

# Madi Gray

## Journalist

Madi Gray was born in Cape Town. A critic of apartheid since her student days, she left South Africa and moved to Sweden where she joined the ANC of South Africa and the solidarity movement The Africa Groups of Sweden, in the same year. Gray worked as a freelance journalist and editor and contributed to the anti-apartheid struggle in various ways, particularly through writing articles and appearing on public platforms, speaking to a variety of audiences including preschool children, trade unionists and peace activists. Currently she works as a tourist guide and enjoys showing her guests how the problems in South Africa are being resolved.



Madi Gray

Bertil Högberg: I'm sitting in Uppsala on 21 September 2005 interviewing Madi Gray. You were born in Cape Town?

Madi Gray: Yes I was born in Cape Town and grew up and went to school and university in Cape Town. It was only when I got married that I left Cape Town to go to Johannesburg.

Bertil Högberg: How did you become involved in the struggle for liberation in South Africa?

Madi Gray: Ever since I was a child I noticed a difference in the treatment of people, based on colour. I remember being taught that all white females were "ladies" whereas women who were not white were not called ladies, at best they were "women" or "girls". I was aware of this when I was five. Most of my growing up time and also my post-university time in South Africa, I felt on my own because in Cape Town outside the university arena so few seemed to share my ideas. Sometimes I wondered whether I was mad or if society was mad, because I had this vision that everyone could live together, that everyone can have the same right to vote, the same right to make a living, the same right to study, to live in decent housing, to have their children with them. These seem to me very basic rights that everyone should have. In Johannesburg I met people who shared these views and were very committed to anti-

apartheid work, democracy and human rights. Yet it was in Sweden that I got confirmation that it was apartheid society that was wrong, it wasn't me.

Bertil Högberg: But at the university there were people who shared your ideas?

Madi Gray: Yes, and of course I immediately got involved in politics. My parents were immigrants from Germany, who came during the inter-war period. Being a refugee from Germany, my mother was able to understand the similarities between Hitler's Nationalist Socialist Party and the National Party in South Africa, which came to power in 1948. She was absolutely terrified that with our background we might be subject to pressure again and so she tried to make me promise not to do anything political during my student years. As my father died when I was eleven, I had to work my own way through university. I got a small bursary for a couple of years but I had to find part-time work so that I could study. That meant that I really didn't have very much time to do more than sign the odd petition and participate together with many others in demonstrations. I could sit and chat with people and share ideas. I failed one of my major subjects in my final year and then I worked full-time for a couple of years until I managed to save the money to go back to university to finish the degree.

Bertil Högberg: What did you study?

Madi Gray: I was studying sociology and psychology and did a year of anthropology as well. For a Bachelor of Arts at that time you also needed a foreign language and I chose German, which I had learned as a child but had never studied further at school. My major was psychology and when I went back I passed after repeating the course and went on to do an honours degree in psychology. That year I didn't need to take a job, which gave me the freedom to start working politically. I wanted to become a journalist and joined the editorial board of the university newspaper, Varsity. In 1968, the year I was news editor, we had a sit-in and occupied the administration buildings for ten days. It was terribly exciting. One felt part of the international youth movement of the time.

Bertil Högberg: What were the demands?

Madi Gray: The demand was interesting. Archie Mafeje, a black man who had done his BA in Anthropology at the University of Cape Town and had then furthered his studies abroad, was appointed to a senior lecturing position at UCT. The Senate, which was the body of teachers and lecturers and professors, approved the appointment. The Council, who handled the money, were leant on by the Minister of Education himself who did not want a black man as a senior lecturer because by that time apartheid had been brought into the universities. So the university council refused to ratify the appointment and we held a sit-in to make sure that he would be appointed. The interesting thing was that years later I met Archie Mafeje, in Holland

where he had been for many years and I asked, "What did you think about our sit-in?" That was the first time he'd heard that the predominantly white student body in Cape Town had actually tried to get his appointment ratified. It was unheard of for students in a country like South Africa to occupy the administration block for ten days. People had to climb over sleeping bags to get to their offices.

Bertil Högberg: But you didn't succeed?

Madi Gray: No. In the end some students from an Afrikaans university nearby, Stellenbosch, were called in.

Bertil Högberg: To throw you out?

Madi Gray: The threat was that they were going to throw us out. I don't think it was the university that called them in, I think it was the police or the military. They surrounded us, they were big and strong, mainly men, rugby players, sportsmen, tough as nails and they threatened to break in and destroy the building and us. We were then asked by the university's vice-principal to please disperse. After discussions amongst ourselves, we agreed to disperse. The university vice-principal actually got the Stellenbosch men away first, by offering them free drinks at the local university pub.

Bertil Högberg: Did you belong to any organization?

Madi Gray: I was a member of NUSAS, the National Union of South African Students and earlier in the same year we had held a national conference in Johannesburg. NUSAS was the student organization at all the English-speaking universities. The Afrikaans speaking universities had their own and subsequently the black universities formed their own. At that point NUSAS was still trying to bring the black universities onto the same platform. A fascinating thing happened at this university conference. As I was there as an elected delegate, I could sit in on closed meetings, and saw there was much paternalism, as the white students were so used to talking for other people, doing other people's thinking. I don't even think they meant any particular harm but they kept giving orders right, left and centre and telling black students how to interpret things. One of the students who was there was Steve Biko. Another was Barney Pityana. I was at a party one evening where Steve and Barney and leaders of what would become the Black Consciousness Movement had a very hectic discussion with some of the leaders of NUSAS. The only thing left was for the black delegations to break away. Soon they formed their own organization, SASO, the South African Students Organization. In due course SASO and BCM, the Black Consciousness Movement, were banned. NUSAS survived. Steve Biko came to be the symbol for the entire black consciousness movement, so much so that the system murdered him while he was in detention in 1978.

Bertil Högberg: And when you left university, what happened then?

Madi Gray: I went back into civilian life.

Bertil Högberg: You forgot politics?

Madi Gray: No I didn't forget politics. One of the reasons I left the country was in fact that I didn't want to forget politics. Over and over again I saw people who had been more radical than me, more involved in things that I didn't have the courage to do, get jobs, families, and responsibilities within two years of leaving the university. If you really wanted to embarrass them you asked, "Do you remember such and such a demonstration?" I just didn't want that to happen to me.

For me the big thing was actually leaving Cape Town. When I got married and moved to Johannesburg, my ex-husband once said to me, "Don't you think you should grow up now and leave student politics?" So I said "Okay" and went into adult politics. I had long been a member of the South African Institute of Race Relations and I went to them and I said I want to do something and was co-opted onto their board. I did voluntary work for them. Through Race Relations I managed to start a project in which I was able to get weekend work one day a week for some high school pupils in Soweto. They were mainly young men and it was the kind of work that they weren't really interested in, like gardening which they didn't have the skills for either, but my point was to try and get them work so they would be able to make twice as much as they needed to be able to attend school. A researcher at the Institute had worked out how much it cost a pupil per year to attend Standard Nine and Standard Ten, the last two years of school. So I divided this sum by 50 and multiplied it by two and that was the standard, the basic rate plus food and transport costs. One of the reasons I started the project was because pupils were actually being injured while they were trying to make their money. One of the ways they were making money was to sell fruit on the trains. In my naiveté I thought that maybe it would be possible to help a few people to earn an independent income so that they could contribute to the family and finish their studies.

Unfortunately I left South Africa less than a year after the project started, but because of it I had a seven day a week permit to go into Soweto and was able to exploit this beyond the original idea. As I was a white woman, officials were really terrified for me. One official said, "I keep thinking that on a Sunday morning I will read that you have been murdered on the streets of Soweto. So if you know anyone who can help to protect you, just ask me and I'll give an extra pass for that day." That enabled me to get in non-South Africans or South Africans who were interested in seeing Soweto, because I had to use private cars and they would drive a car for me. Instead of being able to get jobs for four people I was able to get new jobs for eight each week, because I only drove pupils the first time, to show them how to get there, introduce them to the people who were taking them on. As they were taking on people who were unskilled in gardening and were paying three or four times what they

normally paid a gardener, there was a certain amount of charity from the employers' point of view.

Bertil Högberg: But why did you leave South Africa?

Madi Gray: I left for a number of reasons. I knew from a very early age that I would not be living in SA indefinitely because I could not condone apartheid. When I decided to leave in early 1972, nothing had happened on the political scene since 1964, with the exception of the black consciousness movement, and for obvious reasons I was not part of the Black Consciousness Movement. However nice I was, however much I disliked apartheid, they'd had more than enough of white liberals. Before I became like so many of my friends from university and stopped protesting, I left.

My original idea was to find another meaningful issue in England in which to be an activist and shortly before I left South Africa in 1972 I got involved in the renaissance of the Woman's Liberation Movement in South Africa. We were of course working across the colour line and it seemed perfectly natural to me to go to Britain and join the Women's Liberation Movement there.

Bertil Högberg: Was there a women's movement in South Africa?

Madi Gray: Yes, we held a conference and were given a venue by the South African Institute of Race Relations. They seemed to think we were active in a period when nothing much was happening so they let us do our thing. For a period after 1968 an air of greater freedom was felt throughout the world.

Bertil Högberg: And you left South Africa for Britain?

Madi Gray: Yes I went to England. I had two contacts in London. One was a cousin who had left years earlier and the other was the man with the most beautiful blue eyes in the world, a Swede by the name of Bertil Egerö, who was one of the people I had taken into Soweto. I wrote to both of them and both came to meet me at the airport. My relationship with Bertil developed further and soon we decided to have a baby, our daughter Nandi.

I joined the Woman's Liberation Movement, working on an issue that I thought was very important in South Africa as well, women's right to abortion, women's right to choose and to control their own bodies. Through Bertil I also joined the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau, CFMAG it was called in those days. Later it became known as MAGIC. He was a member of the board.

With my experience of working on the student newspaper, where we did layout and had to prepare copy for the printer, I fairly soon began working with newsletters. In due course I also became involved on the fringes of the anti-apartheid movement. I never became a full member but had permission to use their duplicator.

After I'd been in London about six months I got a very angry phone call from my cousin. A man had turned up on their doorstep and terrorised his wife and asked all about my connections with communism. He told them some story about my life and claimed I had been in the Soviet Union for training for two years. I assume that those two years coincided with the two years I dropped out of university and was in the ordinary commercial world, where the special branch didn't notice me.

Bertil Högberg: So it was the South African security police?

Madi Gray: Yes, a notorious spy, I think it was Gordon Winter. He later wrote a book about working for BOSS and why he did it. My cousin warned me that this character would be calling me, so I was prepared. When Winter approached me he wanted to know about contacts I had made in London, and the silly thing was that I had no idea that the person who arranged for me to stay for six weeks in a room near Covent Garden, happened to choose the street where the British Communist Party had its headquarters. The spy told me that six months after I'd moved out. As far as the Special Branch was concerned, this was part of the whole plot and I was a secret member of organizations like the ANC liberation movement and the Communist Party. The police credited me with far more influence than I ever had. Today one might say that they had more respect for me than I felt I had earned in terms of what I had done in South Africa or what I was doing abroad.

Bertil Högberg: Obviously you were on their records from the NUSAS time.

Madi Gray: Yes, I was on their records from my NUSAS time. Several years after I'd left someone phoned giving a false name and asked my mother where I was. She wasn't a fool and from the questions she was asked she knew that this call was from the security police. I know they followed me from time to time.

In Johannesburg I was told in a devious way that a number of people and four organizations that I had worked with were under scrutiny. Later the Schlebusch Commission investigated them and one or two were banned. I'd been given this information by a friend who'd been threatened by the Special Branch, as we called the security police. They told him a lot of nonsense about me; most of it was made up. They also told him that they wanted him to use me to spy on these organizations and he refused. So I was able to tell them about the scrutiny and the infiltration attempt. Dale White was one; Beyers Naude another.

Bertil Högberg: He was head of the Christian Institute?

Madi Gray: The Christian Institute and three organizations it was working together with: the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre, the SA Council of Churches and the South African Institute of Race Relations were on the list.

Bertil Högberg: But none of them got actually banned?

Madi Gray: No. Not the Christian Institute, but its literacy training programme and other projects were banned. A few organisations did secret behind-the-scenes work with the black consciousness movement on things like administration and helped to develop certain kinds of skills. A number of these organizations were banned and some of the people involved were banned or exiled.

Bertil Högberg: What happened in London after the approach by this spy?

Madi Gray: Nothing.

Bertil Högberg: What did you work with in London, your means of making a living?

Madi Gray: I never took a full-time job. I did a little work by reading SAn newspapers for the International Defence and Aid Fund. It was producing clippings weekly and I would mark things I thought could be used. I did a little work for the Woman's Liberation Movement and I lived off the dole. At the time making money was not a high priority, there was too much else to do. I was also pregnant for part of that time, which made it easier to live off the dole. Bertil was very generous and said, "I am making enough money for two people, do what you think is important." So I did some editing and a bit of research. For instance I joined him at a demographic conference in the Netherlands in December 1972. To attend I had to do a paper on population and that was why I was one of the first people to critically analyse in demographic terms the impact of apartheid policies and forced removals, and pressures on people of colour to limit their families while encouraging whites to have more children. In fact 15, 20 years later, they were still quoting that paper at the university in Leyden, simply because it was early.

Bertil Högberg: How long did you stay in London?

Madi Gray: I was in London about a year and a half. Long enough to decide to build a family and have a child. When Nandi was three months old we went to Tanzania. That was a real eye-opener because for the first time I was in real Africa and the majority of the people were black. It was a very different experience to live there, but it was a very exciting time. We were based at the university, where Bertil was finishing off a book on the first census in Tanzania, interpreting the results, and I had the job of doing the layout. So I was working, but I wasn't earning any money. Instead we got to use a car free of charge and the university organized free accommodation.

Bertil Högberg: Was Bertil employed by the university or by the state or...?

Madi Gray: Initially he had gone over for two years for the United Nations. Then he had another two years paid by SIDA. Funds were very limited for the last piece of work.

Bertil Högberg: How long did you spend in Tanzania?

Madi Gray: Eight or nine months.

Bertil Högberg: Did you have any contacts with the ANC in Tanzania?

Madi Gray: Oh yes. Tanzania was playing a role in progressive thinking in the world. At the university there were the most amazing Sunday morning sessions. I became known as the woman with the baby because every Sunday morning I would go with my baby and Bertil to listen to the different topics under discussion. It was a period when people were analysing the impact of capitalism and imperialism, the heritage of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the pros and cons of communism in China and the Soviet Union. That was my theoretical and political education. In South Africa I had no proper political education and got involved because of gut feelings. At these sessions one discussed left-wing interpretations, questions like if industry got going, would a revolution occur? Could one change society? Today we know the process is more complex, but at the time the ideas were exciting, and one felt one was in a place where things were happening. Tanzania did not have commodities, but it certainly had ideas, and it was a very stimulating time.

Members of the ANC would drive up from the town every Sunday to take part and I met some through seeing them there, so I plucked up the courage to go into Dar-es-Salaam to the ANC office.

Bertil's own involvement had begun in Tanzania when he met Frelimo leaders who were living close to him and they spent evenings talking. So I met liberation movement cadres on a social basis. I was lucky in that I met a South African woman in exile who was married to one of the leaders of Frelimo. We soon got bored of talking about anything other than politics, because politics is a source of endless interest. This woman gave me guidance and encouragement to go to the ANC office and present myself and tell them that I was a silly little liberal if that was the way I felt about myself, but to add that I really felt strongly about the struggle, and I did that.

After I went to the ANC office two comrades came to visit us and sat for hours on two or three occasions, discussing my questions and explaining. I had enormous difficulty accepting the need for the armed struggle. I could understand why it was necessary, but to actually say that I would like to join an organization that was involved in the armed struggle was for me a huge step. I hated everything to do with violence with a passion. I think that passion was part of why I hated what was being done to my fellows in South Africa. Yet I came to understand that there was no other way, simply because there were ANC members who took the time to sit and talk with me.

They gave me a letter to Reg September, the ANC representative in London who sent me to

Joe Slovo and Ruth First who also talked with me. I met Albie Sachs and Stephanie Kemp and started moving in those circles.

After Tanzania I spent two months in London before coming to live in Sweden. During that time Bertil was here organizing a home for the baby and me. So I used the London time to follow up on some of the contacts I had made earlier and all over I was met with such warmth and compassion, although I think I was very naive.

It became clear to me two years or so after I left South Africa, by the time I came to Sweden, that my ideas of not getting involved in South African politics and not joining the exile community had changed because I was now determined that the struggle in South Africa was part of my life. This was pointed out by my South African friend in Tanzania when she said, "Why do you have to behave like all these Europeans? Why do you see yourself forever as part of the solidarity movement when you can be part of the liberation movement?"

Occasionally people say things that stick in your mind and become a watershed, turning your life around. That remark was something that turned my life around.

Another was still in South Africa. I'd managed as a student, when the ANC was already banned, to get hold of a copy of the Freedom Charter. This was probably in 1967 or 1968. Mandela was in prison and the ANC was banned and everything about the ANC was banned, but I happened to have a lecturer who realized that I was politically interested and he was living in the house where Bram Fisher was arrested when he was in disguise. The lecturer lent me a book on the treason trial, and in it was a complete copy of the Freedom Charter. I read this and looked at the Freedom Charter and said, "I can support every single clause," and for me that was so important. Right at the beginning in the preamble it says, "South Africa belongs to all who live therein". To me that meant that I could discard all the white propaganda about how, if the blacks took over, they would massacre us. I knew from the Freedom Charter that South Africa belongs to all of us. I have the right to be there, even as a woman, because women's rights were also enshrined. The Freedom Charter changed my life. Several times friends and family said I was naïve. "Look, if you are 20 and you believe in peace and freedom and democracy and everyone's equal right, that is fine. You are now over 30, you are pushing 40. Wake up! Grow up! Become realistic." Pressure came from family and friends to stop being idealistic, but the Freedom Charter kept me on track.

Bertil Högberg: And how were you received when you came to Stockholm by the ANC here?

Madi Gray: I had a letter from the ANC's chief representative in London, and I had greetings from Joe Slovo to the chief representative in Stockholm, Sobizana Mngqikana (Bizo) who was a close friend of Joe's. He had been sent to open the first ANC office. What happened was that they didn't say "Welcome!" They said "Okay, prove yourself" which was the correct thing to do. So once again I found myself marking newspapers and cutting them out and putting together bulletins of information. Before the ANC had an office I went once a week to the private home of a South African who was working closely with Bizo, Desmond McAllister and his Swedish wife, Suzanne. Within less than six months after I arrived in Sweden there was a

party where I was sitting and chatting to some of my South African friends when a Swede came in and said, "Tell me Madi, do you belong to the ANC?" I was sort of jiving, I didn't want to say yes and I didn't want to say no, because I really didn't know. Then one of the ANC comrades said, "But why don't you tell the truth? Of course you are a member of the ANC." From that day onwards I knew I was a member of the ANC. When I moved from the testing phase to the member phase, I don't know. I always say I've been a member since 1974.

Bertil Högberg: Were many South Africans in the exile community?

Madi Gray: In Stockholm there was Bizo, and Mzolisi Mabude, who was studying here under cover and worked very much in the background. There was Eddie Funde, who today is head of the SABC in South Africa, who became Chief Rep in Australia. There were Desmond McAllister and myself. Many musicians and artists were active against apartheid, like Brian Isaacs, Peter Radise, Gilbert Matthews and Lefifi Tladi, to name a few.

Bertil Högberg: Did you meet Billy Modise?

Madi Gray: He was still in Uppsala. I met Billy at parties. When Bizo had a party he would invite every single person he could think of from Africa. The result was that his parties were fascinating because there weren't only ANC members. There were people who were non-political, others who were staunch members of the Unity Movement, and people from the PAC, who one would only meet at one of Bizo's parties. Through his parties Bizo gave us a platform for meeting and exchanging ideas. There was a man in Västerås who you may have known.

Bertil Högberg: Ja, Ezra (Gabula) Benjamin.

Madi Gray: He unfortunately died, but I still have contact with his sister, Joy Mahlasela. On the west coast Raymond Mokwena played an important role in putting the ANC on the Swedish map before there was an official office here. There were Jean and Bawana Njamela. He was a doctor in Linköping who is now working in Langa after having retired in Sweden. Ken was a doctor in the Kumla area. Some of our women worked as nurses and midwives, while a trained doctor who did not get accreditation in Sweden drove a taxi.

Bertil Högberg: There were quite a few musicians who had jumped off here in Sweden at the end of the 1950s?

Madi Gray: Right, the jazz players in the Golden City Dixies. Then there were other people in Uppsala, Lund, on the west coast, and in smaller towns. Some people chose to live quietly, while others chose a more active political role. Once you start counting, there were a couple of hundred South Africans and we were mostly aware of each other. At some functions we

met South Africans living in Norway, Denmark and Finland. In later years we had contact with students who took shorter or longer courses at Folk High Schools (adult education) all over Sweden.

Bertil Högberg: Yes.

Madi Gray: There were five or six of us who were working with the ANC on a regular basis and other people who could be called in. Once or twice we went away for a weekend to brainstorm and then we involved as many people as possible, South Africans, ANC members mainly.

Bertil Högberg: When you strategised, what did you say? What would be the aims of the office and your work here?

Madi Gray: In 1974 when Bizo arrived, his job was to set up an ANC office. Part of what we were strategizing about was how to get the solidarity movement, the Africa Groups, to work on South Africa again. In the 1960s they initiated a boycott of South Africa and Rhodesia, but later focused on the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau. My first public appearance in Stockholm was at an Africa Groups' meeting in October 1974. I was still learning Swedish and wrote my speech in English, so Hillevi Nilsson translated it. There I was reading Swedish with some words I didn't know. I understood enough to realize she had improved my speech enormously in her translation.

We had the big Zeta hall at ABF and the African scholar Basil Davidson was the main speaker. For me to share the platform with this amazing student of Africa the first time I spoke in Sweden was fabulous. The Africa Groups also invited Esau du Plessis from the Dutch Boycott Outspan Action Group, because they had a strategy to re-ignite the flame for South Africa.

Bertil Högberg: The Stockholm Africa Group organized that?

Madi Gray: Yes, and it was a tremendous success and there were people in the Africa Group for whom that meeting was the turning point, and after that they started taking more interest in South Africa.

But there was still an ideological problem about whether the ANC was an organization that could speak for the people of South Africa. The ANC said, "Of course we can do it, there is no one else, we are the representatives." Bizo did spend a lot of time talking to people in the Stockholm Africa Group.

Eventually he felt it was such an uphill battle to persuade the Africa Group to put priority on work with South Africa, that we decided to start a new anti-apartheid organization, the Support Group for South Africa's People, SSF. Very soon it started producing a bulletin. Guess who did a lot of the editing?

Bertil Högberg: Was it not called Phambili?

Madi Gray: Phambili, correct, forward. We had our own choir. Of that I was not a member. We only sang South African liberation songs. The Africa Groups had a choir at the time but they were singing a lot of Portuguese stuff as well. Sometimes the choirs would perform together. SSF also organized the very first visit by a South African cultural group. It was called Amandla and came in March 1976. It was very much an ad hoc group. Two of the people who were members of that group are ministers in the current government, Pallo Jordan and Ronnie Kasrils. I remember driving Pallo and Ronnie around and listening to them. For many years I was like a sponge, drawing in as much knowledge as possible, and to hear these two committed men having ideological discussions while I was driving them around Stockholm was an absolute mind-blow and I learned a tremendous amount from them.

I was very lucky to be living in a collective at the time and their visit coincided with a week's holiday in the high snowy mountains for everyone in the collective, except myself and Nandi. We were in the flat and could play host. The group stayed with us and we had enough room for everyone. SSF also organized a few other shows for them, I think in Örebro and probably in Gothenburg.

Amandla read South African poetry written by members of the group, though they wrote under pseudonyms like Scarlet Whitman. They brought in singers and dancers, among them ANC students from the German Democratic Republic, the GDR. In Stockholm they had a very short time to rehearse and get the whole programme together.

The final concert was held at Södra Teatern. We had made an effort to get a well-known Swedish cultural personality to agree to be the Master of Ceremonies but a day before he pulled out. That became one of my glowing moments. I put on an African dress I'd bought in Tanzania and introduced the acts one after the other. At the end, when the cast was on stage dancing and singing, my daughter, who was sitting in the front row and had just had her third birthday while the Amandla group was there to celebrate it with her, couldn't contain her excitement anymore, so she jumped up onto the stage and after that all sorts of other people came up and it became one of those events in solidarity when you feel that everything has been worthwhile.

Bertil Högberg: Did SSF organise the tour?

Madi Gray: Yes, together with the ANC office. Desmond was responsible for most of the details and Marianne Eyre did our poetry translations and travelled around the country with the group.

Bertil Högberg: I remember she translated South African poetry. Was she involved in the support group?

Madi Gray: Not really, but she did a wonderful job with this particular tour. I think she was one of their pillars of support, otherwise they would not have managed to present the show in different places. As far as I know it was the first time South African artists, members of the ANC, were on public platforms in Sweden.

Bertil Högberg: Bertil Egerö, your partner, was an old member of the Africa Groups, wasn't he?

Madi Gray: Yes. He was in Gothenburg and then Stockholm.

Bertil Högberg: So he was your avenue into the Africa Groups?

Madi Gray: He was my avenue into the Africa Groups as he was my avenue in London. It is through him that the Africa Groups opened to me. I had met several members earlier. Dick Urban Vestbro I met on my very first visit to Sweden in 1972, others I met in Tanzania and in London. Mai Palmberg came to stay with us in London. Sören Lindh was another visitor. So, among leading people in the Africa Groups, there was no problem. Right from the beginning I joined the editorial board of the Africa Bulletin. I had always wanted to be a journalist and was on the Africa Bulletin for seven years and helped to train more junior people in layout, journalism, writing. Then they overtook me.

Bertil Högberg: That is the role you have as a teacher. When did the Africa Groups change to really side with the ANC? Can you pinpoint when?

Madi Gray: My joining the Africa Groups was quite independent of Bizo. I joined the Africa Groups before I managed to make contact with the ANC, so it was a fait accompli when I met him that I was a member of the Stockholm Africa Group. He asked me not to play too active a role. He said, "Sit there, listen, put forward ideas, but don't lead them, don't get into a position where they are going to elect you to the board, that is not your role." So I was never a board member. I didn't do very much strategising. I asked questions, initially about the ANC, later on after the Portuguese colonies were liberated and they began to change their attitude towards the ANC, I also got involved in the debates on Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Bertil Högberg: Support to the ANC was included in the 1976 programme that we adopted in Björkå. I think that was the first time this decision was officially taken on the national level. There was still a debate whether we should say that the ANC was the leading movement. I think we said it was the leading force.

Madi, you were a member of the Stockholm Africa Group?

Madi Gray: I spent time talking privately to some people but also generally at meetings. A lot of the time I wasn't aware of what I was doing, it was just that I was passionate about South

Africa. I had been convinced by the gentleness of the people in the ANC all the way back from Tanzania, and their kindness and warmth and generosity to me. I had become convinced that the ANC was the organization in South Africa and that this was vitally important.

Bertil Högberg: What happened to the support group and what was the relationship between the support group and the Stockholm Africa Group?

Madi Gray: For a couple of years they worked together. The most important function left by 1978/79 was the choir. The other useful thing that members of the support group did was to help in the office. They would come on a regular basis every time we had to send something out. When Phambili was published, they would help to write it and would, above all, help to stick the stamps on and stuff the envelopes.

Bertil Högberg: Were both Swedes and South Africans in SSF?

Madi Gray: The majority were Swedes.

Bertil Högberg: Did any of these people start to work with the Africa Groups, or did they just disappear when the group dissolved?

Madi Gray: Several are working with South Africa in other ways. But one, a man with silvery hair named Bertil, is still in the Stockholm Africa Group. I saw him at a meeting a few months ago. He's a very gentle man. What also happened was that the song groups started singing together.

Bertil Högberg: They joined forces but eventually both song groups phased out, together.

Madi Gray: Right. In the mid-1970s Bizo was running the ANC office on his own. I came in 1977 and worked for about two years and helped to move the office from Bondegatan to Gamla Brogatan in the centre of town. All the ANC members who were in Stockholm helped in the move one cold and snowy day in January 1979. ANC comrades would drop in to the office when they had the time. If you were an underground person like Mzolisi, you couldn't be seen at the ANC office very much. We had no idea who was watching us.

We did know that our phones were tapped and when we moved, the first time I picked up the phone I said, "Wow I can hear something, it is not crackling." Then I heard a click. We called Telia, the phone company, and asked, "What is happening our phone? Why is there this buzz?" They looked at the connections and said, "Sorry, there is nothing we can do." A phone technician asked, "What do you do here?" and stared at us as though we were terrorists. I guess they couldn't imagine that anyone would be tapping our calls unless we were. My phone was tapped at home, it was equally clear, and I got a technician to double-check

that as well and watched his face. Initially when he went to check it, he chuckled and said I was imagining things but he came back white as a sheet and just said, "There is nothing I can do."

Bertil Högberg: In the solidarity movement we were aware that quite a few of our telephones were tapped. We didn't trust the Swedish security police in those years.

Madi Gray: No we didn't. I don't know who it was, whether it was Swedish security or South African or both, but there was no doubt that my private phone was tapped. One evening I was on the phone for a long time, doing a teenage thing and talking to someone for two hours, and suddenly we heard the tape ending. In those days you had reels and you could hear the end go slap, slap, slap against the recording head and after a couple of minutes it irritated us to the point that we put the phone down, phoned each other again and then the sound was off. I had another very unpleasant experience while the office was still at Bondegatan. I made an arrangement to meet a friend of mine at a pub close to the office. I've always assumed that someone followed me, because a minute or two after I came into the restaurant, while I was waiting for my friend, a man came and sat down at my table. What did he do, but the very un-Swedish thing of offering me wine, a total stranger. He said he was from India, but he spoke with a South African accent. Immediately my hackles rose and I felt he was a colleague of the spy who'd come in the sports car to interview me in London. What did he want? He was talking casually. Why did he ask me about books I was reading in Johannesburg, the kind of work I'd been doing in Johannesburg? It was as though the special branch assumed that I was doing and thinking exactly what I'd been doing in Johannesburg.

Bertil Högberg: But how did he introduce himself?

Madi Gray: He walked up to me and said, "Hi, you are sitting alone, can I join you? I'm from India," and started talking.

Bertil Högberg: And got to know that you were South African?

Madi Gray: No. I gave him as little information as possible. I could hear that he was South African so I said, "I know you are a South African, not from India." He fired questions at me about very South African things to do with what I was involved in at the last place I had stayed at in South Africa, the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre in Roodepoort. Later their secretary had been revealed to be a spy. So it wasn't surprising that he knew what I was reading and what I was doing in South Africa. His questions were very thinly disguised and it took only a few moments for me to realize that though he never talked about South Africa as such, the questions he was putting to me as a total stranger, could only have come from his having memorized a list of things that I was involved in while I was in South Africa. It was like a repetition of the experience in London, I hardly touched the wine and I was terribly careful

about what I was saying. I was 120 percent focused. That was really freaky and the worst was that my friend never pitched up. An hour after this interrogation started, I phoned my friend who'd come by bus and hadn't found the pub, so he got on the next bus and went back home. I felt totally exposed. I took a taxi to his place to get away from the man in the pub. When I sat in the taxi, the reaction came and when I got to my friend's I was shaking.

Around that time, perhaps that very weekend, there was a mysterious break-in at the ANC office. Someone came in by the window and went through many files but tried to make it look like a burglary. The Chief Rep and I never believed that theory. As I'd just paid an account, there were luckily only a few coins left in the petty cash box. It was broken open to look as though it was rifled. I found the coins hidden in a box-file a week or so later.

Bertil Högberg: Coming back to the Africa Groups, what did the Africa Groups do in those years on South Africa? When did they really start to do something? The Africa Groups had been focusing entirely on the former Portuguese colonies, so this was a transition.

Madi Gray: Boycott was one of the early issues. The Africa Groups also started inviting speakers on South Africa in the mid-1970s. Ruth First came and the second time she came was also Basil Davidson's second visit and the Africa Groups organized a tour for them and a big meeting in Stockholm and campaigns were started.

The Africa Groups, being a national organization had a much broader outreach than SSF, who continued to help in the office. Shortly after Lindiwe Mabuza took over as Chief Representative, it was decided to disband the support group.

Bertil Högberg: When did she arrive as ANC representative?

Madi Gray: She arrived in mid-1979. I had met her briefly on Cuba in 1978 because the ANC in Sweden had sent me to the World Youth Conference in Cuba. That was one of those highlights in my life and is where I met both Magnus Walan who became so important in the solidarity and trade union work, and Helena Nilsson of the Centre Party, now outgoing Ambassador to SA.

Bertil Högberg: Were you doing other things within the Africa Group in those years?

Madi Gray: I did different things in the Africa Group. On more than one occasion I toured Sweden, like in 1977 after the 1976 uprising, with a young man called Thabelo Motoponyane, who had been detained and tortured as he was one of the student leaders of the 1976 student uprising in Soweto. We went as far as Luleå in the north and as far west as Gothenburg, in the south to Lund and east to Växjö. For two or three weeks we toured around together and met groups from pre-primary schools and creches to trade unions and Christian peace groups. That was a very important tour and that was also one of the first nation-wide events I remember the Africa Groups undertook. I think that one of the factors that played a

role in the recognition by the Africa Groups was the 1976 student uprising. It was the first really visible protest in South Africa since the ANC leaders were imprisoned in 1964, other than the growth of the Black Consciousness Movement.

Bertil Högberg: The decision to have the next campaign on South Africa had been taken a couple of weeks before, at the end of May 1976. The Soweto uprising helped to consolidate it.

Madi Gray: Early in 1976 people were warning the South African government that things were coming to a head. We had churchmen visiting Sweden from South Africa saying something was happening. I remember being warned in March 1976, before Solomon Mahlangu was hanged on 6 April. That also reverberated around the world.

Bertil Högberg: It was an event that we did actions around in the Africa Groups.

Madi Gray: I stood outside the South African embassy then and on many occasions shouting "Murderers! Murderers!" Once when there were many South Africans as well as Africa Group and SSF involvement was after 16 June 1976. Together these groups held a vigil opposite the embassy, protesting and singing and performing. I think the staff was quite scared because you saw an occasional face at a window, but they didn't have any lights on.

Bertil Högberg: If you look back at the 1970s now, were there any special highlights at that time?

Madi Gray: For me personally it was a time when I came to know Sweden because aside from travelling around with Thabelo, I had travelled around quite a lot on my own and I had done a lot of talking. Most of these were events organized by the Africa Groups. Sometimes the local Africa Groups in, for instance, Umeå and Linköping organised events. I visited both with one of the people who had come to Sweden with the Golden City Dixies, Brian Isaacs, who's spent most of his adult life going around Swedish schools and singing and talking about South Africa. He's done a tremendous amount of work.

Bertil Högberg: I remember him from the mid-1960s.

Madi Gray: We also went to other places together. I would talk and the musicians would perform and we put the anti-apartheid message across to anyone who cared to listen. Sometimes we stood on street corners with collecting tins. We might be hardly noticeable because it was a Saturday morning and everyone was rushing up and down. We were there together with local members of the Africa Groups and I think it was important for the activists in Karlstad, Norrköping, and all over. Wherever we went, we took part in local activities, in whatever was happening.

Bertil Högberg: When you went out like that, were you coming as an ANC member or as an

Africa Groups member?

Madi Gray: It varied. When I travelled with Thabelo I was travelling as Africa Groups. There were other times that the ANC was asked to send a speaker. Some of the time I went. More than once I arrived and would be the last person on the station platform and there would be a group of people at the other end of the platform, busily consulting their watches and looking around. I would go up to them and say, "I think you are waiting for me" in my best Swedish. "No," they'd reply. "We are waiting for a black man from South Africa." Of course the name Madi could be male or female.

Bertil Högberg: Were there any other controversies or conflicts between the solidarity movement and the ANC that you became aware of?

Madi Gray: I don't think there were conflicts once the issue of support for the ANC was resolved. Even with the formulation of the ANC as the leading force in the struggle, the fact was that the ANC was the only South African liberation movement that received support from the Africa Groups.

Another important part of the ANC's work was with the Trade Union Movement. Sobizana did a lot of work with many people all over Swedish society. He met politicians and parliamentarians, and people in the various youth and women's organizations of the different political parties and religious leaders. A lot of what he did I was not really aware of. Yet I was aware of his battles with the trade union confederations, LO and TCO, with whom we had a lot of trouble in the mid-1970s.

The trade union ally of the ANC was SACTU, The South African Congress of Trade Unions. It was a member of the same trade union international, the World Confederation of Trade Unions, WCTU, as the Soviet Union. It also had observer status in the western ICFTU, the International Confederation of Trade Unions to which the Swedish trade unions have always belonged. Because of this, there were ongoing ideological discussions and major problems. The ANC would bring in people from SACTU, John Gaetsewe was one, and introduce them both to the trade union movement and to the Africa Groups. It was an uphill battle with the trade unions. It seemed to have very little to do with whether or not SACTU was active in South Africa, but rather with the fact that SACTU was a member of the wrong trade union international.

Bertil Högberg: This was a battle that went on for the rest of the 1970s and the whole of 1980s as well.

Madi Gray: Yes. I must point out that both the LO and TCO unions came to support the new unions that emerged in South Africa in the late 1970s and early 1980s and played a vital role in assisting them to build themselves up. Both COSATU, the Confederation of South African Trade Unions and NACTU, the National Confederation of Trade Unions, received support.

Bertil Högberg: Was the ANC office involved in the whole sanctions issue?

Madi Gray: Oh yes, but by the time the sanctions issues of the 1980s came up, I was no longer working at the ANC office. I stopped working at the ANC office a few months after Lindiwe took over. The ANC sent people from Lusaka to work with her in the ANC office. Before I left I wrote a complete and thorough description of my job so that anyone reading it would be able to copy my work. Nothing was particularly involved. When I left the office I went to Lund for a few months to do the layout of a book.

Bertil Högberg: So in the 1980s you didn't work at the office but continued to work with the Africa Groups?

Madi Gray: I worked on the editorial board of the Africa Bulletin for about seven years, which would bring us to around 1982. I did the layout of two of the Africa Groups' study books and translations into English, from leaflets to entire books. My name did not always appear on my work.

Bertil Högberg: That was the thing, my name did not appear as one of the writers either.

Madi Gray: It was still in the days where you acted as a group. Yet the publishers, Zed Books, used my layout, page by page, for the English version of the study book.

Bertil Högberg: That was a good layout on that book, good work.

Madi Gray: Thank you, nice to hear after all these years. I did a number of other books as well. There was one about women and I remember finding a cover illustration from a textile, which I really loved, where a woman was tearing apart the chains of oppression. I think Ola Nyberg was involved in some of the drawings in these books.

Bertil Högberg: I remember that.

Madi Gray: I was never an employee of the Africa Groups but I would do tours and other projects.

Bertil Högberg: You were working basically freelance during those years and some of this was for the Africa Groups?

Madi Gray: I freelanced, ever since I left the ANC office.

Bertil Högberg: When you worked at the office, who paid you? Did you get any money from

the ANC?

Madi Gray: Yes, initially when I was still together with Bertil, I didn't need to earn a living, only a little bit of pocket money, so I think I got 1000 or 1500 kronor.

Bertil Högberg: That is what they paid me at the SWAPO office as well.

Did you also work with the Isolate South Africa Committee, ISAK?

MG: Again I would come in on special projects. I was also one of many people who helped researchers like Kristoffer Leonardsson (Christer Pettersson) and others who were writing under pseudonyms or their own names by reading their manuscripts. Sometimes I got paid for it, sometimes I did it in my spare time. If I got paid, it wasn't a huge amount of money. But it was work that was important. I've always worked with information. Today I am disseminating information as a tour guide.

In those days, in the 1970s and 1980s, when I travelled, I would show slides all over the country. Many of the Namibian slides I used were slides of yours that I managed to get through the archives at the Africa Groups. You may not remember, but I did ask your permission.

Bertil Högberg: You probably did. You said that Bizo told you to keep a low profile within the Africa Groups. Did he say similar things to other exiled South Africans?

Madi Gray: I really don't know.

Bertil Högberg: I ask because they were to a large extent absent within the Africa groups. This is something I have been realizing looking back and it was quite different from the situation in Britain where the exile community was quite involved within the anti-apartheid movement.

Madi Gray: I think you will find that is true of all the liberation movements in Sweden. There were virtually no Africans at all in the Africa Groups.

Bertil Högberg: There were the odd ones here and there.

Madi Gray: One or two here and there, yes. In SSF we had people from Gambia as well as South Africa. Some of the activists were in Sweden as students. Certainly if you come from a country where your prime job is to do your studies, then maybe you don't have all that much time to do other things.

Bertil Högberg: When did you return to South Africa the first time?

Madi Gray: March 1990. I missed Mandela's appearance at Globen, that night I was flying to

South Africa. But I'd met Nelson Mandela the day before. Knowing that he was going to visit Sweden, the ANC office under Billy Modise organized for ANC members in northern Europe to attend a members-only meeting. It was an absolutely stunning event. The late Chris Hani was one of the main speakers. He updated us and outlined ANC's new policies.

We had a mini-event a couple of months earlier when ANC members came from East Germany and other countries for a visit by Govan Mbeki and seven other ANC members who were released from Robben Island in 1989.

On Friday 2 February, 1990, the leaders were due to take a part in a discussion that Sida had organized and amazingly in the morning the news was broadcast that the ANC was unbanned. All the banned organizations, 40 of them, were unbanned.

That day I had 15 minutes with Alfred Nzo, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first ANC government. When we were sitting waiting for the meeting to start I asked him, "What is the ANC's initial reaction to this?" Though I wrote all his replies down I had no idea what to do with them. That evening I got a phone call from one of the independent newspapers, South I think it was. They asked me if I could write something about the leaders' reactions and I could use the interview with Nzo.

That was on the Friday, on the Saturday the ANC organized a party for all the comrades from South Africa plus all the ANC members who came from other parts of Europe. When the party was over, no one wanted to leave, so 30 of us crammed into my little flat and we sat and talked and talked. It was again one of the highlights.

There was another kind of highlight when Mandela came to Sweden a few weeks later. This meeting was a much more formal occasion. It was held at Medborgarhuset and was for ANC members. Several of us had the privilege of meeting him. It was a question of joining a queue, shaking hands, standing on tip-toe, getting a hug, getting a kiss, getting a handshake, then the next person would be on. Yet Mandela said he recognized me a year later when I saw him at the first ANC Women's League conference. It was a three-day event in Kimberley in April and I saw him as he was getting into a car with Barbara Masakela. He smiled and shook my hand and I got another hug. I feel very privileged.

Bertil Högberg: How was it to return to South Africa after this?

Madi Gray: That was interesting, exciting and sometimes ironic. I could still communicate with my white friends whom I had left behind. We'd led totally different lives for 20 years, their children had grown up and their businesses were flourishing, or they weren't. One of my friends told me how the boycott had ruined his export firm. Someone else told me of how he had been persuaded to invest in an armaments shipment to break the boycott. I kept hearing these stories and I realized that in South Africa I was seen as the same person they had last met 20 years earlier, somewhat of a liberal. They couldn't imagine that in the meantime I'd joined the liberation movement, and had stood on platform after platform demanding the total boycott of South Africa, full sanctions, the trade embargo, etc. I've lost count of the number of times I committed "sabotage" in terms of the South African Sabotage and Terrorism Acts

simply by going onto a platform and making the demand to isolate South Africa.

I even applied for amnesty when it was possible, a United Nations Amnesty, as I was advised to by the ANC Office.

Bertil Högberg: What do you mean by the United Nations?

Madi Gray: The United Nations initially got involved in repatriation of South African refugees and all members of the ANC were offered the opportunity of asking for amnesty and I was advised to do so, so I did.

In Cape Town the impressive bit was travelling around, going into ordinary shops where the people who used to serve you in 1970 were white, possibly coloured people, but in March 1990 there were also black people, mainly men. Even in the banks, there had been a shift. In 1990 there was still apartheid all over the place. I saw that because the draft of young white men into the army had removed white men from the work force for four years (two years initially and then three-month camps for another 12 years) so the economy had to try and cope with the isolation, try to expand and not to go under completely, business had to make a decision. Either bring in white women into the work force or bring in black men. For one reason or another they chose the patriarchal solution and brought in black men. That was an interesting observation.

A week or so after I first arrived in South Africa, ANC exiles, Jack and Ray Simons, came back from Lusaka and were given a huge welcome at the University of Cape Town. I walked into the hall where I had received a degree, where I had attended several mass meetings and where over the years from when I first started studying early in the 1960s until I left the university at the end of the decade, there had been increasingly fewer black faces because of the apartheid imposed on the university, now more than half the faces were black. I'd heard about the change, but to experience it was completely different. There were other changes. The streets I knew were in the same place I'd left them, but there are huge areas that have grown and which I'm still learning on the Cape Flats.

Bertil Högberg: How long did you stay in the first time?

Madi Gray: The first time I was there for a month but during that visit I was invited to address a conference in July. So I came back to Sweden and wrote a paper and went off again. The first time I had my daughter Nandi with me. We spent her 18th birthday in CT. She'd been there a few months earlier and had made a number of friends. When she was there in 1989, some people were suspicious of the white girl who said she came from Sweden but spoke with a Cape Town accent. Yet through her I met many people. She had made contact with people in the ANC and in the ANC Youth League and I became one of the first people to join the Rondebosch branch, which was closest to my mother's home in Claremont. I didn't realize at the time that I joined at the constituent meeting. I just knew there was going to be a meeting so I went. It was great, and I was able to give a five-minute talk about what Sweden

had done in the struggle against apartheid. It was a period when almost anything could happen; it was full of promise.

Bertil Högberg: You had your family?

Madi Gray: My mother was still alive in those days and I have a brother who has five children.

Bertil Högberg: When did you decide to move back to South Africa?

Madi Gray: I moved back in 1997. I waited for a number of reasons, one of which was that I'd been ill and had to wait until the doctor said okay.

Bertil Högberg: What did you do there?

Madi Gray: I spent the first year trying to get a job. I applied several times. Some people seemed convinced it was impossible to follow what was happening in South Africa if you lived abroad in Sweden.

Bertil Högberg: So then you ended up with journalism?

Madi Gray: I did a little bit of freelance editing and research. I also did a lot of voluntary work for the ANC, hoping that I would be able to find a niche somewhere. I'd moved to Sea Point and joined the Sea Point branch. Then one beautiful August day, I saw fields with whole carpets full of flowers in the Postberg Nature Reserve. Suddenly it came to me that I should become a tour guide. It was like an energy coming from those plants.

The following day I started phoning around, and chose a part-time course for tourist guide training. We were only ten in a fascinating group and I probably learned more about guiding from my colleagues, among them six taxi drivers, than from the actual course. I learned techniques from the course, but I learned about South Africa and Cape Town from my colleagues.

Bertil Högberg: You are still working as a tourist guide?

Madi Gray: I stayed in Cape Town long enough to become a national tourist guide. I also became an assessor. I regard it as part of my solidarity work when the entire tourism industry, particularly the guiding section, was totally overhauled. Tourism is a growth industry, so the idea is to get as many people from the previously disadvantaged communities in as possible. A number of guides, particularly those who'd been guiding for 10 or 15 years were upset and took reassessment as a personal affront. Initially some refused to be reassessed.

I became an assessor because I realized that it was an opportunity for me to be one of those who could facilitate the drawing in of guides from the previously disadvantaged groups. Of the

people I assessed, close to half were from these groups. Some were brilliant, others merely competent. I managed to assist a few to become national guides, and others to gain five or six regions.

Bertil Högberg: You have been working quite a lot with tour groups from Sweden and Denmark?

Madi Gray: Yes, I do a lot guiding of Nordic people. I now work more with Swedes than with any other nationality, but initially I worked just like any new tour guide with people from all over the world. My first tours were one day tours, half-day tours, sometimes two half-day tours and it was really challenging if I had a city tour in the morning and a quick zip down to the Cape Peninsula with a different group of people in the afternoon.

Bertil Högberg: Now you've decided to move back to Sweden again?

Madi Gray: I've moved back to Sweden for half the year, for personal reasons. My daughter is here, very important. I also discovered while living in South Africa that I have become partly Swedish. It is over 30 years since I first came to live here permanently and for the greater part of the first 18 years I never believed it would be possible to return to South Africa. So I did what I felt I should do. I learned Swedish and tried to fit into Swedish society.

One of the things I was really happy about during the 1980s when I wasn't very active in the Africa Groups, was that on a number of occasions Ingvar Flink asked me to represent the Africa Groups at seminars. I was keeping an eye on the South Africa military-industrial complex so I attended events organized by the Stockholm Institute of Peace Research. I went to the World Peace Conference in Copenhagen as a representative of the Africa Groups. I was at very early meetings on what was happening in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. I would often only be asked a day or two ahead of time whether I could go, but would if I could manage it. If I was to talk I would put aside everything in order to do it, because such meetings always gave me so much. I still haven't stopped looking for knowledge, and today when I translate books on the world's water resources or on participatory democracy, I am able to interpret what the writers are saying about positions taken by the World Bank and the IMF in these contexts because of the seminars and meetings that I attended on behalf of the Africa Groups in the 1980s.

Bertil Högberg: My last question is the following. With your South African background, how would you judge the significance of the Swedish solidarity work? What did that mean?

Madi Gray: I'll give you two stories, the first one occurred on my second visit to South Africa in June/July 1990 when I managed to join a township tour organized for managers of one of South Africa's large chain stores. There were 14 and I sat next to the driver-guide. When we got out to look at something in KTC Township, one of the guys, who had understood I came

from Sweden, asked, "Why do the Swedes hate South Africa?" I only had time to say they don't hate South Africa, they very much like the people, but they hate apartheid. That was the end of that discussion. I thought it interesting since it represented an attitude towards Sweden that I picked up on a number of occasions, only he put it very clearly. This is an example from the white community.

On the other hand today, 15 years later, when I go with tourists to a township and meet one of the older people who know about Nordic solidarity, or when we are on Robben Island with one of the prison guides (former political prisoners), and I say I am here with a group from Sweden these people smile and seem to want to hug every one of my tourists. Often the Swedes with me were not part of the solidarity movement, so they tend to look a bit surprised that Sweden should be regarded as such a close friend of the people of South Africa.

A third example occurred when I met colleagues in the free press during my first visits to South Africa, when I was working as a freelance journalist in Sweden. They were aware that Sweden had contributed large sums of money to their papers so they could continue publishing. But they couldn't understand why there was the Shell boycott. Their reason was that in all these papers, at least the ones I saw, a full-page ad was taken out every week by Shell. I interpreted that as showing that our boycott of Shell was brilliantly effective. It wasn't only a Swedish boycott; it was a European boycott. Shell was the only oil company based in Europe, owned in Europe at the time we started the oil boycott. I saw a direct connection between the boycott in Europe and Shell's support to the forces of liberation in South Africa. I think the Shell boycott was successful.

Sweden made many contributions. Many people had come from South Africa to Sweden and returned after studies or visits, to their schools, to their communities, to the churches, all over society. In the early 1990s if I mentioned I'd spent time in Sweden, within a short time half the neighbourhood had gathered and I'd be telling them about Sweden, about the anti-apartheid movement, the Africa Groups, and the Isolate South Africa Committee (ISAK). I usually didn't have time to go into detail and they weren't that interested. What they wanted to hear was that people outside South Africa were supporting them. I am quite sure that it was of enormous importance to realize that there were people so far away of a completely different cultural background who supported them in their struggle for democracy.

Then we can get back to my own first experiences in Sweden when I realized that I was not mad to have a vision of a democratic and free and equal society where everyone had the same rights and the same obligations and the vote. Sweden did believe in it. Even those who were against the boycott would claim that they were arguing on behalf of the voteless people and that it was better to have contact because that would move the political situation forward faster than isolation would.

We should also recall the impact of the International Defence and Aid Fund on the lives of the political prisoners and their families. For thousands it became a life-line. IDAF funded defence counsel and provided for families of political prisoners, as well as covering prisoners' study costs. Per Wästberg, the Swedish writer, played a central role in channelling this support.

I think that the solidarity movement in Sweden has had an enormous impact, also on the ANC

itself. ANC president Oliver Tambo received treatment here after his stroke in 1989. The information office of the ANC very soon received a similar kind of unofficial status as an embassy. It was the first country in Europe where an ANC information office achieved that status as far as I know.

Bertil Högberg: In Africa the ANC had diplomatic status.

Madi Gray: Sorry, let me not forget Africa, you are quite right. In England the ANC had a much larger office but it didn't have the same status in Britain as the relatively small ANC office had here.

It was absolutely clear since Bizo's days, that the ANC representative could talk to cabinet members, and the top organizational people. Bizo had to fight for it, but he established it. And Lindiwe with her outgoingness, her charisma, her ability to get people to simply do what needed to be done reached out to completely new groups. It was important for ANC members to experience this, to be treated like human beings, not simply with respect but to have their opinions asked for. Sweden is sometimes so civilized one wants to throw something at it, but from the point of view of the liberation movement and I am pretty sure this is true not only for the ANC members whom I know, but also for the other liberation movements, coming to Sweden in itself could be a liberating experience. Even if it was a question of a few days, it was important to be able to breathe air without the weight of worrying what was going to happen next. One feels secure here.

Bertil Högberg: Okay thank you.