathetic. On the Commonwealth issue there was Patrick Keatley, journalist who worked at the *Guardian*, and there were a lot of journalists at that time who were sympathetic and could report things, probably in the more serious newspapers, sometimes even in the *Daily Telegraph*. But later on it got more difficult, because the terrorist thing came up, when the armed struggle got going. They said we were supporting a terrorist organisation, that sort of thing, and then there was all that stuff in the 1980s about black on black violence. But I think by that time people understood about apartheid, so that when they watched that they would have their own background in their minds about what was happening. AAM produced its own newspaper, *Anti-Apartheid News*, from 1965 onwards, which would have all the information.

HT: Did it mainly address the members?

DR: No, it was meant for a wider public. We sent out a *Members Newsletter* as well.

HT: Did you do that from the start? Was it a regular thing?

DR: No, we didn't have a *Members Newsletter* at the beginning because we didn't actually have members. But we had a trade union newsletter, because we were trying to influence unions, because we wanted the unions to take up the boycott and sanctions. We found information in *New Age*. Ros knew people in the ANC [African National Congress], and she wrote to various people she knew in South Africa and they would send back airmail letters, as personal letters, with information. We were very interested in finding out about the [inaudible] industry – this was in relation to the boycott – and we wanted to know the conditions of the workers, because all that helped to explain to people here why they should boycott South African goods – that it was a kind of solidarity thing. We always used to campaign in particular areas – we had an academic boycott, a writers' boycott, a sports boycott. We wrote to academics and playwrights and asked them to sign a declaration that they would not let their works be performed or their books published in South Africa.

HT: What other media strategies did you use? You mentioned collecting your own information, trying to publicise it and producing your own media. What did you do to influence the established media?

DR: We would always invite them along to press conferences, and the BBC.

HT: Did they come, did they write?

DR: Yes, if you go through the press for the period there is an enormous amount on South Africa. In fact I was actually the contact for the BBC. Years after I left, a girl in the office told me that when they rang up they always asked for me, because I was almost like a press

spokesperson. I also bumped into Mr Havers who was the South African Press Association guy in Fleet Street, and he said 'Hello, who is doing the PR for the AAM?', so it's really interesting that he saw our role as professional PR.

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HT: So we were talking about the media and its response to what you were doing. There are also other ways of getting attention from the media, for example demonstrations. Did you think of that in terms of getting attention from the media, go out in the street and do certain things to get into the …?

DR: Well, not sort of standby things, not in those days. We were very proper, we used to ask well-known people to head the march. It usually started from Marble Arch and went to Trafalgar Square. We would have these people in the front and the press would probably take photographs of that. So that would be the news story – what they [the well-known people] were saying, the fact that they were there, supporting the Movement. Later on in Trafalgar Square, there was a demonstration where we had a number of coffins, that represented people who had been killed in South Africa.

HT: Was this in the 1960s?

DR: No, I think it would have been in the '70s or '80s. During the Rivonia trial we had a massive demonstration in Trafalgar Square. In fact it wasn't just there – there was also a demonstration in Scandinavia. I remember I was in Endsleigh Street and somebody phoned me, I think it was from Oslo, and said that they just had a massive demonstration there demanding that the people in the Rivonia trial should not get the death penalty – that was the fear – and we also held a demonstration. I think Nelson Mandela referred to that in his book. The judge also said that that had influenced the judgement – he said that international public opinion had influenced him in deciding not to sentence them to death.

HT: How important were cultural expressions in the struggle?

DR: There was a very strong folk music movement at that time and they were very supportive. We had folk concerts to raise funds …

HT: It also seemed to have been important to involve prominent persons. Can you say something about that?

DR: Well, right from the beginning in the late '50s there were political personalities involved in supporting MCF and AAM. Fenner Brockway himself was quite a well-known figure and there were many other MPs. When the Labour Government was elected in 1964, and the Tories went out of office, that was also quite a good time for us. Many people became supporters. For example, we went to ask Barbara Castle, who is now Baroness Castle, and asked her to be the president of the Movement,[3] and she wrote to all the Labour MPs, I think, who had been newly elected, asking them to join the Movement and a great many of them did. This was when we were in Endsleigh Street. Leon Levy, who had been a trade unionist in South Africa, was working temporarily as our organiser, and he said to me that he was

[3] This was in 1992: Barbara Castle resigned as President of the AAM when she became a Minister in the 1964–1970 Labour Government.

thrilled as he sat there opening these envelopes with the application forms for all these well-known people. Harold Wilson joined – he wasn't Prime Minister then – but he became Prime Minister. Trade unionists were always very keen to join. This was one of the reasons why we did all these different campaigns on academics, playwrights and so on. It seemed quite important not just to get the man and the woman in the street, but to get well-known people. It's the way that politics works here, that you try to rope in people to support your cause. You also need the grassroots of course, but it's just this thing that the press have, of wanting names. They are not interested in a resolution from a trade union branch or a Labour Party branch, unless it gets passed at a Labour Party conference, or the TUC Congress – then they are interested. The local press would be interested in what small groups were doing, but you will find the press, well look at them – they are still always chasing personalities – not so much the *Guardian*, but the rest of the press.

HT: So involving prominent persons could also be seen as a media strategy?

DR: Oh yes, certainly, they would be very likely to take notice of that person saying something. We weren't saying anything outrageous; our aims were very simple. It was only people like [name inaudible] that didn't agree with them. I think after a while people began to feel they couldn't actually not be against apartheid …

HT: How would you characterise the relations with government?

DR: Well, in the period I was there, after the Labour government was elected there was a great change. Before that we had a Conservative government. I don't think that we had any relations with them really, but we would go and see the leaders of the opposition. Then when the Labour government came into power, we would go and see the Foreign and Colonial Secretary. I remember we had deputations on quite a number of occasions. So we would have that kind of relationship where we would go and lobby them in the House [of Commons] about particular aspects, or we would do a mass lobby where we would ask people to turn up and lobby in the House to go and ask the MPs questions. That is not done so much now, because I think parliamentary democracy is a bit strange. But we would have queues of people waiting outside. We would have people in the lobby, checking in the book to look up who their MP was. We were very keen on this parliamentary route, you know, to getting things done. We put great emphasis on that. I did it myself, because I thought it was important. It was about the only means of getting anything done, basically, to get something done in Parliament. We had these mass lobbies, people queuing up, petitioning. Another thing we did was to organise the MPs themselves. There was a thing called an Early Day Motion. Many MPs signed it and the subject could come up for debate in the House. It was also an important thing to get questions asked [in the House of Commons] and to get matters debated. Martin Ennals, who was our first organiser, was particularly good at that. He had worked for the National Council for Civil Liberties, which is now called just Liberty, I think, and has done masses of lobbying on all kinds of issues. We would go into the House to arrange to meet people – in those days it was much easier to get access to the House …

HT: In those early days, what were your relations with CND, which was such an important movement?

DR: We had no formal relations, they were not on our committee at all. I used to go to on CND things in Trafalgar Square, actually in a way for professional interest, to see how they were organising things.

HT: To learn for …

DR: Yes, how they did it. The people we used to get most help from in the early days were the people from MCF, who had also been organising rallies and so on for a long time. They gave us a lot of tips, they had a chief steward, Ian Page, and a lot of other stewards, and they used to help out with our stewarding, until we got more efficient, and got our own people trained up. For example, if you had a rally, you needed stairs to get up to the platform and loudspeakers and you needed to make banners and placards – so there were all those technical things.

HT: How would you describe the relations between the AAM and the IDAF and also the ANC during that early period?

DR: The ANC was just getting established here. There were a lot of people who were already in London, and then later Oliver Tambo came and Yusuf Dadoo, and Nana Mahomo, a PAC [Pan-Africanist Congress] chap. I guess we used to see them regularly – they would speak at meetings if we asked them. It was great if they were free and able to speak to meetings in England. We would arrange for them to speak at Labour Party conferences, and of course that would be someone of quite high calibre, like Yusuf or Oliver or Robert Resha – he was quite a charismatic speaker. We always had an African speaker, together with the great and good dignitaries who we were bringing in. That was the other thing – that they would be speaking on the same platform as the actual Africans from South Africa, who were the main speakers. The others were just brought in to dress the platform up.

HT: So you wouldn't say that there were any tensions between the ANC and the AAM?

DR: Not that I was aware of. There was a bit of a tension – some people used to think that the PAC was the more dynamic organisation. The concept was that they were much more dynamic than the ANC. The ANC was headed by Chief Luthuli then, who I think was seen as a kind of a middle of the road safe kind of guy, apart from Nelson Mandela, of course – he was the dynamic figure who could have counteracted that – but there was a slight element of – people would say that they wanted a PAC speaker because they saw PAC as being more dynamic, plus the other thing, that ANC was seen as being Communist influenced and PAC was not.

HT: You mainly had contacts with the ANC?

DR: Yes, but I used to see Nana Mahomo [from the PAC]. But they kept to themselves really.

HT: But you generally invited ANC speakers to meetings?

DR: No, we would invite both if we could. But very often there was only ANC there, because there weren't that many PAC people here – when I say here I mean outside South Africa. And they would be here one day and gone tomorrow – they would be going to Geneva or New York or whatever, they were always on the move.

HT: Talking about travelling, did you travel as an activist?

DR: No.

HT: Not at all?

DR: No, I only went to places like the Labour Party conference and the TUC Congress, which was in England. I didn't go to Africa.

HT: You never went to Southern Africa?

DR: No, I should not have gone there, because you know we were boycotting South Africa. I was always very busy. I mean I was always the one who was the backroom girl who was always swamped with the work, and if I wasn't around things didn't seemed to get done. So I never felt that I had the time really, privately, to visit other countries. Anyway Abdul Minty was the one who was doing that, he was the travelling secretary.

HT: Have you been to South Africa now?

DR: No.

HT: And you didn't go to conferences outside England, in Europe?

DR: Well I did go in the 1980s, when I was working for IDAF [International Defence and Aid Fund]. I worked for them from 1983 to 1990. They organised a very big conference in Harare, on children, which was a very important conference, but that was like a working conference. I went with a whole lot of other people from IDAF. I just went to conferences – IDFA held conferences in Sweden and Oslo.

HT: Which you went to?

DR: Yes, but that was in the 1980s. Do you know Ernst Michanek?

HT: What were you doing in IDAF?

DR: I ended up working on Programme 1, which is the legal aid section, which was very fascinating and depressing too. We would receive huge piles of documents, which were all the legal documents that the lawyers were sending to us, and by that time we had computers. We were analysing the trials that were going on, keeping notes of the trials, of the people who were involved and so on, and how much it was costing, because the cost had to be agreed by a lawyer in London. We were keeping tabs on what was going on, so we had a quite complex computer programme to sort all that out. We would give reports to these conferences that were held, our annual conferences, basically that's what they were, and also of course we used the information when we were approaching donors for money. I worked on that.

HT: To what extent was that different from working in the AAM?

DR: It was different because it was actually quite secret. It was in an upstairs room and nobody was supposed to know what was going on, so you didn't really talk about it anywhere else, outside. I would say that I worked in the Research Department of IDAF, because it had several different strands. They had a big research department, they produced a lot of documentation themselves, a whole mass of publications …

HT: In the AAM, there was internal criticism regarding sex and race – I mean that there were even groups formed to strengthen the position of women in the struggle, as well as trying to get more black people into the Movement. Can you comment on that?

DR: That would have been in the late ’70s or probably in the ’80s?

HT: In the 1980s, yes, did you have that kind of discussion at all in the ’60s?

DR: No.

HT: How did the events in 1968 and the student movement influence you?

DR: We had to concentrate on Southern Africa, which included Zimbabwe and Namibia. We were campaigning on Zimbabwe. In fact, the thing that really threw us a bit was in 1966 – or was it 1965 – when Ian Smith declared UDI [Unilateral Declaration of Independence], because we then had to concentrate on Rhodesia. There was a long campaign on that. Before 1965 we hadn’t been campaigning on Rhodesia, but after 1965–66 it had to be included, so that was the issue that affected us more than what was going on in Paris in 1968.

HT: There has also been a conflict about defining the struggle, as anti-racist or anti-imperialist?

DR: We saw big business, capitalism, as the cause of a lot of the trouble in South Africa, because they could have taken more steps towards pressuring the government in South Africa. They were just compliant; in fact the South African government gave grants to businesses to set up there, and so capitalism played a role in keeping apartheid going. I think everyone understood that, I think we understood it, because it was like colonial history. I was always hoping for the day the revolution would break out, but it happened in a different way from the way that everybody had envisaged it happening. I think, really, that it was all for the best.

HT: Were you aware of the amount of money that the Swedish government gave to the IDAF?

DR: Yes, it was several millions, wasn’t it?

HT: Were you also aware of the amount of money that the Swedish government gave to the ANC?

DR: No, well I suppose thinking about it, it must have been coming from Sweden or Scandinavia. Where else could it have come from?

HT: I have one last question, which has a different character. How would you define solidarity from your own point of view?

DR: Yes, it’s when you are prepared to make common cause with a group of other people to achieve something that you want to achieve. I mean that doesn’t necessarily mean that you agree with the other people on every issue, but because there is something that is an

overriding thing, that you see is of importance, I call that solidarity when you build up a movement. I suppose in a way that that is what we were doing in AAM. We did have a few Conservatives on board at one time, although they dropped out. We always had Liberal supporters, always church supporters, religious support, and trade unions, and lots of other people, Methodists or whatever. So that's how I would define it, that you actually get a very broad support, as broad as you can. If you want to achieve something, if you have an aim, you have to actually define it so that it is something that is fairly simple to achieve. You want to do that and you try and make it as simple as you can, that you actually want to achieve something, like the banning of GM foods or saving the whales or whatever. So that it's a simple thing, that people say 'Oh yes, I agree with that, or I don't agree', and I think that is how these kind of movements have grown now. I find it interesting that there is a whole movement now on fair trade. There are fair trade products in our shops in Britain, and when you buy it them it is good for the producers in the countries they are coming from. They are getting more than if their products are sold by Nestlé, and in a way it is a reverse of what we were doing in the 1960s, when we were boycotting things. We are now saying buy things, buy South African goods again, because that is a positive thing. I think that is what solidarity should be. You should develop a fairly simple aim that people can understand and relate to, and it must be something that basically affects their own experience, because they understand about food and whales and global warming.

HT: So what do you think, if you could speculate on what kind of role solidarity could play in the world in the next decades?

DR: I suppose the most important thing is the issue of global warming, because look at what has happened in Mozambique. I know that there are programmes like Jubilee 2000 and that's great. I support that …

HT: Thank you.