

Denis Goldberg

ANC, ex-underground, former political prisoner. Work for the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry

Goldberg grew up in an intellectual family and became aware of national as well as international politics at an early age. He joined the Modern Youth Society in 1953 while at the University of Cape Town, studying engineering. In the early 1950's he joined the Congress of Democrats and the Communist Party underground. Goldberg continued to be an activist and joined *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation, which many commentators call the ANC army) as technical office in the beginning of the 1960's. He was advised to leave the country but instead became the weapons maker for the *Operation Mayibuye* and subsequently arrested in 1963. After imprisonment for 22 years he was set free in 1985 and was reunited with his family in London where he continued to work for ANC.

Madi Gray: Denis, how did you personally become involved in the struggle for liberation?

Denis Goldberg: My parents were of the communist left. By the age of six I knew about surplus value, I knew about the poverty of workers in general, but black workers in particular in South Africa, the mixture of national oppression, exploitation and unemployment. I grew up during World War 2. I was reading the news headlines whilst sitting on my father's lap when I was six years old, so I knew about the Nazi invasions of Europe and the Soviet Union, of the war in Far East and I knew the significance of it. I couldn't have told you about 'Kristallnacht', but I knew about the events and I knew about concentration camps. All of this was part of my background.

I also remember when I was aged about ten, a group of us were coming home from school one day, and we saw a man who in South African parlance was coloured, running to catch a train. He was running so fast. Add to the story that our fourth grade teacher was the Western Province half mile champion. His nickname was Tinkie, because he was quite little.

Somebody said, "Look at that man run. He's faster than Tinkie!" Another ten year old said, "He can't be faster than Tinkie, Tinkie is the half mile champion". A third, and I wish I could remember his name, said, "But he can't run against Tinkie, because he's coloured." There we were, ten years old and we knew these things.

In 1943 I knew about the Battle of Tobruk, the Battle of El Alamein, the Battle for Stalingrad, all of this. My schoolbook said, "South Africa is a democracy", which means that all grown-ups can vote in the elections and if a political party loses, it loses power. I went home and said, "It says all adults vote, but only whites vote". My parents didn't say, like most others would, "Shush, shush, those are grown up things." They said I was right. The book was wrong and what it said was not true. We knew about it, and the reason I'm stressing this is that still today whites say they didn't know what happened. Here [very recently] General Malan, the Commanding Officer in Namibia said he didn't know what happened when they found mass graves in Namibia. He had nothing to do with anything like that.

Madi Gray: Are you talking about General Magnus Malan, Minister of Defence under President P W Botha?

Denis Goldberg: General Magnus Malan. The former Commanding Officer said that the South African troops were so well disciplined, they would never have done things like that. They would not shoot people and put them in a mass grave." This is outrageous nonsense when we know of the role of South African troops in Namibia. Some had spit-roasted people to get evidence. All this came out, and we all know this, but they were fined R100, this sort of trivial slap on the wrist. We knew.

The question was, when did I get involved. I got involved just before I wrote my undergraduate thesis in 1953, because I met a young woman, Esmé Bodenstein, who was involved. To me, going to meetings in the Modern Youth Society, which was in a way out of kilter with Congress because it was a non-racial youth organization, was like coming home. I felt comfortable and I could talk openly. That was the beginning, when we learnt a lot about organising.

Madi Gray: Were you at the university of Cape Town then?

Denis Goldberg: I was at UCT where I studied Civil Engineering. One of the reasons for getting involved, besides my background and political upbringing, was that I really and truly wanted to build for people. This was important, because you couldn't build for all the people in South Africa, you could only build for white people. You couldn't build dams for black people because the Government wouldn't spend the money, nor for roads and railways. It was morally wrong. First you had to get rid of apartheid, then you could build for people. Here I am, 60 years later, 72 years of age, and I work for the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry and I bring water to people and I help shape policy for sanitation and for growing trees for commercial purposes, so people who have never had anything can have an income. It's taken 60 years to get here and it's a great fulfilment for me. In the 1950s I joined the Congress of Democrats and the Communist Party underground. In the 1960s I joined Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation, which many commentators call the ANC army) as Technical Officer. I was a trained engineer and you needed trained people. So I became a weapons maker in Cape Town. I worked with Fred Carneson and Looksmart Ngudle and Barney Desai in our Regional Command. Looksmart Ngudle was the first to be murdered under interrogation in 1963. Such a great tragedy. He was a wonderful man. He was called Looksmart, because his mother thought he looked smart and...

Madi Gray: And so he lived up to that.

Denis Goldberg: He did, and had such an influence on other people around him. He was handsome, good looking, and had a wonderful smile. He was a delight as a comrade. We chose not to use explosives in Cape Town, but to do cold sabotage. Throw a rope over a

huge bunch of telephone lines and pull them down and the whole of Somerset West and the Strand and Gordons Bay had no telephones. Or our MK people dug up a cable and put a pick axe to it, so all the telephones out along the coast were dead. The telecoms people could come and fix it up, but the point was the security forces had to stop this happening. Looksmart was the Field Commander. They brought in police vans from all over the Cape Peninsula, Paarl, Wellington, and other areas to line this line of cables and telephone wires, so Looksmart reconnoitred; he would watch and see where they were and then go between them. We had no military instructors and had to learn for ourselves, so why make an explosion or compel them to go all out for you? You learn slowly how to reconnoitre a target, how to advance and how to retreat and be safe. That's the way we worked.

Madi Gray: Did you start in 1961, the 16th of December?

Denis Goldberg: I do have to say that the bombs I made that night didn't go off. With one, there was a mix-up over timing. The other George Peake was to plant at the back door of the Roeland Street Jail. Somebody betrayed him. We know who it was. As George was priming the explosive, the police took him. They switched on their car headlights and had him pinned down. He was quite lucky that the timing device was not very good. It was later dismantled and the timing device went off in the hands of a policeman exactly 24 hours later. Luckily it didn't go off at the time, because it would have blown George up and they wouldn't let George disarm it.

Madi Gray: This was behind the Roeland Street Jail, now the State Archives?

Denis Goldberg: Yes. We did a lot of stuff and the main aim was to try and build trust, build self-confidence. We in the Western Cape MK Command had a major dispute with our organization. We'd read the books on guerrilla warfare. You do not send all your people out. You have to maintain your political structures, one for information, two for safety, three for recruits. You've got to have somebody there so we would consciously not send certain people out. Then there'd be an instruction through an ANC channel and we'd find they'd disappeared, so we didn't have them available. There was a swing to the left among the leaders, who thought we'd train people for a few months and they would then come back and overthrow the apartheid army of 400 000 men. That was a bit absurd, but I do understand the left-wing emphasis. But it was a dispute nevertheless, and it led to friction. We were going by the book and they were going by emotion. Part of the emotion was to overcome the Gandhian influence in both the Indian Congress and the ANC. You had to bend the stick too far the other way to stress the need for an armed struggle. I'm explaining the background. So that's a quick resumé of me becoming involved. I was in the Congress of Democrats and at various times I was Branch Chairman and Branch Treasurer. We took part in getting people involved. My first big campaign that I was involved in was the Congress of the People.

Madi Gray: In 1956?

Denis Goldberg: 1955. In 1956 it was adopted, but the call to the Freedom Charter was made in 1955. I was working on the railways as an engineering technician. I hadn't finished at university yet, and spoke at a meeting in Simonstown one Saturday afternoon. When I arrived at work on Monday I found a letter on my desk dismissing me. Railway servants were not allowed to be involved in politics, especially at that time. I got fired, and that was quite a tough time for us, we didn't have any money.

Madi Gray: We've touched on the organizations, like you being involved in the Congress of Democrats, but you mentioned an organization at university I've not heard of.

Denis Goldberg: At the university of Cape Town there was an organization called the Modern World Society. It involved people like Simon from Rhodesia and Lionel Foreman and many others. They wanted to have contact with black working class youths, as good Marxists they had to have contact with the working class, but university rules prohibited non-students from attending political events on campus, so they formed the Modern Youth Society. Before my time, Amy Rietstein was there, Mary Turok, Ben Turok, Albie Sachs, Esme Bodenstein who became my wife, Bubbles Thorne and others.

George Peake came to them. He heard that they ran evening classes. Actually they were literacy classes and they used the Guardian newspaper as reading material. They were far ahead of Paulo Freire, who said you teach adults to read from materials dealing with things of real importance to them, not stuff churned out en masse for children.

George Peake wanted to learn French. He had been in the South African navy in World War 2, on minesweepers in the Mediterranean and he'd learnt a bit of French and now he wanted to speak French. He was persuaded to stay and teach other people literacy in English and Afrikaans and he became Chairman of the organization. He became a very strong political activist in the Coloured People's Congress and a trade unionist in the Building Workers Union. It was a remarkable development. Toivo Ya Toivo from Namibia was in Cape Town and came into that organization.

Madi Gray: Is that what was known as night school?

Denis Goldberg: No. Liberals had night schools. Ours was a political school and dockworkers from the compound came. Where the Marina is now being built in the Waterfront used to be a compound.

Madi Gray: It was in the middle of the docks?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, dockworkers lived in that compound. The old quarry became a tank farm with petrol tanks. Now it's getting to be a nice posh Marina.

Greenwood Ngotyana of the Eastern Cape organized these dockworkers. He was a famous man in Cape Town. We did everything with Congress. We had difficulties because our structures were different; we weren't Indian youth or Coloured youth or African youth, we

were the Modern Youth Society. One of our two big highlights was organising a camp off Prince George's Drive. The Methodist Church had a place for youth to have holidays, and Kenny Parker's [now a Professor of English in London] mother was on the committee. We were able to get this place and had a non-racial camp over the Easter weekend in 1954. The security police surrounded us. It was interesting because there'd been a court case in which banning orders had been struck down, as there was some legal flaw in them, and suddenly all these people could come. There they were, political leaders, together with these youngsters who didn't know much politics - Africans and Coloureds and Whites and some Indians, altogether well over 300 people. It was really remarkable.

Madi Gray: It must have been fantastic.

Denis Goldberg: We repeated it in 1957 at the old General Botha Training School.

Madi Gray: In Gordons Bay?

Denis Goldberg: No, it was in Simonstown, on top of Red Hill, before they moved to Gordons Bay. It was funny because Bernard Gosschalk and his wife Ruth Fine, as she had been, had an uncle who was a city councillor in Simonstown. They were able to approach the council for a mixed camp, and they gave us the use of the camp free of charge if we made a donation to the mayor's fund. They thought when we said mixed that we meant boys and girls; they didn't know they were black and coloured and Indian and white boys and girls. They wouldn't take a donation from us afterwards.

Madi Gray: I can believe that.

Denis Goldberg: Those were two great moments, because we were living the future in utter defiance of all the laws and the pressures. We used to have picnics out at Camel Rock at Scarborough. There was a sign up with the Group Areas marked on it. There was one little triangle of land which had no Group Areas mark on it, so we used to go there for our multi-racial picnics. We were within the law and even though we had a long walk across sand dunes to get there they couldn't touch us, not on that. We really tried hard to try to live up to a set of principles.

Madi Gray: At some time you slid from defiance to sabotage and your life changed?

Denis Goldberg: [That was when I joined umKhonto we Sizwe.] Then when the 90 Day Act came into effect in 1962, my comrades of the Communist Party and other organizations assured me I would be among the first arrested, because I was known as Mr Technico in our movement, and the police would want me. Even if I didn't break, somebody would under the 90 Day Law, which was designed for the police to extract information by whatever means they could. It was thought that I would certainly get a minimum of ten years in prison. I was urged

to leave the country, but to go via Johannesburg to get cleared by the umKhonto High Command and leave the country. As a disciplined person that's what I did. I went to Johannesburg by train under a pseudonym and the High Command asked me to stay and be the weapons maker for the High Command for Operation Mayibuye. Joe Slovo met me and was my contact there.

I agreed to stay, because I had left Cape Town because I couldn't be politically effective there any more. I could build bridges, roads and power stations, but couldn't blow them up again! I bought a smallholding called Travallyn Agricultural Holdings in the Krugersdorp municipality for us to live on. It was a fairly isolated smallholding and we could use it disguising ourselves as a small farmer and his labourers. The Liliesleaf place in Rivonia was known to be dangerous as too many people had been there. We went back once too often, for one final meeting, and got caught. That showed how dangerous it was. Apparently the Security Police were only expecting Walter Sisulu to be there and they caught the lot of us. They were over the moon. And so it was that six weeks after I got to Joburg, we got caught.

Madi Gray: Was it that quick?

Denis Goldberg: It happened quickly.

Madi Gray: It was a fluke, catching everyone, wasn't it?

Denis Goldberg: I think so. Nicholas Wolpe is running the Liliesleaf Project today and is turning it into a heritage project. He's come a long way and done wonderful work. Their historian has dug up stuff in the archives, partly in the British archives. British Intelligence knew who was there. A caravan was parked nearby and we always suspected it was the South African Police, but it wasn't.

Madi Gray: It was the British?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, we were quite convinced that they used to take a drive every morning to see who was at this place and to take photographs.

Madi Gray: In July 1963 you were arrested?

Denis Goldberg: I was arrested on 11 July 1963 and on June 12th 1964 we were sentenced at the end of the Rivonia Trial. Like most of us I was sentenced to four terms of life imprisonment.

Madi Gray: Four terms, for four different things?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, four charges. Life imprisonment for each and they run together. Four separate charges. For example, you buy a vehicle and you get convicted for that contribution to your conspiracy, but handling money to buy it is another charge. We were charged with

conspiracy to overthrow the State by force of arms, with preparing to receive an army of invasion, our own ANC people, and I was charged in effect for buying a Volkswagen Kombi, into which I had curtains fitted so that nobody could see Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Ray Mhlaba and Wilton Mkwayi from Port Elizabeth. We could drive around and nobody could see in. Madi, never buy a Volkswagen Kombi. They'll put you in prison for 22 years.

Madi Gray: You were in for 22 years?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, from the time of my arrest. I came out in 1985 and started travelling the world speaking for the ANC. That was the task I was given. I'd flown to Lusaka and met with Oliver Tambo and members of the National Executive who were there. I was introduced to the world media by the ANC and Thabo Mbeki chaired that press conference. A veteran struggle hero is back, he's working with us, was the attitude. I went to London to live with my family and it was very nice to have a family again.

Madi Gray: What did you do?

Denis Goldberg: I worked in the ANC office and my task was to travel and talk, because you use the political platform you've got, the white comrade who had been 22 years in prison. People would ask, "Why are you a white involved in the struggle of black people?" and I would say, "I'm involved in the struggle for all people. I want my children to grow up without having to worry about these things."

Once in California, at the university of Berkeley, at a Martin Luther King Junior chapter, I was invited to give a talk, this hero from South Africa. I got to the meeting and nobody spoke to me. I felt the attitude was "What's this honky doing here?" Then I gave my talk and told them about our struggle and where we were at, and I was careful not to talk about these poor suffering blacks, which was very common amongst the older black ANC exiles in America, jerking the heartstrings. What I spoke about was a confident movement that was on the way to seizing power, these were the comrades I knew. Somebody asked questions, "What are you doing, a white man in a black struggle?" and somebody else said, "You did this for us and we thank you." I said, "I did it for me and my children, I didn't want to live a lie and I don't want them to live a lie." No matter what I said, I had to be doing it for them. I said, "Of course I am, but I'm trying to explain to you it's much deeper than that." It was quite difficult.

Then I was sent to speak to the youth at an international conference of the International Union of Socialist Youth. The IUSSY held a conference in Seville in Spain and I was sent to speak for the ANC. It was interesting for me because I'd not been a public speaker before prison, and I saw that we delegates to this conference talked and talked to each other without listening to the speeches. Official speakers would get up and everyone just went on talking. What fascinated me too was the way in which the election to the new executive was fixed in advance by people who lectured me about democracy. It was very ironic.

Then I had to get up and speak and I spoke like I usually do, as I'm speaking to you now, and after a few minutes everybody was quiet and listening. Maybe it was because I was talking

about something important, about people in prison, about people living and dying for the cause of freedom in South Africa. Maybe I had a little passion in my voice, without shouting and screaming at them. It was good to be able to make an impact on them.

In the evening we went for a drink and there was a quiet man there, who turned out to be Bernt Carlsson who had been the international secretary of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and of the Socialist International. He'd been in London and knew the ANC people and was Olof Palme's trouble-shooter by then. He talked for a long time with me and asked me questions and there were a lot of young people around drinking lovely Spanish wine. That resulted in me receiving an invitation to tour Sweden from the Social Democratic Youth Organisation, Socialdemokratiska ungdomsförbundet, SSU. I was met by Monica Andersson, the secretary, and Anna Lindh who was president of SSU at the time and who was later murdered when she was Foreign Minister. They kitted me out in warm clothes and put me on a plane for Luleå, a town in the north on the coast, on the railway line that goes up to the iron ore mines.

I came down by plane, train and car, city by city, until I got down to Göteborg/Gothenburg and Malmö then I made my way by train back up to Stockholm again. Then I went on to Finland, and from Finland to Norway, another meeting in Sweden, then to Norway and then to Denmark. After six and a half weeks away, I'd spoken at over 100 meetings, and had 120 interviews and luncheons and appearances. I had a wonderful trip, and I got to know the Nordic countries.

Madi Gray: This was in 1985, shortly after you were released? The cold, it would have been about November, December?

Denis Goldberg: I arrived in Helsinki and I think it was 35° below. Even the water in the windscreen wiper bottle froze. I was so excited and stimulated by it all, it was wonderful. I'd been in Sweden for three and a half weeks before I got to Helsinki, so I'd got used to it. In fact I found Swedish homes and hotels overheated, I couldn't handle it. I would open the window first thing in the hotel room to let some clean air in. It was all so fascinating, it was nothing to do with politics.

I went for a walk in a little midlands town in Sweden, north of Stockholm, and I walked out on the snow and it went crunch under my feet, the first time I'd ever heard it.

I saw a car travelling, about three-quarters of a mile away. There was a little steam coming out of the exhaust pipe, but no sound, totally dead. I remember one of my hosts driving me in a snowstorm. I'd never seen a snowstorm, I'd never seen snowflakes rushing towards me in the headlights. Actually you're moving and the snowflakes are coming straight down, but they looked as though they were rushing at you. What an experience! Then they allowed me the 'privilege' of cleaning the snow off the windscreen, as I'd never done it before. That became a chore in London occasionally, to get rid of the ice and snow. Can you imagine that first time?

Madi Gray: Yes, I can. It doesn't snow on the streets of Cape Town.

Denis Goldberg: What I experienced in Sweden, it sounds irrelevant, was a warmth and a friendship and a caring and it wasn't just for black South Africans, it was a caring about people who were involved. I have no doubt that Olof Palme, as Prime Minister, made it legitimate to do this. You weren't defying anything, and there I was, invited to speak in schools, to kids from ten years old to matriculants and whatever you call A-level students there, and at universities.

One of the greatest moments was meeting a South African. He had been a tsotsi (petty gangster), as he himself told me. He was from Soweto, he'd gone into exile and had been sent to school. He was then sent to the Soviet Union, qualified as a medical doctor and ended up in Sweden, married to a Swedish woman. They were not young people. He'd become a psychiatrist and had organized a lecture for me at the university.

Madi Gray: It could be Ken, from Kumla?

Denis Goldberg: It sounds like it, an African? I lectured at the university and then he and his wife took us home to their house afterwards. A number of people were at the dinner, and he said to me, "You know Denis, it's one of the greatest moments of my life. The way you talk, now I understand what happened to me in my life. You've got it exactly."

Madi Gray: That is fantastic.

Denis Goldberg: It was so moving. I felt I belonged. I've got the documentation somewhere, my wife Edelgard sorted it out for me, and I could find it. I found great friendship and great warmth, I enjoyed the way so many South Africans were made welcome.

There's a railway line that does a curve inland and down south, not on the coast, on the west side of Sweden. I learnt how to pronounce the names too. Imagine knowing there're kitchen appliances called Huskvarna and there's a town called that. Where's Electrolux based, Nässjö, is that right? It's a long time since I was there and I travelled on my own.

Madi Gray: Between all these places, they just let you roam freely?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, they did. I had to learn the language very quickly. In ten days I was making an appeal for funds in Swedish. I said, "Det nummer för ANC's postgiro är trettiofem, noll noll, noll två, streck två," (the ANC's postal giro number is 35 00 02-2). Everyone waited to hear what I was going to do with the hyphen, the dash. The money poured in. Lindiwe Mabuza, our chief representative, said to me, "Denis, the love letters that are pouring in with money coming for the ANC, that is remarkable!"

I learnt to speak the language because there was an advertisement for potatoes, a beautiful pair of hands, obviously feminine, and I hadn't seen beautiful feminine hands very often in the last 20 odd years, holding a baked potato with cheese in it or butter, and it said Potatiland, Framtidsland. That was the advertisement, and I worked out that it was saying, "Potato country, future of the country".

I found, because I was fresh out of prison, I could read Swedish newspapers quite quickly and I would ask my hosts, often students, to explain to me and they would read the page and they'd say it says so and so. I would say, but there is a whole passage, not just two words. What does this paragraph mean, because there was an idiomatic expression that I could not grasp. I can't do it now, but I can say, "Tack så mycket" and "Tusen tack!" I can also say "Hej då" and I can also take that sort of indrawn breath.

Madi Gray: Particularly when one says 'Nej! No'.

Denis Goldberg: So I learned Swedish. Swedish is a very phonetic language, you pronounce it like it's written. This has an advantage for a foreigner, not like in Denmark where you can't make out what the word looks like from the way it's spoken. Eventually somebody said to me, "Denis don't feel so proud. You speak Afrikaans, that's why you learned." True.

Madi Gray: Afrikaans helped me, too. But it still took an effort to learn it.

Denis Goldberg: Yes. These are things about Sweden and so many people do speak English so I was able to communicate with Swedes. I remember at one of these universities, where I was very open with people, I said you can ask any question you like and I'll choose whether I'll answer. You're free to ask, I'm free to decide whether to answer. I gave my talk and sat down. Everybody was terribly curious, what does a man in his forties, who spent 22 years in prison, do with his sex life? One young woman asked, "What do you do for sex in prison?" and totally unembarrassed I talked about it. I found it by far the best way and it was a time of great openness.

Madi Gray: Yes, it was.

Denis Goldberg: For people to understand what you go through, I talked about jealousy. I've got a wife. She was young, like you are. Do you expect her to be celibate, do you lock her up in chains? There's no way you can. It took me a long time, I said, to learn to accept what intellectually I knew was right for her. I said intellect and emotions are two different things. I said all these things, and people responded well.

Madi Gray: I'm sure there's a lot of respect for your openness and honesty.

Denis Goldberg: I think so, but I also decided that there's no point in talking to people who have never been to South Africa about the details of where things are. There's a big city called Johannesburg, and I would have a map of the world, which I would put up on an overhead projector. You found this equipment all over Sweden, so I produced my own hand-drawn overhead slides. I would show the audience: This is the world, this is Sweden, and Europe and this is Africa, and this is South Africa and then I'd have a map of South Africa with its neighbouring territories, because I found if I was talking about destabilisation in Namibia,

Mozambique, or Angola, you could see people losing track because they were not sure where these countries are.

Madi Gray: Yes, exactly.

Denis Goldberg: If you put up a map on the screen, they'll listen to the words and when you put a pencil on the glass it pointed automatically for you like an arrow, and then they followed because they'd seen the map in the newspapers, on the television, but now it was meaningful.

On one occasion a South African trade unionist and I shared a platform and he said, "You go from the Jo'burg City Hall down Commissioner Street and you walk along there and you come to Diagonal Street and you go up past the market and then you come to the pass office," and he'd lost the audience. I said, "There's a pass office in Johannesburg, in the seedier part of town," that's all you needed to say. I learnt to do that.

I found it was best to simplify, to cut to the main issues. I would find South Africans in the audience who would ask the complicated questions and I would say that's fine, it's never quite as simple as I have described, but I can confuse you with all the details and you will remember nothing. What is the main issue? That's what I wanted to talk about.

Madi Gray: Who did you talk to?

Denis Goldberg: There were trade unionists, who were very strong in support, and the Workers Adult Education Association, what do they call it in Swedish?

Madi Gray: ABF, Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund.

Denis Goldberg: ABF, yes, that's right, it's in many places. There's a university city in southern Sweden, Lund. I stayed there with Gillian Nilsson and her husband Lennart a number of times. They lived on Danskevägen in Lund, and across an open field was Svenskevägen. It was where the final battle took place, the front line where the armies faced each other in 1825, or something like that. I also learnt to eat senapssill (herring in mustard sauce) and it was wonderful! There are things I did there that were so normal. I would be taken shopping, and it was just so nice to be relaxed and not to talk any politics for a short while.

On another occasion I was at a school, I'm not sure where it was, though somewhere in the south. It was known for its fascist influence, and there were some pretty tough-looking young men, who must have been 18, 19 years of age. They sat in the front row, arms folded, pushing up their muscles. The people who were racist were very hostile, and the school principal supported them. I was taken in to talk to her, the principal, about the evils of racism and why we fought it in South Africa and I was told about the hostility I would find. I decided, "I'm not going to let you frighten me. If the Boers haven't destroyed me you're not going to." I simply stared them down, they didn't ask any questions, they were quiet. But I had that

experience in Sweden too, people who talked about svartskallar, black heads.

On the other hand, I was able to speak at a high school in Gothenburg, I think, where they'd combined with one or two others, and 400 young people were involved. I simply sat there, next to my overhead projector and talked. There was dead silence for two hours. That is a long time, because young people don't have a lot of Sitzfleisch, as my mother would have said. They've got itchy bums.

Once Monica Andersson took me to address Palme's Social Democratic Party's annual conference in Gothenburg, and I had the whole lot of them standing up chanting slogans, "Down with apartheid", "Up with freedom", "Victory to the ANC", in Swedish. I couldn't do it now, but I'd worked out how to do it. I had them on their feet like they'd been on the streets in the 1960s, protesting, and they thoroughly enjoyed it and so did I.

Madi Gray: Considering you haven't spoken Swedish for all these years and only had fairly rudimentary details, you've remembered a remarkable amount.

Denis Goldberg: I came out of prison after all those years where I'd lived in my mind. You don't go to work, you don't have girlfriend problems, you don't go to out to the movies, you don't go anywhere and gradually layer upon layer of your memory is exposed. You live in your memories. You remember conversations in great detail. Later, back in the world, it gets covered over again by all the other exciting things you do.

You come out of prison into this world and you're so open to all these influences and delightful things happen. Sweden was the place for me, that was the first really big experience, besides Britain, and Britain for me was in a sense like being home. My parents were born in London. I'd read most of Dickens and I'd read Shakespeare and English history, growing up in a British colony in South Africa, so it wasn't unfamiliar, except for the darkness of the sky and the clouds sitting on your head. Sweden was so open and friendly and welcoming, so clean, and so wealthy.

There was poverty too of course, in the southern industrial cities. The harbour district in Gothenburg is not a very nice place to live in. But there were new things too. You go to a party and if you are a driver you don't drink, or you drink but you don't take a car, you get on a bus or a tram to go home. It was absolutely amazing and so different from the South Africa I remembered.

Going back to Olof Palme, I've mentioned meeting the international socialist secretary, Bernt Carlsson, and he carried tremendous weight in the Socialist International and the Socialist Youth League. I must say I was very sorry when Bernt Carlsson died in the Lockerbie plane crash.

Madi Gray: Yes that was terrible.

Denis Goldberg: I was more than upset when Olof Palme was murdered. It's also interesting for me that we Marxists always argue that history is inevitable, but it does take an individual leader such as Palme to make decisive interventions. How it would have worked out in detail

without him I don't know. I'm quite sure South Africa would still at some time have found itself free of apartheid, but there's no question that actions by the Nordic countries helped.

Madi Gray: Do you remember if you were at the last public appearance Olof Palme made? He opened a conference called The People's Parliament a week before he was murdered.

Denis Goldberg: No, I wasn't there but I remember it clearly. I was probably selling T-shirts in New York. Imagine selling T-shirts at a concert in Central Park on racism in South Africa! I would meet trade union secretaries. Sometimes the members were quite afraid of their general secretaries. They would feel strongly about sanctions-busting but Metall, for instance, didn't feel that way at the top level. They were afraid to speak out, to break away, but they had good sentiments. While I was critical, I also understand it because I see it in our own movements.

One example was in Karlstad where the arms manufacturer Bofors is. I gave them hell at the Metall trade union. I asked, "Why can't you in your union take a resolution about prohibiting exports to South Africa of special metals that are only used for military purposes?" "Oh no, we have to discuss this with our general secretary first." I said, "But you have a democratic right to make a decision. You tell me you agree with this idea?" "Oh, no, we wouldn't want to create disunity". I said, "You mean you're afraid of the general secretary?" "Yes". IG Metall in Germany was a leading element in the Metal International and they were very opposed to the positions we were taking and I found that very interesting.

Madi Gray: This was the trade union working at Bofors?

Denis Goldberg: Yes. I found it very interesting indeed because I was able to give a talk and they'd asked me interesting questions and I asked them to do something, but they couldn't. I said, "I've been in prison 22 years. My comrades are still there, people are being hanged, people are being murdered by the police. You have the right to organize your members and to make you own resolutions and to influence the policy of the union. You have that right and you're afraid to say anything. I'm worried about what happens to people in my country now! When we have won our rights it will be too late to offer support."

Everything was not bright and beautiful in the class conflict, and there were fears and the need to keep a job. Workers at Alfa Laval for instance, knew that Alfa Laval was shipping stuff to South Africa, by shipping it from Sweden to Germany to France to Spain to Italy and then its country of origin just disappears; it's no longer Swedish, and it arrives in South Africa despite the official boycott. These people told me how it was done, so I said, "Why do you let it happen?" and they said, "Because we need our jobs".

This is important because in many countries of the world people would say to me, "Why do you have an armed struggle? If the workers would go on strike for six months they could bring the government down because they would smash the economy." I said, "Yes, you're probably right, but how do they feed their children?" "Don't they have a social security system? Don't they have unemployment pay?" "No, it's part of the problem with South Africa, if we had all these things we wouldn't need the struggle." "Oh, Oh." "Don't you think that the government knows about this? Don't you think a big company like Anglo American will break rank and pay

its workers a bit more, because it can afford to, and they will go back to work because they have the democratic right to do so?" "You mean they would break ranks with their fellow workers?" "Yes, they've achieved their demands, and their Union would ask them if they accept. They'll go back to work. Then the poorer [less wealthy] mines get help from the police to beat up the workers, and they go back to work. You think it's just all logic, it isn't. There two sides in this struggle, more than two sides." "Oh, Oh."

I spread information to Swedish workers who were prepared to support a company they knew was breaking sanctions and they voted for sanctions, but not to lose their jobs. You have to take this into account, and in rebuilding our country now, we are faced with such issues.

Madi Gray: Yes, it's only natural. Tell me more.

Denis Goldberg: What you would call a conservative liberal party, to the right of the centre, because I was also involved with them. Anna and Matthias Svensson in Partille, a town outside Gothenburg, were my hosts and were very hospitable. Wherever I went Anna came with me because my programme was wider than the events they organized. She met with such hostility from people of the left.

I said, "I don't find this acceptable, because you're trying to tell the ANC who we should have as supporters and allies, and the ANC accepts that from nobody, not in South Africa and not outside South Africa. I know you've got your class conflicts in Sweden, but in the interests of the people of South Africa you have to transcend them for the sake of this campaign." They found it very difficult. Yet these were really solid good-hearted people.

Madi Gray: They were probably members of the liberal party, Folkpartiet?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, that's right. They were genuine people in the Folkpartiet who were opposed to racism and bigotry and they were treated as bigots by people of the hard left. Put it that way.

I understand the class conflict in these countries, because I grew up in South Africa. My dad was a trade unionist and a worker, but sometimes you have to take seriously the ANC slogan "Unity in Action", because that way you can make a decisive breakthrough. It doesn't put an end to class conflict, it suppresses it or sets it aside to achieve some bigger goal and then you can have your class conflict.

Once I was taken to meet a member of parliament in Stockholm, whose name I've forgotten. I liked the informality: people in sweaters, no jackets, and you go into the canteen and I discovered how much milk people drink with their meal, and that in the south of Sweden what I called a frikkadel is a köttbulle and when you get up to the north it's boiled, but it's still called köttbulle.

I also found that it doesn't matter who you are, you sit down in the canteen, you go to pick up your meal and when you've finished your meal you clear the table and take your tray away. You don't do it in Britain. There you're taking somebody's job away, but in Sweden you clean up after you, and I liked that. After prison when that was what was required of us, it was nice

to see people doing it freely and voluntarily, and not leaving a mess behind. That was the point. Because it makes it less unpleasant for others, that was the thinking also.

When it comes to the politics there were the Africa Groups and various others. Lars Hult, what organization was he in?

Madi Gray: He started off in the Africa Group in Karlstad in a forest by a lake. That's where I met him. In 1978, 1979 a new organization was formed and he was their first permanent employee, their secretary. He stayed until the organization was finally dissolved in 1995, after the elections. Unfortunately he contracted cancer.

Denis Goldberg: Yes, I sent a message to his family when I was told about it.

Madi Gray: His child was born in 1993 and a few months later he got this illness, and was diagnosed with leukaemia, the same illness as Joe Slovo. He hung on for another few years but the sad thing is that when his son was about five or six it was over.

Denis Goldberg: Yes, I liked Lars, and I liked the turmoil in the ISAK office. They organized concerts and jazz and musicians and were always busy, always with something fresh and new. When this organization was formed, they campaigned in a different way from the Africa Groups.

Madi Gray: The Isolate South Africa Committee, ISAK, was an umbrella organization made up of many national organizations, so in principle, it had millions of members. Their job was to get the millions of people involved at a local level, and they had all the major youth organizations, political and church, several women's leagues of political parties were there, a lot of churches were involved, a number of trade unions, not so many, but the ones who supported the call for the boycott joined. Did you discuss things that had an influence on policy in due course, issues discussed with people at board level in the solidarity movement?

Denis Goldberg: Well, they always wanted to know from me, at public meetings and in discussions in the office, why the ANC does this, why do you do that, they wanted understanding of why we had an armed struggle, "Doesn't an armed struggle lead to violence forever?" I said, "Yes, but people are dying anyway", for example. In many countries I know I was able to influence attitudes, partly because I wasn't speaking from a theoretical position, but as a participant, who had been prepared to put my own life on the line, and that had an influence, I have no doubt. People said it to me, I'm not being boastful about it.

Madi Gray: I was also thinking of the policy of these organizations, didn't they come to you with questions like, "Should we boycott?"

Denis Goldberg: All the time. They'd say, "People in South Africa don't boycott, isn't it harming the people themselves?" and I would say, "If people inside South Africa call for a boycott, why do you deny them this?" "Yes, but it would harm the economy?" "But isn't that

better than destroying the factory, so that the factory will be there afterwards?" "Yes, that's true." You're right to raise this question with me because I just took it for granted that everybody agreed with us, but it wasn't so, it did need discussion.

In Port Elizabeth, for example, there was a boycott in the city. Mkhuseleli Jack made a famous speech, "On Friday there will be a boycott, you will not go to town, you will not go to shop, you will not even buy a box of matches!" The business people in the city would not upgrade the townships and so they boycotted the big shops in the city. They caved in very quickly. There were boycotts within the country as well.

There was ISAK, the Africa Groups, Vänsterpartiet (The Left Party). I remember meetings they organized. Who was the ANC rep then?

Madi Gray: At the time we're talking about, the end of the 1980s, the Chief Rep was almost certainly Lindiwe Mabuza.

Denis Goldberg: Yes. She was there when I arrived.

Madi Gray: She left about 1987 and then Billy Modisi came.

Denis Goldberg: Raymond, who was Raymond?

Madi Gray: Raymond Mokoena was from the West Coast, Varberg, and worked at Volvo.

Denis Goldberg: He had studied in Sweden as well. I think he married a Swedish woman, had children. I haven't seen him since but he told me how grateful he was and he wasn't the only one.

Madi Gray: In addition to the South Africans, you must have met many Swedes?

Denis Goldberg: I'm trying to think of a guy who met me in Sweden one winter. He had on a thin t-shirt and jeans and was determined to show me it wasn't really cold in mid-December, but his lips were blue. Nice people, I was really looked after.

I also remember meeting artists, Theresa Devant, a Teaterpedagog, a teacher of theatre. Such excitement about how they were able to incorporate anti-South African racism into their Swedish work especially for schools and students. This was a very fascinating thing. There was Soren Lindh and his wife Meta Boethius, from Stockholm who gave such wonderful support!

I remember in Halmstad going to the idrottsförening (sports association) and meeting with the Regional Director, Nils Billing, Kanslichef, for Halland, to try and build support there. It all happened to us through anti-apartheid people.

Madi Gray: Important in Halmstad was Ulf Halldén.

Denis Goldberg: Yes, he took me. He was a great supporter.

In Oskarshamn I met Tormod Nasset of Metall. To this day he will tell you that he and they became involved in solidarity with the ANC and now in projects in free South Africa because I told a meeting that "Många bäckar små gör en stor å" [many little streams make a mighty river]. He says that made them feel that they too could make a difference.

Madi Gray: Wasn't there a political party that organized an annual fund-raising run in Gothenburg?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, there was support from a communist party, Marxist Leninist Revolutionary, KPMLr. Teddy Franks was the international secretary. Very solid support. The run was Fredsloppet, the Peace Run. Arnold Selby who lived in exile in Germany and his friend Errol Shanley also from Durban but living in exile in London often took part. Errol and Dorothy his wife were both among the accused in the Treason Trial. The sports organization behind the Peace Run was affiliated to KPMLr.

At one meeting of theirs that I addressed, a man got up and said, "I want to help but I'm an artist, how can I help?" I said, "We need financial resources, we need this, we need that. I don't know how you help, but I know everybody can find a way, professionally, individually". That member of the audience at that meeting went away with that idea. With the Royal Academy of Arts, of which he was a member, he organized an art exhibition and artists donated their work. I was there to open the auction in which they sold the artworks in a beautifully renovated harbour gallery in an old warehouse. I didn't know why I had been invited and when I got there he said, "It's your all your fault!" He meant I had been responsible because, "You said we can do something, everybody can, and so we artists have done something." They made tens of thousands of kronors for the ANC struggle.

Madi Gray: Artists against Apartheid?

Denis Goldberg: That's what it was. While walking around I stopped in front of a lithograph and he said, "Do you like that?" and I said, "It's very impressive," and some weeks later a cardboard tube arrived. The artist had sent it to me, it's hanging on my wall here now. I must say a belated thank you to Helene Wedel, the artist.

Madi Gray: You will have to show it to me just now.

Denis Goldberg: I will. It's of African women dancing, and it's a Swedish artist who has captured this voluptuousness, the twitching backsides, it's all there. I think it's remarkable, which is what struck me, because it is so alive. The exhibition and auction organized by the Artists against Apartheid, that was an attitude that was so superb. These experiences I had in Sweden.

I have no doubt that talking and discussing and debating all helped to achieve understanding,

but like with those workers in Karlstad, it was important for me to understand their problems, and not to make demands on people they weren't going to keep.

Madi Gray: No, that's important. Women in Scandinavia are not supposed to be discriminated against. Didn't you make a key point during a speech?

Denis Goldberg: I used a trick of rhetoric if you like. We in South Africa had become very insistent on the slogan, "One Person, One Vote" as against "One Man, One Vote". We have still today such a huge struggle to overcome the deprivation of women and their right to exercise their rights, their human rights. This has been a very conscious policy. Oliver Tambo said, "The liberation of women is a task for women and men together." Dora Tamana from the Western Cape said, "I have given you the word, find your tongues and speak", words to that effect. Charlotte Maxeke, Ellen Khuzwayo, who has just died, these people were so important in building the campaign for the rights of women. When I came to Sweden I would talk about "One person, one vote" and of course in Swedish it was "En person, en röst". I was making a speech in Stockholm at the Folkets Hus and the chairman was my interpreter. I remember playing language games with him. When I came to talk about our policy, "One person, one vote!" my interpreter said "En man, en röst!" so I left my microphone to walk across the stage to his podium, put my arm around his shoulder and said, "I said, 'One person, one vote' and you say, 'One man, one vote'. I need you to say, 'One person, one vote'." Everybody looked amazed, because it was clear I understood a little bit of Swedish. He said, "That's the way we say it in Swedish" and I said, "That's the way we used to say it in English, now we've learnt to change it. You will have to find a new translation because it is important that you do and I would like you to find a way." He was very embarrassed and afterwards he came to me and said, "You hurt me very badly, you should have warned me." I said, "I didn't know I was going to do it." I can apologise to him now. Yet if I had warned him, the point wouldn't have been made.

I have to say that in anti-apartheid movements in many parts of the world the majority of members were women. Often men held the top positions, in developed countries, not just in South Africa. Very many of the activists were women and I wanted to record that fact. More than half the audience was on my side; they were women. I don't quite understand why in Sweden and the other Nordic countries that had such a huge impact. It wasn't done in a conniving way; they're events I'm recalling.

Madi Gray: You were provoking people to think.

Denis Goldberg: The point I am making is that within a language, ideas and attitudes are buried and we should question the way we say things without being absurd.

One person, one vote. We have a huge struggle in South Africa. We have a president, President Mbeki who makes a major issue of the rights of women and the advancement of women. There are many women in our government, at the top level the Deputy President, cabinet ministers, mayors of major cities, premiers of provinces, city councillors, a very conscious attempt to overcome what's called African tradition. We live in a modern era and I

think it is great and I was playing my little part in advance by trying to say “En person, en röst”.

Madi Gray: I think the way we talk about it now in Sweden is “En människa, en röst”. When you decline the word människa, you realise it’s feminine.

Denis Goldberg: Well I used to write letters from prison and I would talk about heshe as one word. Meaning whichever gender. I would have put shehe, but it sounds like a laugh. Generally I found in English if you write in the plural, you get them and they, which are gender-free. You can get around it quite nicely, but you can’t do that when you are talking about a person who has a right.

Madi Gray: Absolutely.

Denis Goldberg: A lot of work went into organising rallies in Folkets Hus, the community centre halls found all over Sweden. What struck me about these community centres, Folkets Hus, was the wealth of a country that could provide them! Have you seen some of our multi-purpose centres we’re creating here? That’s the same concept but on a much more modest scale.

Madi Gray: Yes, it may have come straight from there, adapted to South Africa.

Denis Goldberg: But very different, lack of money, lack of resources, different climate I suppose, different architecture, and different uses in a way.

Madi Gray: Don’t we need more sport facilities in the multi-purpose centres?

Denis Goldberg: The multi-purpose centres are much more basic in providing active community services, and for meetings and gatherings and conferences, concerts and gigs and so on.

There was the People-to-People organization and their support through collecting clothing for our people in our camps in Africa.

Madi Gray: You mean places like the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania and camps in Lusaka and Angola?

Denis Goldberg: That’s right, all that clothing was valuable, though our people were finicky. They said, “It’s not American style, it’s Swedish style, we’re South African, we go for American style”. It was huge, so much stuff.

When I got to the midlands of Sweden after 1985, up in the forestry country, there were forestry workers and people who were producing pre-fab sheds which would be the container for a whole lot of medical equipment and computers that would go to Palestine. It would arrive

and they would put the containers down in a certain way and it would make a field hospital with complete sets of equipment already in there. They wanted to do the same for us. We weren't ready for it because we weren't back home in South Africa. Underlying it was the freedom of people in a country so wealthy that it was able to change hospital equipment every four years.

Madi Gray: Brödet och Fiskarna (Bread and Fishes) in Västerås did that for Namibia. They sent SWAPO equipment for two hospitals that Sweden built, and equipped them with stuff collected from Swedish hospitals.

Denis Goldberg: I am making light of it by talking about the wealth, but I am trying to say that the political support was important. I am trying to say the humanity underlying that political support was important. I know from ANC comrades, black South Africans who were there, the kind of things that they got from that support, to me that was important.

Madi Gray: You've given me highlights and stories, mainly about Sweden, but you have obviously also had a lot of contact with the other Nordic countries, Norway, Denmark, Finland.

Denis Goldberg: I went to each of these countries a number of times, though only twice to Finland, but the three Scandinavian countries. I never got to Iceland. I travelled to so many towns, and I've got ashtrays and other gifts.

Madi Gray: Do you still have them?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, somewhere, most of them.

Madi Gray: You mentioned you enjoyed the cold in Helsinki. I'm sure you had other memorable experiences?

Denis Goldberg: I went to Finland once and stayed a week or more. On that tour in November/December 1985 I was in Helsinki and I was introduced to four women of the Portfolio Committee for Foreign Affairs. They were members of the ruling party that I think was Conservative, and the Social Democrats and the Communist Party and the Liberal Party, and there was to be a debate on sanctions against South Africa relating to the export of timber products, matches, and especially investments in South Africa. They chatted with me before the debate, and they asked me what my attitude to the issue was.

I said, "Your Foreign Minister is going to get up and say that there is pressure for sanctions, but we don't believe in sanctions because it does more harm than good, and the people themselves will suffer and the amount we export to South Africa is small, so it doesn't matter." I said, "The answer to it is, for example, if the amount is so small that it doesn't matter, why do it? You're so rich, the amount of income is so small. There will be future markets, your product is so good, you will be able to export later, when South Africa is free." Then he will answer you and he will have the following to say..." and your answer to that is

this.” Each would ask a question, and they'd decided who would speak first.

It was so astonishing. I sat in the front row of the gallery upstairs, and each one got up and said, “The Foreign Minister has made a statement, there's somebody who cannot speak because he's not a member of our parliament. He's sitting upstairs in the gallery and what he wants to say is this...,” and they would say what I suggested they say, in their own way of course. It was translated for me. Then the Foreign Minister got up and answered as though he was reading my script. The next one got up and said what had to be said and he again answered as if reading my script, one after the other. It was as though each one said I should be answered, and then said what I would have said. It was miraculous.

Madi Gray: Did they point out that you were from South Africa?

Denis Goldberg: Oh yes, they said who I was, and it was known because there had been a lot of interviews in the main newspapers. There were different solidarity groups in most countries, especially in Finland. There was the Communist set of solidarity groups and some socialists and so on. There was a lot of support for our people in military camps in Angola from the Finnish solidarity movement.

We were badly affected when the breakup of the left came about in Finland and they split apart with great animosity among them, which was a pity and unnecessary. It was over decolonization and Gorbachev, but it was unnecessary to affect the South African struggle through their disunity. People couldn't transcend their own internal fighting. The solidarity in every country was enormous and, for me, very heartening.

Madi Gray: Norway, were you there?

Denis Goldberg: I was there more than once, with the Social Democratic Youth and the anti-apartheid movement. The Norwegian anti-apartheid movement was called Faellesrådet mot Apartheid or something like that.

I was struck by Norway. It was the size of Britain but with a small population. Britain is a filthy industrial country, and even though the industries are dead, it's still filthy. It's so disorderly compared to Scandinavia.

There I was struck by the huge wealth, and even though now that wealth isn't quite so readily available, I know that, but relative to us it is very wealthy. Of course Sida, DANIDA and NORAD, the Norwegian Aid Organisation are all still helping in enormous ways. So, those long-term effects are there.

I met the general secretary of LO in Norway, the blue collar workers' confederation, and we were talking about the boycott and the Norwegian ships transporting petroleum products and everything else to South Africa. I said, “You really do have to take a stand. You are collaborating with a fascist regime, and you know from your own history that doesn't help, it's the wrong thing to do.” In Oslo I'd been through Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum, Norway's Resistance Museum on the history of the underground, and so it was fresh in my mind. He gave me all the normal answers and I said, “It's not going to affect the economy of Norway

and there's a lot of shipping business and at least you have to make sure that if your ships do go there, then it costs South Africa so much that they're not going to use you, you've got to price yourselves out of the market. As a trade union you have to say to the ship owners, 'You are not going to sail the ships to South Africa!' They won't fire your workers, because you've got everybody else organized. The point is to find a way to convince them that it's not worth it, that's all." It was a long debate, I don't know what happened, but there were huge Norwegian ore carriers, not just oil tankers, shipping out of South Africa, all that coal I think, and eventually they did something about it.

As always, I must admit, I took an attitude much broader than that of South Africa. Growing up as I did with the father and mother that I had, my dad had been a British sailor, he'd been a trade union shop steward, so I had a grasp of all this and I could talk about my father being blacklisted on the Australian coast and not being able to get a berth home to England. They wouldn't give him his job back.

Madi Gray: Was that political?

Denis Goldberg: Yes, because he was a union organizer, and eventually his union comrades took him as a stowaway from Brisbane to Melbourne, and there he got a berth home to London and on arriving in the harbour in London's East End, he met the Seaman's Union Secretary and said that they were on strike, and to bring the men out. He hadn't worked for six months, he'd had one voyage in six months, and he took the men out on strike. That's what you do, that's what I grew up with and knew about. I wasn't born then but I heard the stories. So, I was able to talk to the man in Norway this way.

In Norway I met the permanent secretary for Africa in the Foreign Affairs Department. I said to him, "You need to give money to the ANC which is not tied to a project, because things happen: kids get shot and we have to fly them out. We have to ask for money to hire a plane, we need to be able to do it without delay." He said, "You'll buy arms with it". I said, "I'm talking about a principle of support for humanitarian work and you're talking bookkeeping rules". He said, "We have to account to the Norwegian Parliament in terms of our laws." I said, "I don't know how you account for it. We'll find a way." I could do this and be quite arrogant about it as well.

I travelled all around to north of the Arctic Circle, had a very interesting experience up in, it would have been, what's up there? Narvik, Tromsø, Trondheim?

I was walking to a meeting, and I could hardly walk straight, I was ill. Next morning I said I've got to have a doctor. One said he would see me, it took a long time because we had to find an English/Norwegian dictionary. When I got there I was introduced to him and he was so hostile to me. He wanted to know what I was doing there because he knew I was South African, from my accent. I explained I was talking about South Africa and he said, "What do you mean you're talking about South Africa, I thought you talked about apartheid". "Yes, why we've got to fight against it." "Oh, you're that Goldberg," he said and it turned out that he and his wife had been in Kwa-Zulu Natal, KZN, at a mission hospital. He was a doctor, she was a nurse, with no laboratory, no serious health care facilities. I had been telling people that

according to the World Health Organisation on average there was one doctor for 80 000 African people, and for whites it was one doctor for 400 people, plus specialists. The audience would question me, and I said, "This is what is happening". "Oh," the doctor said, "Where we were there was something like one doctor to 120 000 people."

He told me that at the Evangelical church-based mission hospital they'd been given two doctors, recent graduates, who instead of doing military service were deployed there. One of them was a Boer who walked around with his service revolver stuck to his waist and when Zulus came along, he spoke no Zulu, he would just shout, tell them how stupid they were. "Why don't you feed your child properly?" Eventually they closed the hospital because Buthelezi supported this kind of attitude and would not give any help to this hospital. After 100 years of mission work they had to close the hospital, withdrawing in effect any medical service at all, because they said they couldn't really be of help to them anyway. What they were doing was propping up a hostile and evil regime and not being able to treat patients. So there was a withdrawal from the mission work there. It was clearly a very difficult decision.

In the end he treated me very nicely and got me back on my feet quickly, but when journalists asked me about the KZN story, I said go ask him, this is the outline, go and ask him to tell you the story, it was great.

This is the sort of experience that's a highlight and you have to be open to it. You have to be prepared to ask. When you go into the Trade Union General Secretary's office you have to be prepared to look at the pictures on his wall, to know something about what he does, to think about it, and to listen to people.

Freddy Reddy in Oslo, our ANC psychiatrist in residence, could tell me about the thinking in the Norwegian Government relating to our movement. He would say, you have to say this that or the other. I would say, I don't know how I'm going to say it or whether I will say it, because I need to know what they're going to say as well. I had access to such people that had understanding. He's done a lot. Poor Freddy, he came home to South Africa, got very ill with pancreatic cancer and had to go back for treatment. My daughter died of pancreatic cancer and it's very rare for anybody to survive. He couldn't get treatment in Norway and went to Switzerland where they were able to prolong his life.

Madi Gray: I'm afraid I lost touch with him many years ago. What about your experiences in Denmark?

Denis Goldberg: In Denmark there was Aaron Mnisi who was Chief Rep of the ANC. That's not his name now, but his pseudonym. As Themba Khubeka he was after liberation our first ambassador to Denmark and then was posted to Japan. He made me really welcome and I had a ball in Denmark, because he opened doors for me and made use of me in a way that I really appreciated. He appreciated what I could do and I appreciated his shrewdness and his understanding of the complexities of Danish politics.

Madi Gray: He had a couple of very good assistants.

Denis Goldberg: John and Ina Hanssen. They came to visit us recently.

Madi Gray: When they were in Cape Town, I was not here.

Denis Goldberg: Saeeda Valli, she was married to a poet in Denmark. There were others from Sydafrika kontakt, like Morten Nielsen, who organized the Danish ten-year South African festival in 2004. Morten feels he can tell the South African Government where it's going wrong and he might be right on occasion. He organized a very good event, even I was invited to go there, "Denis, will you come and speak at a seminar, a workshop?" I ended up speaking at I don't know how many, one after the other and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Denis Goldberg: I've met mayors of cities right up in Umeå and Luleå and further north even. There would be formal receptions for the ANC man, me, happening to be there. Not just in Sweden, in Denmark, in Århus, wherever I went it was quite astonishing what the anti-apartheid movements had been able to achieve in mobilising support.

My point is that whichever of the Scandinavian countries, there was a welcoming, even with the difficulties people had of supporting the armed struggle. I haven't been back to Sweden, but the connections still remain and I know that if I were in Sweden and were to look up some of the people, the friendships would be there. That a liberation movement had such international support from relatively small countries, the Nordic countries, was on a scale that was astonishing.

There were elements who were very hostile. There are racists in Sweden. There were plenty of Swedish workers who were hostile to immigrant workers who were in factories for training and wouldn't train them but made their lives miserable. We had support from the whole of society except for those smaller groups. From the whole of the official society, in other words.

Madi Gray: You were interviewed by all kinds of newspapers weren't you, from the tiniest little leftwing bulletin to major daily newspapers?

Denis Goldberg: Wherever I went in Sweden and the other Nordic countries I was given great access to the media. In every Swedish town were two newspapers subsidised by government in the interests of democracy. I would be interviewed by both, and give full, long interviews. I was photographed with some of the young people from SSU, Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbund, Sweden's Social Democratic Youth League. Elsewhere the workers' education movement (ABF) would have me and there would be reports in the local media. Years later a Finnish television team came to visit me in London. Would I tell them some prison stories, they were doing for light entertainment? They did a half hour programme. It's a lovely programme called Not a Five-Star Hotel. That was because the judge in a court case that we had brought against the prison authorities for access to newspapers, said, "Prisoners are not free to have everything they want, they are in prison and prison is not a five star hotel." I can confirm that it was not a five star hotel. In a five star hotel you have a key to the door! That was interesting.

Madi Gray: Did you have trouble putting your case in the media?

Denis Goldberg: I found Swedish and Nordic media very receptive. I remember there was a journalist, I think in Gothenburg, who used to do a weekly column in a Sunday paper and was considered to be an agenda setter in the print media. Jan Halldin did a whole page report on an interview with me about Israel's role in support of apartheid. I had made a statement criticising Israel and was heavily attacked by the Israeli ambassador. The statement I had made was that Israel had an open-ended agreement to supply arms to South Africa and was supporting the killing of our people and participating in it. Their excuse was their security, but I found it totally reprehensible.

The Israeli ambassador said, "How can Goldberg know? He has just come out of prison, he can't possibly know these things". Well, I had been in prison with Dieter Gerhardt, a very high-ranking South African naval officer, a Commodore in the South African navy in command of the Simonstown Naval Dockyard, who knew what was going on. He was in prison because he had been a spy for the Soviet Union and he told me these things. There is also a logic in the situation.

This journalist asked me what I had to say in answer to the ambassador. In the end I said if the Israeli ambassador wants to prove that this is not the case, let him produce the treaties and the secret codicils. Israel says they are winding down the treaties, and will not renew them. There was a clause in the treaties, which said they do not have to be renewed, they are self-renewing unless cancelled. So let him show us the documents. Let him prove that what I am saying is wrong. I do know, and the logic of the situation is this: Why does Israel no longer steal yellow cake from French nuclear fuel reprocessing plants? Because South Africa is supplying it. Let him come and argue these points.

What I liked was that the journalist did a whole page interview and said Goldberg says this, the ambassador says that, and in the end he, the journalist, had to come down on the side of the ANC man who had the more logical argument. It was good journalism. A whole page of a tabloid size magazine insert! But this was typical. I found that very fascinating.

Madi Gray: You were involved fairly early on in producing ANC merchandise. That was very important, because it became an international seller.

Denis Goldberg: When I got to London in 1985 and started working in the ANC office I found there were lots of anti-apartheid shirts, t-shirts, badges, and buttons, all from the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Everybody knew about anti-apartheid but many did not know about the ANC. My sense was that the ANC as the leader of the struggle for liberation was not very well known in Britain. I am not sure about other countries, but I found in Britain, when I would talk about the African National Congress or the ANC, people would say, "What's the ANC?" Then I would say, "It's the leading anti-apartheid struggle organization. Nelson Mandela is the imprisoned president of the ANC". "Oh, that organization."

I felt there was a need for an ANC-South Africa merchandising operation, and put it to my comrades as a way for us to make the ANC known, separately from AAM in Britain. There were people in the British Anti-Apartheid Movement who were very upset with me, as I didn't

ask their permission!

The current Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad said, "Anything Denis can find in green, gold and black and he can make a profit on, he will turn it into something and sell it to make money for the ANC". There were t-shirts and scarves and skullcaps and badges and children's t-shirts and watches and very elegant diaries. I wanted to show people that we too could be elegant. We too could handle modern graphics and printing. We are not, forgive me, out of the bush. This was quite important.

There were coffee mugs and coasters, of course. For many years of doing this, I avoided faces on the mugs. I was always afraid of the culture of the individual and I am sorry that I broke from it, because the stuff I did with Nelson and Winnie Mandela didn't sell very well. I wanted the more abstract support for the concept of liberation rather than for an individual, but I submitted to the majority's wishes. I'm a good democrat sometimes.

That operation was very good and a lot of material was sold in Sweden and in the other Nordic countries, and in Holland, Great Britain, France, and Germany. In our best years we were selling £120 000 worth of materials a year, which was a lot of money in those days. The point about it was the people who bought it were advertising the ANC out of choice and doing our work for us. This was publicity for the ANC paid for by people who wanted to support us. For quite a small amount of money every year, even if we didn't cover our costs fully, we were doing £100 000 worth of publicity which didn't cost £100 000, which was over a million kronor at the time, it's a lot of publicity.

There were South Africans who would come out of South African trade unions, who'd been invited to a remote village in Scotland and they'd say, "We found the ANC flag there," or, "We arrived in London and went to buy postage stamps and there's a guy wearing an ANC shirt." I thought it was quite important.

Madi Gray: Absolutely.

Denis Goldberg: One of the things I did when Nelson Mandela came to Sweden with all the leaders, was to give them each a great big golden yellow shopping bag with the ANC's Umkhonto fighting spearman on it. Into each I had stacked t-shirts for adults and children, scarves and watches. I've got photographs of Nelson Mandela wearing our scarf and our sweatshirt and people had flags. I wanted them to fly home and walk off the plane in South Africa with the ANC shirts and their goodies. Instead of a duty free bag, they'd carry an ANC bag, before the ANC was fully accepted, before it was okay to do this. It was after the releases, but before the ANC had re-established itself.

It wasn't decisive, but it was fun for me and it left me free to do public speaking and to go to the UN to speak for the ANC. I went a number of times. So I am trying to say that the freedom of our work in Sweden and Britain, but particularly the Scandinavian countries, was tremendous.

Madi Gray: You say Olof Palme set the tone for the way official Sweden received the ANC. You mentioned you had friends in the liberal party. Did you ever have anything to do on a more official level with politicians from other parties aside from the social democratic party?

Denis Goldberg: I spoke wherever I was asked to speak, the social democratic party, the left party, the liberal party all organized events for me.

What I did try to get organizations in Sweden to do was to try to transcend their differences in the interest of greater solidarity with our liberation movement. Often they were fighting out their own differences, whether on the right or the left, it didn't matter.

But formal political connections, no, that was not my task. My focus was on all the anti-apartheid organizations out here. I am not going into political decision-making; the top politicians did that. My job was to build solidarity and I am talking now about building solidarity.

I would meet people in organizations like Rädde Barnen (Save the Children) and would get a very full picture of what they were doing in southern Africa generally and in support of our children in particular. I know that this had huge implications when the ANC had a conference on the rights of children. It took place in Harare but the support that came out of "Save the Children".

Madi Gray: The Unicef conference where Lisbet Palme, Olof Palme's widow, was one of the opening speakers?

Denis Goldberg: That's right. All of that support was important in building towards this. I wasn't there but I'm trying to say it was a dual thing, the support of the Swedish and Nordic governments was important, but we had to build the solidarity movement with our Swedish friends and comrades to enable the Swedish government to take each step further. If there wasn't this support, Palme would have been isolated. So it is interrelated, as a good lefty I'd say it's a dialectical process.

I have to say that it was one of the most remarkable periods in history I've heard of, not just in southern Africa. I did meet a person who was one of the founders of anti-apartheid, Per Wästberg, who was important.

Madi Gray: He was a key figure in the International Defence and Aid Fund. A lot of Swedish money went into it even though it was based in London and they smuggled vast sums of money into South Africa. Were you aware of that? Can you tell us something about that because a lot of Swedish people are unaware of this key contribution?

Denis Goldberg: Afterwards I know that several documentaries have been made about it. I personally was not aware of it, I was in prison most of the time. In the last few years I heard about it but I chose not to enquire because money was going in secretly, you didn't want to ask about it. It was a remarkable thing to find people all over Britain who would post money to people who they were allegedly pen-friending.

I know it was a lot of Swedish money and this is why Horst Kleinschmidt was given a Swedish knighthood, wasn't he? He has a Swedish decoration in recognition of his role. I don't think he

uses it but I know he's got it and he did tremendous work. It is one thing having the financial backing, it is another having the organization and political skills to make it work, to be able to draw people together.

Madi Gray: Denis, didn't you have contact with academics in Sweden?

Denis Goldberg: I did have contact with Swedish academics. I remember Mai Palmberg in particular from Uppsala. She did a lot of writing on South Africa, its economy, the links between Swedish companies and South African ones. I think that was very important. I attended a number of seminars where I spoke on the South African economy and I remember there were occasions when there would be people who were interested but not necessarily academics, and people for whom it was important that the discussion should take place in Swedish. But because of my presence people would lapse into speaking English and I would say "Tala på svenska!" because it was important that Swedish people understood. I have to say too that it was often much wider than just Sweden and South Africa. It was a question of South Africa, Israel, Palestine and solidarity movements.

Madi Gray: There were a number of seminars on that topic, that South Africa and Israel were international outcasts that supported each other.

Denis Goldberg: Yes. Abdul Minty of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa had a role to play in that too, so that was interesting. I also met Jane Hunter from the United States, now editor of Israeli Foreign Affairs, so I had another source of detailed information and study and was able to bring these together and make a contribution.

Madi Gray: The Stockholm Institute for Peace Research, SIPRI, did you have any contact with them? In 1989 Sigrid Landgren published an important study on South Africa's military-industrial complex, *Embargo Disimplemented: South Africa's Military Industry*.

Denis Goldberg: Probably, but I don't know. You know, we are talking about events 20 years ago. I'm sorry, the filing cabinet, I can't remember the key words anymore.

Madi Gray: It's okay, you are not the only one.

Denis Goldberg: Yes, the point I was trying to make was that there were academics who played an important role in gathering the information and analysing it and presenting it so that we and Swedish people and other people around the world could understand.

Madi Gray: When you say "we", do you mean the ANC?

Denis Goldberg: We in South Africa's liberation movement, the ANC and its allies. It all helped us, it gave us intellectual ammunition.

Madi Gray: It's fantastic that Swedish academics could assist by giving intellectual ammunition.

Denis Goldberg: You know what I have come to understand, as I've got older? It is not just the kid who throws a stone who is important or the guerilla fighter. It was very important that if we achieved liberation in South Africa that we achieved our own liberation. It helped tremendously to have support. It has helped tremendously to have this intellectual support because if in an intellectual argument you can detach people who support apartheid from that position of support, you strengthen yourself relative to the regime and its supporters. If, through intellectual argument, you can bring some of them over to your side, your swing is doubled.

In the end, unless we are operating on blind prejudice and bigotry, unless that was the case and there are such people, if you are operating at some level of intellectual conviction and are open to debate and argument that's a very important role. I have to say that when I came out of prison and having grown up in the left and progressive movements all my life, I was tired of ranting and raving, rabble-rousing because though I might do it very well, somebody from the other side would come along the next week and turn the same people around again. I felt there was a need to present a rational argument about our common future; why there shouldn't be racism.

There was Konsum, the cooperative movement, which held a conference in Dalarna, in Smedjebacken. From there I've got a little blacksmith carved in wood with his leather apron and his bowler hat.

I remember being asked to speak at their regional conference, their annual general meeting, and being asked "Why are people racist?" I said, "Perhaps it is built into our language and into our belief systems. All things light and bright are beautiful, and we are afraid of the dark?" We couple these things somehow in our minds ending up with, fear of the strange, fear of those who look different perhaps fear of people with dark skins, who speak different languages, with national chauvinism. I ended up with them shouting slogans like it was the 1960s all over again and they were enjoying being engaged with this movement.

I had presented them with an argument about the role of racism in South Africa and what it does to people, not just the oppressed which is terribly important but what it does to the oppressors, that they too needed liberation. I felt the need, I am coming back to the intellectuals, the need to present a logical, rational argument about the long-term future of Sweden and the people of Africa through South Africa. It was not just hateful, although it is hateful, and I am not disputing that. How do you get people to accept it, the need to fight against it, to take a stand?

I remember meeting a young black person on a train and he asked me what I was doing there and I told him. He was a refugee who'd been put into a school and now had a job. He was being trained as a machinist, a metal worker, and in the factory it was very difficult. No worker would talk to him, he was totally alone, cut off. They tried to freeze him out. At lunchtime in the canteen he sat down and if there were others at the table they'd get up and move away,

and he said he was very grateful for the opportunity to have a job, but the attitudes were dreadful. He needed somebody like me to tell about it, because he couldn't tell anybody else.

Madi Gray: No, he might risk losing his job?

Denis Goldberg: They would say he's an ingrate, an ungrateful person. You know, solidarity wasn't a one way thing. There was the need to deal with the distaste of many Scandinavian people for the Laplanders. Was I in Norway or Sweden? It doesn't matter. People who'd been involved in the anti-apartheid movement said, "We are fighting racism in South Africa, but we suppress the language of the Same people. If somebody wants to build a hydroelectric power dam, you suddenly find articles in newspapers saying these are lazy people, they let their women do the work and the men herd the reindeer." Then you say, "But this is South Africa you are talking about". It was Swedish people involved in anti-apartheid who held up the mirror of the racism of South Africa to their own societies in Scandinavia, saying, "That's hypocrisy". That is the kind of intellectual argument I am talking about. They took a stand against their own racism in their own society. So yes it was in support of our struggle, but we gave something back.

Madi Gray: Talking about intellectuals and arguments, the Africa Groups and the Isolate South Africa Committee, ISAK, published a range of books on the military, on sanctions, trade, on Swedish policies. Were you aware of these? Did you make any contributions?

Denis Goldberg: No, I didn't personally make contributions. I did have discussions with people and knew that this was being done. While I could speak a little Swedish, I found it difficult to read Swedish in a sustained way. I knew the stuff, I was shown the stuff and I think it had an influence.

There were often seminars and conferences in Britain at which Scandinavian academics would be present and so there was this cross-fertilisation of ideas. It wasn't British, it wasn't Swedish, it was anti-apartheid from the whole of Europe and a little from America as well. I thought that was important and what this also did was to inform debates at the United Nations.

Madi Gray: Right.

Denis Goldberg: The United Nations Security Council was a problem because of the veto right of the permanent members, but the General Assembly was very important, and the UN Anti-Apartheid Committee was important, just as the Namibia Committee of the UN was important. All of this material played a role. It was important stuff because if governments say they act on rational grounds, it's a question of whose rationality is predominant.

Madi Gray: Denis, I have a feeling that you were at an ANC dinner in Stockholm where we celebrated the unbanning of the ANC. That was on Saturday 3rd February 1990. What do you remember of those days?

Denis Goldberg: What I remember was the sense almost of shock that what we had waited so long for, was going to happen. Nelson was released on the 11th, wasn't he? You say I was in Sweden the weekend before?

Madi Gray: That's right.

Denis Goldberg: It's difficult for me to remember because I was in and out of Sweden at that time on speaking tours, at fund raising events, meeting different groups. I do remember a party at your house after a meeting in Folkets Hus to celebrate, was it the unbanning of the ANC?

Madi Gray: Yes. It was originally planned to welcome the ANC leaders who'd been released a few months earlier, after over 25 years in prison.

Denis Goldberg: There was a sense of shock because we knew the regime didn't have the strength it once had, it didn't have the unity or the total hegemony over white South Africa. We knew that there were elements, big business people, Anglo-American, English speaking businesses, Afrikaans speaking businesses, even military men, who had been to meet with the ANC, the academics, the intellectuals had been to talk.

When De Klerk made his announcement, this was such a radical departure that one thought, "What has he got up his sleeve? What trick is there? Is this to disarm us in the figurative sense, but also in the literal sense of the armed struggle?" We were having a struggle to keep sanctions going, the armed struggle was very difficult, although we knew that we had people inside South Africa by this time.

Yet it was also for us a moment of huge change. We were so used to being illegal, to having to struggle to be heard. The whole point of the ANC in exile was to get a hearing in diplomatic circles in the hope of getting governments to support the struggle against apartheid by putting pressure on the apartheid government to change. Suddenly the government was saying, "Yes, we're changing!"

What do we do afterwards? It took a lot of radical rethinking about our attitudes. It's not as though we went marching into Pretoria and took power and set up a government, which is every revolutionary's dream. Castro goes in with his 2 100 people and takes over Havana and sets up a government. I suppose we are lucky, we didn't have the chaos that goes with such a revolutionary transformation, but then we didn't have the transformation, we are still trying to transform, but we have kept our economy going.

Your question was what did I feel like? A relief, a sense of the long night is over or nearly over, dawn is coming, we are going to see freedom. People who were still in prison would obviously have to come out and we would have the task of trying to rebuild our country, for South Africa a new kind of country.

I also remember the joy. I do remember the celebrations. I remember solidarity movements in Sweden and elsewhere being overjoyed with us and for us, which was a wonderful feeling. I

think people in Sweden, because of Olof Palme's Prime Ministership, Sweden and the Nordic countries had given tremendous support.

It gave legitimacy to the anti-apartheid movement when the head of government gave us such support and I noticed that when I travelled around Sweden. I was asked to lecture in schools to little children and older school - goers but also university students and post-graduates and adults at ABF, all of this because there was such legitimacy and they were such a joy for us. That is my recollection.

Madi Gray: My recollection of early February was that eight leaders of the ANC had come to thank Sweden and meet ANC president Oliver Tambo. He'd had a stroke shortly before and was being rehabilitated. I think you may also have gone to see him at the clinic?

Denis Goldberg: I did. In March 1990 Nelson Mandela and his party stayed in the State Guest House, the palace called Haga Slott. I was there when Nelson met with Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu and all the others who came as well. I had come from London together with Father Trevor Huddleston, Siphon Pityana and Horst Kleinschmidt from the Defence & Aid Fund, and Mendi Msimang, the ANC Chief Representative in London. We flew in together. That was a remarkable turnaround! Nelson Mandela was lionised in Sweden. He met heads of government and cabinet ministers; he met everybody. I'd met Walter Sisulu and the others before, when they were released.

Cabinet ministers would be there. I remember a conversation with the Minister of Agriculture about the policy of leaving land fallow and paying people to leave land fallow and because we used so many chemicals and he was saying "Won't you persuade my farmers not to do that?" It was this kind of openness of the whole society.

That party that day at Haga Palace was quite astonishing. The people who flew in, Miriam Makeba, for example, and other musicians, I don't remember them all but there was a toing and froing going on like this was a part of South Africa.

What I realise now, when people complain about our nurses and doctors and other professionals that go abroad, is that I think it's so important to have a different view of the world, to look at South Africa through different eyes, to see how normal we are. We've got good people, we've got some very corrupt people, but when you go to Germany and the Chairman of the Work Committee of a large company, a trade unionist, has taken half a million rand from the company so he can go and visit his prostitute friends, you find they have such people too. This is the man who set up a trust fund for workers to contribute to the relief of HIV and AIDS children, but he takes half a million for his own screwing around. We have people like this, too.

Madi Gray: Yes we do.

Denis Goldberg: It's important to know that we have normally good, normally bad, such a mixture of good and bad and see poverty in these countries. I don't want anybody to be poor, but it's to give a better perspective, a clearer view. This is what I got from travelling. I got

books on Swedish trade union movements, you know, some of the earliest trade unionists were in Sweden and they all talked about red flags then, flying the flag.

Madi Gray: They still sing the International and I know it better in Swedish than in English.

Denis Goldberg: You're quite right, goodness Madi, you remember things I vaguely remember. I suppose you've been talking to other people as well?

Madi Gray: That has helped. Personally, Sweden was the place where I got an answer to my existential question. I was isolated when I was growing up, as the only one in my family who reacted, and I reacted fairly young. I got an answer to my question, "Am I a mad idealist, or is society mad?" What happened to you after 1990?

Denis Goldberg: The ANC had an "ANC meets the World" rally at the FNB stadium in Soweto and I went from Britain, because I'd stayed in Britain and created and ran an organization, a registered charity relying on the solidarity contacts I had helped to build up. It was set up in Britain to fund projects in South Africa.

Madi Gray: What was it called?

Denis Goldberg: Community Heart, it's still running, shipping over 2 million books for children in English, and it provided well over R10 million for the Rape Crisis Centre in Cape Town. We got it from Comic Relief but also from trade unions and from our twin organization in Germany and we provided a vehicle to teach maths and science. It goes to schools with everything you need for a laboratory in the back. An art project, too. Read the website.

I was telling you about "the "ANC meets the World" to say thank you, and I arrived there and I remember getting into a big coach, to be taken back to our hotel, and as I walked down the aisle there were people from the United States and Canada and Sweden and Norway and Denmark, I actually had to stop and talk all the way at every seat. Amazingly then I remembered names and I remembered where I'd met people. Some of them said, "You meet so many people, how do you know me?" and it was because they made such an impact on me. Why should they have been so committed, young people and older ones too, with so much freedom to do what they like?

Madi Gray: Before we close, is there anything you would like to add?

Denis Goldberg: What I would like to add is that I think what you're doing is important, and it's important because support for a people struggling for freedom is not terrorism. Today many countries are passing laws, which say that to demand a change of government in a country is terrorism. I was still in Britain when they first introduced the anti-terrorism laws, and I said, "In South Africa under apartheid, communism was the sign of a wish for a different social political economic system. Of course it was also the sign of the system advocated by Marx and Lenin, but the call for any change of system was treated as a sign of communism."

Madi Gray: I remember.

Denis Goldberg: Here we are seeing the same sort of thing. I understand the difficulty of defining things in legal terms, but I might trust politicians, but don't necessarily trust intelligence chiefs, police chiefs, operatives and agents who interpret things as they wish if the laws are vague, and to demand a change of government when the regime denies human rights is not terrorism. You have to distinguish the methods from the purpose. To support a peaceful movement, a demand for freedom, that can't be terrorism. You have to do what we did to persuade the world, that apartheid was a breach of human rights and a crime against humanity, that the apartheid state was illegitimate in natural law and in international law and therefore states were entitled to act against it. Forget about Umkhonto we Sizwe, those demands would now be defined as terrorism and there's something wrong with a world, which says that a sense of human rights is terrorism.

Governments can go to war on false pretences. They always have. Now there's evidence apparently that President Johnson's agents created the Tonkin incident in the Vietnam war, that it was a deliberate fraud. Our newspapers are shocked that President Bush's intelligence agents in Iraq used the weapons of mass destruction theory and that the 45 minutes interaction was a deliberate fraud. Many incidents have been caused to justify a lot. I'm saying therefore that it's not new.

To defend human rights is also old, and we can't submit to the demand not to defend human rights. What you're doing, I think has a relevance far beyond the freedom of South Africa, significant as that is. We always said there were four pillars to our struggle: the underground struggle, the open political struggle, the international solidarity movement, and our armed struggle. The solidarity movement was very important, it's widely acknowledged that the isolation of the apartheid regime was significant in our liberation.

We need to isolate regimes, we need to isolate Morocco so that the people of Western Sahara, the Saharawi people, can have their own country. We need to support the Palestinian people, though I do not like some of their leaders, but I know about their oppression, the theft of their water, their olive trees, their land. People react, and they need our support. It's not terrorism to support the Palestinian people.

Madi Gray: No.

Denis Goldberg: On the other hand, I do not accept that the bombing of the Twin Towers, spectacular as it was, was a legitimate tactic. The people who died were not the ones who were oppressing the people of Palestine. What one needs to think about is how in the feudal countries of the Middle East the Palestinian people cannot be free because they will challenge the feudal system. The feudal rulers have supported the demand for a secular Palestinian state, but not when the Palestinians get really dangerous, as we saw with Jordan when they were thrown out of Jordan.

Madi Gray: That was quite a long time ago.

Denis Goldberg: Yes, but the point is it's been going on and on and on. They mouth off against Israel as the oppressor, but they don't actually want a secular Palestinian State, a modern State that will challenge the feudal aristocracy, and that for me is a very serious problem. Now I'm not blaming the oppressed for their oppression, I'm simply saying that Arafat's creation of Palestinian nationalism out of pan-Arabism is very significant but it held within it a serious contradiction, because it was challenging the pillars of pan-Arabism, namely a religious feudal system, and Palestinians are the workers and the intellectuals throughout the Middle East and a threat, in the end, to the feudal overlords. To support the Palestinian people against all that is not terrorism.

So your work is very important.

Madi Gray: Thank you.

Denis Goldberg: That's all I wanted to add. No names, no dates, no nothing, but all from 1985 to 1994.

Madi Gray: Thank you Denis, it's been a wonderful interview. Above all it gives what is so important, a feel of and a look into some of the major issues at the time, and a feel of what the time was like. Thank you very much.

Denis Goldberg: Thank you.

I have found some names and organizations that I wish to append to the interview. Some I have mentioned and there are many I have not recorded. I personally thank them all.

Some of the people I met at various times:

Gerd Andersson, International Secretary, County Council of Norrbotten, Boden

Monica Andersson, at first Gen Sec of SSU, later SDP International Department, Stockholm

Nina Andersson, Campaign Officer, Afrikagrupperna, Stockholm

Vanja Berglund, Kommunalråd, Stadshuset, Boden

Nils Billing, Kanslichef, Hallands Idrottsförbund, Halmstad

Christina Björk, Riksställningningar, Stockholm

Birgitta Bygren, Executive & International Secretary, Swedish Association of Health Officers

Nisse Carlsson, Producent, Kulturavdelning, Folkparkerna

Ingalill Colbro, Regional Secretariat for southern Africa, Sida

Teresa Devant, Teaterpedagog, Enskede

Teddy-John Franks, KPML(r), Gothenburg

Madi Gray, Stockholm

Barbro & Staffan Gunnarsson, Landskrona

Tomas Gustafsson, Development Secretariat, Landstinget i Värmland

Ulf (and Susan) Halldin, Halmstad

Roger Hällhag, ISAK, Stockholm

David Henly, Uppsala

Pia Holmquist, Örebro

Lars Hult, ISAK

Anna Lindh, President SSU then, Foreign Minister

Sören Lindh & Meta Boethius, Afrikagrupperna, Stockholm

Tormod Nasset, Trade Unionist, Oskarshamn, ongoing twinning projects with Port Shepstone and with Boland ANC

Gillian Nilsson, ABF, Lund . I am not sure of the surname. It may be different

Mats Nilsson, Luneby (former rally driver who drove me round Sweden rather hectically)

Mai Palmberg, Uppsala

Anna & Matthias Svensson, Partille (Folkpartiet)